

Volume 2: Sermons 201-400

800  
Sermons

C. H. Spurgeon

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THE SERMONS OF  
CHARLES  
SPURGEON

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IN FOUR Volumes





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# **The Sermons of Charles Spurgeon**

# Part 2, 201-400

by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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## **Faith Versus Fear**

The believer when he is brought into peace with God does not tremble at the thought of God's power. He does not ask, "Will He plead against me with His great power?" But he says, "No, that very power, once my terror, and fear, is now my refuge and my hope, for He shall put that very power in me. I rejoice that God is Almighty, for He will lend me His omnipotence—'He will put strength into me.'" The very power which would have damned my soul, saves my soul. The very power that would have crushed me, God puts into me that the work of salvation may be accomplished. No, He will not use it to crush me, but He will put that very strength into me. Dost see there the Mighty One upon His throne? Dread Sovereign, I see Thine awful arm. What, wilt Thou crush the sinner? Wilt Thou utterly destroy him with thy strength? "No," saith He, "come hither, child." And if you go to His almighty throne, "There," saith He, "that self-same arm which made thee quake, see there, I give it to thee. Go out and live. I have made thee mighty as I am, to do My works; I will put strength into thee. The same strength which would have broken thee to pieces on



the wheel shall now be put into thee, that thou mayest do mighty works."

Now, this great strength sometimes goes out in prayer. Did you ever hear a man pray in whom God had put strength? You have heard some of us poor puny souls pray, I dare say; but have you ever heard a man pray that God had made into a giant? Oh, if you have, you will say it is a mighty thing to hear such a man in supplication. I have seen him as if he had seized the angel, and would pull him down. I have seen him now and then slip in his wrestling; but, like a giant, he has recovered his footing, and seemed, like Jacob, to hurl the angel to the ground. I have marked the man lay hold upon the throne of mercy, and declare, "Lord, I will never let go, except thou bless me." I have seen him, when heaven's gates have been apparently barred, go up to them, and say, "Ye gates, open wide in Jesus' name;" and I have seen the gates fly open before him, as if the man were God Himself; for he is armed with God Almighty's strength. I have seen that man, in prayer, discover some great mountain in his way; and he prayed it down, until it became a very molehill. He has beaten the hills and made them like chaff by the immensity of his might.

Men and women have asked a thing of God, and have had it; that have been to the throne, and showed a promise, and said they would not come away without its fulfilment, and have come back from God's throne conquerors of the Almighty; for prayer moves the arm that moves the world. "Prayer is the sinew of God," said one, "it moves His arm;" and so it is. Verily, in prayer, with the strength of the faithful heart, there is a beautiful fulfilment of the text, "He will put strength in me."

Not only in prayer, but in *duty*, the man who has great faith in God, and whom God has girded with strength, how gigantic does he become! Have you never read of those great heroes who put to flight whole armies, and scattered kings like the snow on Salmon? Have you never read of those men that were fearless of foes, and stalked onward before all their opposers, as if they would as soon die as live? I read of a case in the old kirk of Scotland, before that King James who wished to force "the black prelacy" upon them. Andrew Melville and some of his associates were deputed to wait upon the king, and as they were going with a scroll ready written, they were warned to take care and return, for their lives were at

stake. They paused a moment, and Andrew said, "I am not afraid, thank God, nor feeble-spirited in the cause and message of Christ; come what pleases God to send, our commission shall be executed." At these words the deputation took courage, and went forward. On reaching the palace, and having obtained an audience, they found his majesty attended by Lennox and Arran, and several other lords, all of whom were English. They presented their remonstrance. Arran lifted it from the table, and glancing over it, he then turned to the ministers, and furiously demanded, "Who dares sign these treasonable articles?" "We dare," said Andrew Melville, "and will render our lives in the cause." Having thus spoken, he came forward to the table, took the pen, subscribed his name, and was followed by his brethren. Arran and Lennox were confounded; the king looked on in silence, and the nobles in surprise. Thus did our good forefathers appear before kings, and yet were not ashamed. "The proud had them greatly in derision, yet they declined not from the law of God." Having thus discharged their duty, after a brief conference, the ministers were permitted to depart in peace. The king trembled more at them than if a whole army had been at his gates; and why was this? It was because God had put His own strength into them to make them masters of their duty. And you have some such in your midst now. Despised they may be; but God has made them like the lion-like men of David, who would go down into the pit in the depth of winter, and take the lion by the throat and slay him. We have some in our churches—but a remnant, I admit—who are not afraid to serve their God, like Abdiel, "faithful amongst the faithless found." We have some who are superior to the customs of the age, and scorn to bow at mammon's knee, who will not use the trimming language of too many modern ministers, but stand out for God's gospel, and the pure white banner of Christ, unstained and unsullied by the doctrines of men. Then are they mighty! Why they are mighty is because God has put strength in them.

"And shall I hold on to the end?" says the believer. Yes, thou wilt, for God's strength is in thee. "Shall I be able to bear such-and-such a trial!" Yes thou wilt. Cannot Omnipotence stem the torrent? And Omnipotence is in thee; for, like Ignatius of old, thou art a God-bearer; thou bearest God about with thee. Thy heart is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and thou shalt yet overcome. "But can I ever stand firm in such-and-such an evil

day?" Oh, yes you will, for He will put His strength in you! I was in company, some time ago, with some ministers; one of them observed, "Brother, if there were to be stakes in Smithfield again, I am afraid they would find very few to burn among us "Well," I said, "I do not know anything about how you would burn; but this I know right well, that there never will be any lack of man who are ready to die for Christ." "Oh!" said he, "but they are the right sort of men." "Well," said I "but do you think they are the Lord's children?" "Yes, I believe they are, but they are not the right sort." "Ah!" said I, "but you would find them the right sort, if they came to the test, every one of them; they have not got burning grace yet. What would be the use of it?" We do not want the grace till the stakes come; but we should have burning grace in burning moments. If now a hundred of us were called to die for Christ, I believe there would not only be found a hundred, but five hundred, that would march to death, and sing all the way. Whenever I find faith, I believe that God will put strength into the man; and I never think anything to be impossible to a man with faith in God, while it is written, "He will put strength in me."

Caesar could not swim the Tiber, accoutred as he was; and dost thou hope to swim the Jordan with thy flesh about thee? No, thou wilt sink then, unless Jesus, as Aeneas did Anchises, from the flames of Rome, upon his shoulders, lift thee from Jordan, and carry thee across the stream, thou wilt ne'er be able to face that tyrant and smile in his face, unless thou hast something more than mortal. Thou wilt need then to be belted about with the girdle of divinity, or else thy loins will be loosed, and thy strength will fail thee, when thou needst it most. Many a man has ventured to the Jordan in his own strength; but oh! how he has shrieked and howled, when the first wave has touched his feet! But never weakling went to death with God within him, but he found himself mightier than the grave. Go on, Christian, for this is thy promise, "He will put strength in me."

"Weak though I am, yet through  
His might, I all things can perform."

Go on; dread not God's power, but rejoice at this, He will put His strength in you; He will not use His power to crush you.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## **A Faithful Friend**

There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. - Proverbs 18:24

Cicero has well said, "Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed." Friendship seems as necessary an element of a comfortable existence in this world as fire or water, or even air itself. A man may drag along a miserable existence in proud solitary dignity, but his life is scarce life, it is nothing but an existence, the tree of life being stripped of the leaves of hope and the fruits of joy. He who would be happy here must have friends; and he who would be happy hereafter, must, above all things, find a friend in the world to come, in the person of God, the Father of his people.

Friendship, however, though very pleasing and exceedingly blessed, has been the cause of the greatest misery to men when it has been unworthy and unfaithful; for just in proportion as a good friend is sweet, a false friend is full of bitterness. "A faithless friend is sharper than an adder's tooth." It is sweet to repose in some one; but O! how bitter to have that support snapped, and to receive a grievous fall as the effect of your confidence. Fidelity is an absolute necessary in a true friend; we can not rejoice in men unless they will stand faithful to us. Solomon declares that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That friend, I suppose, he never found in the pomps and vanities of the world. He had tried them all, but he found them empty; he passed through all their joys, but he found them "vanity of vanities." Poor Savage spoke from sad experience when he said -

"You'll find the friendship of the world a show!  
Mere outward show! 'Tis like the harlot's tears,  
The statesman's promise, or false patriot's zeal,  
Full of fair seeming, but delusion all."

And so for the most part they are. The world's friendship is ever brittle. Trust to it, and you have trusted a robber; rely upon it, and you have leaned upon a thorn; ay, worse than that, upon a spear which shall pierce you to the soul with agony. Yet Solomon says he had found "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Not in the haunts of his unbridled pleasures, nor in the wanderings of his unlimited resources, but in the pavilion of the Most High, the secret dwelling-place of God, in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, the Friend of sinners.

It is saying a great thing to affirm that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" for the love of brotherhood has produced most valiant deeds. We have read stories of what brotherhood could do, which, we think, could hardly be excelled in the annals of friendship. Timoleon, with his shield, stood over the body of his slain brother, to defend him from the insults of the foe. It was reckoned a brave deed of brotherhood that he should dare the spears of an army in defense of his brother's corpse. And many such instances have there been, in ancient and modern warfare, of the attachment of brethren. There is a story told of a Highland regiment, who, while marching through the Highlands, lost their way; they were overtaken by one of the terrible storms which will sometimes come upon travelers unawares, and blinded by the snow, they lost their way upon the mountains. Well nigh frozen to death, it was with difficulty they could continue their march. One man after another dropped into the snow and disappeared. There were two brothers, however, of the name of Forsythe; one of them fell prostrate on the earth, and would have lain there to die, but his brother, though barely able to drag his own limbs across the white desert, took him on his back, and carried him along, and as others fell one by one, this brave, true-hearted brother carried his loved one on his back, until at last he himself fell down overcome with fatigue, and died. His brother, however, had received such warmth from his body that he was enabled to reach the end of his journey in safety, and so lived. Here we have an instance of one brother sacrificing his life for another. I hope there are some brothers here who would be prepared to do the same if they should ever be brought into the same difficulty. It is saying a great thing, to declare that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is putting that friend first of all in the list of loving ones; for, surely, next to a mother's love, there is, and there ought to be,

no higher affection in the world than the love of a brother to one begotten of the same father, and dandled on the same knee. Those who have "grown in beauty side by side, and filled one house with glee," ought to love one another. And we think there have been many glorious instances and mighty proofs of the love of brethren. Yet, says Solomon, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

To repeat our assertion, we believe that this friend is the blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It shall be ours, first, to prove, this morning, the fact that he sticks closer than a brother; then, as briefly as we can, to show you why he sticks closer than a brother; and then to finish up by giving you some lessons which may be drawn from the doctrine, that Jesus Christ is a faithful Friend.

I. First, then, beloved, we assert that CHRIST IS "A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER." And in order to prove this from facts, we appeal to such of you as have had him for a friend. Will you not, each of you, at once give your verdict, that this is neither more nor less than an unexaggerated truth? He loved you before all worlds; long ere the day star flung his ray across the darkness, before the wing of angel had flapped the unnavigated ether, before aught of creation had struggled from the womb of nothingness, God, even our God, had set his heart upon all his children. Since that time, has he once swerved, has he once turned aside, once changed? No; ye who have tasted of his love and know his grace, will bear me witness, that he has been a certain friend in uncertain circumstances.

"He, near your side hath always stood.  
His loving-kindness. O! how good."

You fell in Adam; did he cease to love you? No; he became the second Adam to redeem you. You sinned in practice, and brought upon your head the condemnation of God; you deserved his wrath and his utter anger; did he then forsake you? No!

"He saw you ruined in the fall,  
Yet loved you notwithstanding all."

He sent his minister after you; you despised him; he preached the gospel in your ears; you laughed at him; you broke God's Sabbath, you despised his Word. Did he then forsake you? No!

"Determined to save, he watched o'er your path,  
Whilst, Satan's blind slave, you sported with death."

And at last he arrested you by his grace, he humbled you, he made you penitent, he brought you to his feet, and he forgave you all your sins. Since then, has he left you? You have often left him; has he ever left you? You have had many trials and troubles; has he ever deserted you? Has he ever turned away his heart, and shut up his bowels of compassion? No, children of God, it is your solemn duty to say "No," and bear witness to his faithfulness. You have been in severe afflictions and in dangerous circumstances; did your friend desert you then? Others have been faithless to you; he that eat bread with you has lifted up his heel against you; but has Christ ever forsaken you? Has there ever been a moment when you could go to him, and say, "Master, thou hast betrayed me?" Could you once, in the blackest hour of your grief, dare to impugn his fidelity? Could you dare to say of him, "Lord, thou hast promised what thou didst not perform?" Will you not bear witness now, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised; all hath come to pass?" And do you fear he will yet forsake you? Ask, then, the bright ones before the throne—"Ye glorified spirits! did Christ forsake you? Ye have passed through Jordan's stream; did he leave you there? Ye have been baptized in the black flood of death; did he there forsake you? Ye have stood before the throne of God; did he then deny you?" And they answered, "No; through all the troubles of our life, in all the bitterness of death, in all the agonies of our expiring moments, and in all the terrors of God's judgment, he hath been with us, 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'" Out of all the millions of God's redeemed, there is not one he hath forsaken. Poor they have been, mean and distressed, but he hath never abhorred their prayer, never turned aside from doing them good. He hath been ever with them.

"For his mercy shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure."

But I shall not longer stay, since I can not prove this to the ungodly, and to the godly it is already proven, for they know it by experience; therefore it is but little necessary that I should do more than just certify the fact that Christ is a faithful friend—a friend in every hour of need and every time of distress.

## II. And now I have to tell you THE REASONS WHY WE MAY DEPEND UPON CHRIST AS BEING A FAITHFUL FRIEND.

There are some things in himself which render it certain that he will stick close to his people.

1. True friendship can only be made between true men. Hearts are the soul of honor. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand, which shall be broken at any convenient season; but if a man have a sincere heart within him, and be true and noble, then we may confide in him. Spenser sings in fine old English verse -

"No, certes can that friendship long endure,  
However gay and goodly be the style,  
That doth ill cause or evil end enure,  
For Vertue is the band that bindeth Harts most sure."

But who can find a stain in the character of Jesus, or who can tarnish his honor? Has there ever been a spot on his escutcheon? Has his flag ever been trampled in the dust? Does he not stand the true witness in heaven, the faithful and just? Is it not declared of him that he is God who can not lie? Have we not found him so up to this moment; and may we not, knowing that he is "Holy, holy, holy Lord," confide in him, that he will stick closer to us than a brother? His goodness is the guaranty of his fidelity; he can not fail us.

2. Faithfulness to us in our faults is a certain sign of fidelity in a friend. You may depend upon that man who will tell you of your faults in a kind and considerate manner. Fawning hypocrites, insidious flatterers, are the sweepings and offal of friendship. They are but the parasites upon that noble tree. But true friends put enough trust in you to tell you openly of



your faults. Give me for a friend the man who will speak honestly of me before my face; who will not tell first one neighbor, and then another, but who will come straight to my house, and say, "Sir, I feel there is such-and-such a thing in you, which, as my brother, I must tell you of." That man is a true friend; he has proved himself to be so; for we never get any praise for telling people of their faults; we rather hazard their dislike; a man will sometimes thank you for it, but he does not often like you any the better. Praise is a thing we all love. I met with a man the other day who said he was impervious to flattery; I was walking with him at the time, and turning round rather sharply, I said, "At any rate, sir, you seem to have a high gift in flattering yourself, for you are really doing so, in saying you are impervious to flattery." "You can not flatter me," he said. I replied, "I can, if I like to try; and perhaps may do so before the day is out." I found I could not flatter him directly, so I began by saying what a fine child that was of his; and he drank it in as a precious draught; and when I praised this thing and that thing belonging to him, I could see that he was very easily flattered; not directly, but indirectly. We are all pervious to flattery; we like the soothing cordial, only it must not be labeled flattery; for we have a religious abhorrence of flattery if it be so called; call it by any other name, and we drink it in, even as the ox drinketh in water. Now, child of God, has Christ every flattered you? Has he not told you of your faults right truly? Has he not pricked your conscience even upon what you thought to gloss over—your little secret sins? Has he not provoked conscience to thunder in your ears notes of terror, because of your misdeeds? Well, then, you may trust him, for he shows that faithfulness which renders a man right trustworthy. Thus I have pointed out to you that there are reasons in himself for which we may trust him.

3. In the next place, there are some things in his friendship which render us sure of not being deceived, when we put our confidence in him. True friendship must not be of hasty growth. As quaint old Master Fuller says: "Let friendship creep gently to a height; if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath." It is even so. I think it was Joanna Baillie said -

"Friendship is no plant of hasty growth.  
Though planted in esteem's deep fixed soil,  
The gradual culture of kind intercourse

Must bring it to perfection."

In vain thou trustest the gourd over thy head, O Jonah; it will not be of much use to thee; it came up in a night, it may wither in a night. It is the strong stiff oak, of ages' growth, which shall abide the tempest; which shall alike put out its wings to shield thee from the sun, and shall afterward find thee a hovel in its heart, if necessary, in its gray old age, when its branches tremble in the blast. Friendship is true when it begins; but we must have a man's friendship long before we can say of him, that he will stick closer than a brother. And how long has Christ loved you? That you can not tell. When the ages were not born he loved you; when this world was an infant, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of mist, he loved you; when the old pyramids had not begun to be builded, his heart was set upon you; and ever since you have been born he has had a strong affection for you. He looked on you in your cradle, and he loved you then; he was affianced to you when you were an infant of a span long, and he has loved you ever since. Some of you I see with gray hairs, some with heads all bald with age; he has loved you up till now, and will he now forsake you? O! no, his friendship is so old that it must last; it has been matured by so many tempests, it has been rooted by so many winds of trouble, that it can not but endure; it must stand. Even as the granite peak of the mountain shall not be melted, because, unlike the snow, it has braved the blast, and borne the heat of the burning sun; it has stood out always, catching in its face every blow from the face of nature, and yet been unmoved and uninjured. It shall last, for it has lasted. But when the elements shall melt, and in a stream of dissolving fire shall run away, then shall Christ's friendship still exist, for it is of older growth than they. He must be "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" for his friendship is a hoary friendship—hoary as his own head, of which it is said, "His head and his hair are white like snow, as white as wool."

4. But note, further, the friendship which lasts does not take its rise in the chambers of mirth, nor is it fed and fattened there. Young lady, you speak of a dear friend whom you acquired last night in a ball-room. Do not, I beseech you, misuse the word; he is not a friend if he was acquired merely there; friends are better things than those which grow in the hot-house of pleasure. Friendship is a more lasting plant than those. You have a friend,

have you? Yes; and he keeps a pair of horses, and has a good establishment. Ah! but your best way to prove your friend is to know that he will be your friend when you have not so much as a mean cottage, and when, houseless and without clothing, you are driven to beg your bread. Thus you would make true proof of a friend. Give me a friend who was born in the winter time, whose cradle was rocked in the storm; he will last. Our fair weather friends shall flee away from us. I had rather have a robin for a friend than a swallow; for a swallow abides with us only in the summer time, but a robin cometh to us in the winter. Those are tight friends that will come the nearest to us when we are in the most distress; but those are not friends who speed themselves away when ill times come. Believer, hast thou reason to fear that Christ will leave you now? Has he not been with you in the house of mourning? You found your friend where men find pearls, "in caverns deep, where darkness dwells;" you found Jesus in your hour of trouble. It was on the bed of sickness that you first learned the value of his name; it was in the hour of mental anguish that you first did lay hold of the hem of his garment; and since then, your nearest and sweetest intercourse has been held with him in the hours of darkness. Well, then, such a friend, proved in the house of sorrow—a friend who gave his heart's blood for you, and let his soul run out in one great river of gore—such a friend never can and never will forsake you; he sticketh closer than a brother.

5. Again, a friend who is acquired by folly is never a lasting friend. Do a foolish thing, and make a man your friend; 'tis but a confederacy in vice, and you will soon discover that his friendship is worthless; the friendship you acquire by doing wrong, you had better be without. O! how many silly friendships there are springing up, the mere fruit of a sentimentalism, having no root whatever, but like the plant of which our Saviour tells us, "It sprang up because it had no depth of earth." Jesus Christ's friendship is not like that; there is no ingredient of folly in it; he loves us discreetly, not winking or conniving at our follies, but instilling into us his wisdom. His love is wise; he hath chosen us according to the counsel of his wisdom; not blindly and rashly, but with all judgment and prudence.

Under this head I may like wise observe, that the friendship of ignorance is not a very desirable one. I desire no man to call himself my friend, if he

doth not know me. Let him love me in proportion to his knowledge of me. If he loves me for the little he knows, when he knoweth more he may cast me aside. "That man," says one, "seems to be a very amiable man." "I am sure I can love him," says another, as he scans his features. Ay, but do not write "friend" yet; wait a wee bit, until you know more of him; just see him, examine him, try him, test him, and not till then enter him on the sacred list of friends. Be friendly to all, but make none your friends until they know you, and you know them. Many a friendship born in the darkness of ignorance, hath died suddenly in the light of a better acquaintance with each other. You supposed men to be different from what they were, and when you discovered their real character you disregarded them. I remember one saying to me, "I have great affection for you, sir," and he mentioned a certain reason. I replied, "My dear fellow, your reason is absolutely false; the very thing you love me for, I am not, and hope I never shall be." And so I said, "I really can not accept your friendship, if it be founded upon a misunderstanding of what I may have said." But our Lord Jesus never can forsake those whom once he loves, because he can discover nothing in us worse than he knew, for he knew all about us beforehand. He saw our leprosy, and yet he loved us; he knew our deceitfulness and unbelief, and yet he did press us to his bosom; he knew what poor fools we were, and yet he said he would never leave us nor forsake us. He knew that we should rebel against him and despise his counsel often times; he knew that even when we loved him our love would be cold and languid, but he loved for his own sake. Surely, then, he will stick closer than a brother.

6. Yet again, friendship and love, to be real, must not lie in words, but in deeds. The friendship of bare compliment is the fashion of this age, because this age is the age of deceit. The world is the great house of sham. Go where you may in London, sham is staring you in the face; there are very few real things to be discovered. I allude not merely to tricks in business, adulterations in food, and such like. Deception is not confined to the tradesman's shop. It prevails throughout society; the sanctuary is not exempt. The preacher adopts a sham voice. You hardly ever hear a man speak in the pulpit in the same way he would speak in the parlor. Why, I hear my brethren, sometimes, when they are at tea or dinner, speak in a very comfortable decent sort of English voice, but when they

get into their pulpits they adopt a sanctimonious tone, and fill their mouths with inflated utterance, or else whine most pitifully. They degrade the pulpit by pretending to honor it; speaking in a voice which God never intended any mortal to have. This is the great house of sham; and such little things show which way the wind blows. You leave your card at a friend's house; that is an act of friendship—the card! I wonder whether, if he were hard up for cash, you would leave your banker's book! You write "My dear sir," "Yours very truly;" it is a sham; you do not mean it. "Dear!" that is a sacred word; it ought to be used to none but those you regard with affection; but we tolerate falsehoods now, as if they were truths; and we call them courtesies. Courtesies they may be; but untruths they are in many cases. Now, Christ's love lieth not in words, but in deeds. He saith not, "My dear people;" but he let his heart out, and we could see what that was. He doth not come to us, and say, "Dearly beloved" simply; but he hangs upon the cross, and there we read "Dearly beloved" in red letters. He does not come to us with the kisses of his lips first—he giveth us blessings with both his hands; he giveth himself for us, and then he giveth himself to us. Trust no complimentary friend; rely upon the man who giveth you real tokens worth your having, who does for you deeds to show the truthfulness of his heart. Such a friend—and such is Jesus—"sticketh closer than a brother."

7. Once more, and I shall not weary you, I trust. A purchased friend will never last long. Give to a man nineteen times, and deny him the twentieth, and he shall hate you; for his love sprang only from your gifts. The love which I could buy for gold I would sell for dross; the friendship that I could buy for pearls I would dispense with for pebbles; it were of no value, and therefore the sooner lost the better. But O believer, Christ's love was unpurchased love. Thou broughtest him no present. Jacob said, when his sons went to Egypt, "Take the man a present, a little oil, a little balm, a few nuts and almonds;" but you took Christ no presents. When you came to him you said,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

You did not even promise that you would love him; for you had such a faithless heart, you durst not say so. You asked him to make you love

him; that was the most you could do. He loved you for nothing at all—simply because he would love you. Well, that love which so lived on nothing but its own resources, will not starve through the scantiness of your returns; the love which grew in such a rocky heart as this, will not die for want of soil. That love which sprang up in the barren desert, in your unirrigated soul, will never, never die for want of moisture; it must live, it can not expire. Jesus must be "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

8. Shall I stay to urge more reasons? I may but mention one other, namely, this—that there can not, by any possibility, arise any cause which could make Christ love us less. You say, how is this? One man loves his friend, but he on a sudden grows rich, and now he says I am a greater man than I used to be, I forget my old acquaintances. But Christ can grow no richer; he is as rich as he can be, infinitely so. He loves you now; then it can not be possible that he will by reason of an increase in his own personal glory forsake you, for everlasting glories now crown his head; he can never be more glorious and great, and therefore he will love you still. Sometimes, on the other hand, one friend grows poorer, and then the other forsakes him; but you never can grow poorer than you are, for you are "a poor sinner and nothing at all" now; you have nothing of your own; all you have is borrowed, all given you by him. He can not love you, then, less, because you grow poorer; for poverty that hath nothing is at least as poor as it can be, and can never sink lower in the scale. Christ, therefore, must love thee for all thy nakedness and all thy poverty.

"But I may prove sinful," sayest thou. Yes, but thou canst not be more so than he foreknew thou wouldst be; and yet he loved thee with the foreknowledge of all thy sins. Surely, then, when it happens it will occasion no surprise to him; he knew it all beforehand, and he can not swerve from his love; no circumstance can possibly arise that ever will divide the Saviour from his love to his people, and the saint from his love to his Saviour. He is "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

III. Now, then, AN INFERENCE TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS. Lavater says, "The qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies; cold friends, cold enemies, half friends, half enemies, fervid enemies, warm friends." Knowing this to be a truth, I have often congratulated myself,

when my enemies have spoken fiercely against me. Well, I have thought, "My friends love me hard and fast; let my enemies be as hot as they please; it only indicates that the friends are proportionately firm in affection. Then we draw this inference, that if Christ sticks close, and he is our friend, then our enemies will stick close, and never leave us till we die. O, Christian, because Christ sticks close, the devil will stick close too; he will be at you and with you; the dog of hell will never cease his howlings, till you reach the other side of Jordan; no place in this world is out of bow-shot of that great enemy; till you have crossed the stream his arrows can reach you, and they will. If Christ gave himself for you, the devil will do all he can to destroy you; if Christ has been long-suffering to you, Satan will be persevering, in hopes that Christ may forget you; he will strive after you, and strive until he shall see you safely landed in heaven. But be not disappointed: the louder Satan roars, the more proof you shall have of Christ's love. "Give me," said old Rutherford, "give me a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one; for sleeping devils make me slumber, but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master." O! be glad, then, if the world rant at thee, if thy foes attack thee fiercely. Christ is just as full of love to thee as they are of hatred. Therefore,

"Be firm and strong;  
Be grace thy shield and Christ thy song."

And now I have a question to ask: that question I ask of every man and every woman in this place, and of every child too—Is Jesus Christ your friend? Have you a friend at court—at heaven's court? Is the judge of quick and dead your friend? Can you say that you love him, and has he ever revealed himself in the way of love to you? Dear hearer, do not answer that question for thy neighbor; answer it for thyself. Peer or peasant, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, this question is for each of you; therefore, ask it: Is Christ my friend? Did you ever consider that question? Have you ever asked it? O! to be able to say "Christ is my friend," is one of the sweetest things in the world. A man who had lived much in sin, one day casually entered a place of worship. Before the sermon, this hymn was sung -

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

The next day the man was met by an acquaintance who asked him how he liked the sermon. Said he, "I do not know, but there were two or three words that took such a hold of me that I did not know what to do with myself. The minister read that hymn, 'Jesus, lover of my soul.' Ah!" said he, though he was by no means a religious man, "to be able to say that, I would give up all I have got! But do you think," he asked "that Jesus ever will be the lover of such a man as I am? 'Jesus, lover of my soul!' O! could I say it." And then he buried his head in his hands and wept. I have every reason to fear that he went back to his sin, and was the same afterwards as before. But, you see, he had conscience enough to let him know how valuable it was to have Christ for his lover and his friend. Ah! rich man, thou hast many friends. There be some here who have toiled for their country's good, and deserve a meed of honor at their country's hands, who, for one mistake—or what, perhaps, was a mistake—have been neglected by too many who once appeared to be their most trusty adherents. O! put no confidence, ye great men and ye rich, in the adherence of your friends. David said in his hast, "All men are liars;" you may one day have to say it at your leisure. And O! ye kind and affectionate hearts, who are not rich in wealth, but who are rich in love—and that is the world's best wealth—put this golden coin among your silver ones, and it will sanctify them all. Get Christ's love shed abroad in your hearts, and your mother's love, your daughter's love, your husband's love, your wife's love, will become more sweet than ever. The love of Christ cast not out the love of relatives, but it sanctifies our loves, and makes them sweeter far. Remember, dear hearer, the love of men and women is very sweet; but all must pass away; and what will you do, if you have no wealth but the wealth that fadeth, and no love but the love which dies, when death shall come? O! to have the love of Christ! You can take that across the river of death with you; you can wear it as your bracelet in heaven, and set it up as a seal upon your hand; for his love is "strong as death and mightier than the grave." Good old Bishop Beveridge, I think it was, when dying, did not know his best friends. Said one, "Bishop Beveridge, do you know me?" Said he, "Who are you?" and when the name was mentioned, he said, "No." "But don't you know your wife, Bishop?" "What is her name?" said he. Said she, "I am your wife." "I did not know I had got one," said he. Poor old man! his faculties all failed him. At last one stooped down and whispered, "Do you know the Lord



Jesus Christ?" "Yes," said he, making an effort to speak, "I have known him these forty years, and I never can forget him." It is marvelous how memory will hold the place with Jesus, when it will with no one else; and it is equally marvelous, that,

"When all created things are dry, Christ's fullness is the same."

My dear hearers, do think of this matter. O that you might get Christ for your friend; he will never be your friend while you are self-righteous; he will never be your friend while you live in sin. But do you believe yourselves guilty? Do you desire to leave off sin? Do you want to be saved? Do you desire to be renewed? Then let me tell you, my Master loves you! Poor, weak, and helpless worms, my Master's heart is full of love to you; his eyes at this moment are looking down with pity on you. "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" He now bids me tell you that he died for all of you who confess yourselves to be sinners, and feel it. He bids me say to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He tells me to proclaim salvation full and free; full, needing nothing of yours to help it; free, needing nothing of yours to buy it.

"Come ye thirsty, come and welcome;  
God's free bounty glorify:  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh -  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

There is nothing I feel that I fail so much in as addressing sinners. O! I wish I could cry my heart out, and preach my heart out, to you and at you.

"Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,  
To thee let sinners fly,  
And take the bliss thy love imparts;  
And drink, and never die."

Farewell, with this one thought—we shall never all of us meet together here again. It is a very solemn thought, but according to the course of nature and the number of deaths, if all of you were willing to come here

next Sabbath morning, it is not at all likely that all of you would be alive; one out of this congregation will be sure to have gone the way of all flesh. Farewell, thou that are appointed to death; I know not where thou art—yon strong man, or yon tender maiden with the hectic flush of consumption on her cheek. I know not who is appointed to death; but I do now most solemnly take my farewell of such an one. Farewell, poor soul; and is it farewell for ever? Shall we meet in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed; or do I bid you farewell now for ever? I do solemnly bid farewell to you for ever, if you live and die without Christ. But I can not bear that dreary thought; and I therefore say, poor sinner! stop and consider—consider thy ways, and now "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "Why will ye die?" "Why will ye die?" "Why will ye die?" Ah! ye can not answer that question. May God help you to answer it in a better fashion, by saying, "Here Lord!

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
O Son of God I come to thee.

I trust my soul in thy kind hands." The Lord bless you all for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## The Faithful Saying

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. - 1 Timothy 1:15

It is worthy of notice that Paul, in the passage before us, as indeed in all his writings, exhibits great sensitiveness with regard to sin. The sin which he had himself committed against the Lord Jesus, looked at from some points of view, might have been greatly extenuated on account of the honest, although mistaken, motive which lay at the bottom of it; but Paul, after allowing for his ignorance, declares that of sinners he had been chief, and that he obtained mercy that in him, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. He describes himself as having been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," and he is evidently lost in grateful astonishment that he should have been saved. This godly sensitiveness with regard to sin was associated in, the apostle's mind with an equally vivid sense of the freeness and richness of divine grace. That Christ died, not for the righteous, but for the guilty, is the great thought which is upon his mind, and he has no hesitancy whatever in declaring it, and in speaking most boldly concerning the exceedingly abundant grace of God in forgiving sin. The union of these two feelings in Paul is, by no means an unusual occurrence among human minds, for you will generally find that the preacher who is most clear in his witness that salvation is by grace, is also the man to whom sin is exceeding sinful. Indeed, all those who prize grace most are men who feel most sorrow concerning their transgressions. All systems of theology, except that which is founded upon free grace, in some way or other take off the edge of guilt. If they try to compromise the business, and make salvation to be partly a matter of human effort and human merit, and partly a work of divine grace, they are sure in the process to conceal the exceeding iniquity of sin. Man is made out to be a poor, weak creature, victimised by a law too rigid for his frailty. It is represented that he has a right to mercy, and a great uproar is made if we deny him any such right; and much anger is felt if we declare

that mercy is the sovereign prerogative of God, and may be exercised at his own absolute discretion. Rebellion against divine election is often founded on the idea that the sinner has a sort of right to be saved, and this is to deny the full desert of sin. You will find that he who sets forth free grace as the sole fountain and source of human salvation, and declares that sin is pardoned and put away freely by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, is most plain and severe in denouncing sin with all his might, and most tender in sorrowing over his own personal iniquities. I shall preach grace to the chief of sinners at this time without reserve, and without guarding my words in any respect whatever; I shall fling the big net of the gospel right into the sea, let it go where it may; but do not, therefore, conclude that we think little of sin. Far from it; it is to us the sum of all abominations, and the fire of hell; and this I trust shall be apparent all along, though for the present we shall confine our thoughts to the greatness of the grace of God, since to that subject our text summons us.

The apostle Paul had been describing himself and his sin; he confessed that he was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, "but," saith he, "I obtained mercy." His was an instance of a sinner saved, and he now declares that his case was a type of all others, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The tendency is to set up the apostle as an exceptional convert, but he corrects the idea by asserting the grand doctrine that the Savior's errand was to those who are guilty and undeserving, among whom he counted himself to be the chief. This coming of Christ to save sinners as sinners he regards as a truth so well known in the Christian church that it had come to be a saying, "familiar in their mouths as household words." It had become a sort of proverb with Christians that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, and Paul says that it might justly be received as a proverb among all nations, for it was worthy of universal acceptance from the weight of its meaning, the importance of its subject, and the divine authority with which it was sealed. Moreover that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is so true that it is not merely a saying, but a faithful saying, worthy of all confidence, being as sure as the truth of God himself. Pass it round, ye Christians, repeat it among yourselves without the slightest hesitancy or question; let it be a proverb among you, a fact undoubted, a truth

unquestionable. For the salvation of sinners Jesus came into the world. He contemplated the saving of no other sort of persons but those who are sinful.

I. Our first observation from this statement will be THAT SINNERS ARE IN AN AWFUL CONDITION. A man who needs saving is evidently in a very undesirable state. Now, every man and woman among you this day who has not been saved by Christ Jesus needs saving. You have kept the law, you say, from your youth up, and what do you lack? My answer is that you need saving, notwithstanding your fine ideas about yourselves. But you have been religious also from your earliest recollection, and you do not know that you have ever committed anything very wrong. Dear friend, despite your morality and outward religiousness, we are compelled to tell you that you need saving just as surely as the unchaste or the profane. Despite all that you say in your own favor, you have broken the law of God, and you are a sinner, and as a sinner you are in a terrible position, from which nothing can save you but the hand of God.

For, first, it a grave peril to be a sinner. You have broken your Maker's command: is not that a calamity? You have neglected his will, which is holy and just and good, is not that a crying evil? To have a heart which does not choose the right, but which leans to evil, is not that ruinous? To have a mind which does not love God, but cares for itself more than for its Maker and Lord, is not that to be in a diseased state of soul? You are not in a fit state to judge, but holy beings think it so. The polluting influence of sin upon the soul is the direst of all mischiefs, the worst of all destructions: it is spiritual death. From the defiling presence of sin every man needs to be saved.

Moreover, the thrice holy God hates sin with a hatred scarcely to be conceived by any of us, since we have lost the sensitiveness of perfect purity. Whatsoever things are impure, unchaste, untrue, unloving, unrighteous, God loathes with all the infinity of his perfect nature. Doubtless sin is a grief to godly men, but it is far more obnoxious to the Lord our God. "The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth." "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." The Lord hath fierce indignation against everything that is evil: this is no arbitrary trait of his character, he does not choose to be angry with this or

angry with that without a cause, but from the very necessity of his divine nature he must delight in everything that is good, and he must abhor everything that is evil. O sinner, what a plight you are in since there is in you and upon you the sin which God cannot endure. What must your position be, for it is written concerning the Lord, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity," and such are you? Can you bear the thought?

Furthermore, you are condemned, and before long this will be made evident to all intelligent beings. There cometh upon the swift wings of time a day in which the Judge of all the earth will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and every transgression and iniquity shall receive its just recompense of reward. It is not possible that it should be otherwise, for there must come a reaping to every sowing. Idle thoughts and idle words, and evil deeds must bear their fruit, and hence every sinner is in danger of eternal fire. As surely as the righteous through Christ shall go into everlasting happiness, so shall the ungodly depart into everlasting punishment, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And this may happen to any unpardoned sinner before he has heard the next word which I am about to utter: he may find himself shut out from all hope, eternally shut out from God ere yonder clock shall strike. This is a perilous condition for an immortal soul! Yet every sinner not saved by Christ is in this condition!

To this may be added the further reflection that the sinner is quite unable of himself to escape either from sin itself, or from the wrath which he has aroused, or from the punishment which is appointed for his transgressions. What canst thou do, O Ethiopian, to change thy skin? O leopard, how canst thou remove thy spots? And if, being evil, thou couldst learn to do good, how couldst thou put away the sin of the past? By what process couldst thou take out the stains of former years? Do not the sins of thy youth lie in thy bones even to this day? and they must be there for ever unless the strong hand of Christ shall take them away. One of old cried, "O generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" and the question may well be asked of the most cunning and crafty of sinners. If ye neglect the great salvation, which it shall be our joy to preach to you to-day, how shall ye escape from the wrath to come? Shut up, then, as within a wall of fire, with that fire already burning within his

soul in the form of evil lustings, and drawing nearer to him from without every day he lives, the sinner is in a terrible position indeed. O unforgiven man, what thinkest thou of this?

Perhaps that position may be all the better defined if I remind you of the way by which a sinner has to be rescued from it. There was no hope for any sinner unless the Son of God himself should save him; you may safely measure the depth of the danger by the glory of the person of him who undertook to deliver us from it. It is the Son of God whom angels worship who has come to save sinners. It must be a deep destruction from which only God himself can rescue man. And though he were the Son of God, yet when he came, observe how he had to be equipped, and from his equipment learn the sternness of the task. He must be Jesus-a Savior; and then he must also be Christ,-anointed for the work: he must come with a commission from God, with authority divine, and the Spirit of God must rest upon him to qualify him for the great undertaking. For the text saith not that Jesus came into the world, but Christ Jesus, the anointed Savior, came that he might save. If this equipment was needed, then surely the state of man was a grievous one. Note also that even Christ Jesus could not save men had he stayed in heaven, he came into the world to save sinners. The Fall was so grievous that he must come right down into the place of our ruin; he must come to the dunghill that he might lift us out of it. God sat in heaven and said, "Let there be light," and the darkness fled before him, but he could not sit in heaven and save sinners: he must needs come into the world to do so; down into this polluted creation the eternal Creator must himself descend. Lo, there in Bethlehem's manger he sleeps, and on a woman's breast he hangs! He cannot save sinners, so great is their ruin, unless he becomes incarnate and takes upon himself our nature. And being here, think how dreadful must be the ruin when we see that he cannot return, saying, "It is finished," until first of all he dies. That sacred head must be crowned with thorns, those eyes must be closed in the darkness of the tomb, that body must be pierced even to its heart, and then must lie a chill, cold corpse in the grave, ere man can be redeemed; and all that shame, and suffering, and death were but the outer shell of what the Savior suffered, for he passed under divine wrath and bare a load such as would have crushed the whole race of men had they been left to bear it. O sinner, you are

awfully lost, you are infinitely lost, since it needs an infinite Savior to present the atonement of his own body in order to save sinners from their sin. This is the first truth then which is included in this faithful saying, may the Holy Ghost write it on our hearts.

II. The second observation, which clearly contains the very bowels of the text, is this, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME TO SAVE MEN AS SINNERS. His salvation is meant for men who are sinners, and for none else. Somebody says, "But is not that a plain matter of fact?" It is, but it is a fact scarcely ever realized: indeed its real meaning is not known until God the Holy Ghost reveals it. A great many persons have a notion that Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable people, who if they have done any wrong have repented of it, and have made things square. He came, according to them, to save persons who do their very best by attendance at worship, and taking the sacrament, and giving to the poor, and paying their way, and saying their prayers. These are doing all they can to get right, and keep right, and surely they will be saved, so men talk. Their theory of salvation is very mixed, but it comes to this, that the gospel is for good people. They do not quite do without Jesus Christ,-he comes in somewhere or other; but their religion is a kind of mangle-mangle,-partly they save themselves and partly Christ saves them, and between the two they are not saved at all. Their vain fancy is that, though they cannot do quite as much as they ought, Jesus comes in as an excellent make-weight, and turns the scale in their favor. That is the notion of the bulk of mankind, and in many places of worship you may hear something very like it. Too much of the preaching of the present day mingles the old covenant with the new: you do not know whether after all you are going to be saved by merit or mercy, whether Christ came to save sinners or the righteous. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound.

It is far too generally supposed that there must be something to recommend the sinner to God, and that God could not send his Son to save men whom he views in the base and horrible character of sinners. "Surely," say the enemies of free grace, "he must have regard to their repentance or to something which he either sees or foresees in them." That he should see man to be evil and only evil, and yet visit him in mercy for mercy's sake, seems hard for the carnal heart to believe. Therefore,



lest we should be misunderstood, we lay down this straight line, that Christ did not come into the world to save anybody but sinners, and he viewed those sinners as sinners and nothing more: he did not view them as repenting sinners, nor as believing sinners, nor as humble sinners, nor as sanctified sinners, nor anything else but sinners, and under that character he contemplated their salvation. The text saith nothing more and nothing less than that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"; there is not a qualifying word.

It is clear that sinners only are the objects of salvation, for none but sinners need saving, and if there had been no sinners there would certainly have been no saving and no Savior. Who wants saving but a lost man? Who wants a Savior but a man who through his sin has ruined himself? The very term "Savior" and the very name "Jesus" imply that salvation work is for sinners. We have some sinecure offices in our Government: I have heard of a Master of the Buckhounds, who never mastered a buckhound in his life; but my Lord Jesus holds no sinecure in his office of Savior, for there are plenty of sinners, and he is always saving them. If sinners are not contemplated by the plan of grace, then the office of Savior is obsolete; but this can never be, since he is Jesus Christ, the anointed Savior, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Nor would the gospel be required for any but sinners, since none but the guilty need glad tidings of pardon and grace. If man can be secure under the law let him keep under the law: if the law can justify, let the law justify. What need of a second system to take away the first unless through the weakness of man the first system shall be found to be of none effect? No, verily the law is glorious; Mount Sinai shineth resplendently, and verily perfection would have been by the law if it could have been kept by mankind. No need for another glory or excellency, for the first would have sufficed if men had not been sinners; for the law is holy, and just, and good. The very sound of that word "gospel" is lost, and its sweetness dissipated in the midnight air unless there be sinners, for they above all men need glad tidings of a Savior born among men.

Salvation must be for sinners, for to them only can mercy ever come. If I am brought before a court of justice, and I plead "Not guilty," and the magistrate replies that he will have mercy upon me, I repel his

observation with indignation; I want no mercy of him; I am innocent. Let him give me justice, and that is all I ask. It is an insult to the innocent to offer him mercy; and therefore unless man is guilty God cannot show him mercy. Mercy has no room to bestow her blessings of amnesty and pardon till first of all guilt is admitted. To the sinner forgiveness can come, but to none else.

Moreover, the characters whom Jesus came to save are always so described that they must be sinners. Sometimes we read of them as being "dead in trespasses and sins," and it is written, "And you hath he quickened." Sometimes they are represented as enemies: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." They are called aliens, strangers, wandering sheep, prodigal sons, and so forth; and all these imply distance from God by sin. Sometimes they are represented as debtors, and when they have nothing to pay he freely forgives them all their debt. All the descriptions of persons for whom the mercy of God is intended bear upon their forefront the notion of their being sinners, and our Lord himself saith, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The coming of Christ has no bearing towards the ninety-and- nine that went not astray, except that they are left where they were. The Good Shepherd comes after the lost sheep and only after the lost sheep, and if you can prove that you are not a lost sheep then you have proved that Christ never came to save you. The whole of his errand looks this way, he came to save sinners and only sinners.

Look now at what he did when he was here. I will only ask you to consider the crowning act of his work, when he hung upon the cross. What mean those bruising of the scourge? What mean those deep furrows on his blessed back? What mean those pierced hands and feet? They mean this, that he is suffering on account of human sin. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Self-righteous men and women, what has the cross to do with you? You carry it on your bosoms, and make an ornament and a plaything of it, and that is all it is to you. None but the guilty can know the true meaning of the cross, and derive

benefit therefrom. For them the dreadful tree bears the precious fruit of substitutionary sacrifice, and peace and pardon through the atoning blood; but to those who are not sinners the cross is a barren tree. O Christ of God, only a sinner can know thy worth. A saint may admire thee in thy glory, but a sinner trusts thee in thy shameful death, for thou art meant for sinners. "He gave himself for our sins,"-for what else could he give himself and yield himself unto death?

Besides that, where is Jesus gone now but to heaven? And what is he doing? When he went to heaven he received gifts for men, and, listen to this word!- "Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He pleads to-day, but for whom is he an advocate? He made intercession for the transgressors. Prove that you are not rebellious nor transgressors, and there are neither gifts nor pleadings for you, for the whole drift of what he is now doing is towards the sinful.

Look you, sirs, at the legacy which our Lord has left us. He has left us the Holy Spirit, and what for? The Holy Spirit is here to convince of sin. Of what use would he be to those who have no sin? He is here to regenerate, but of what use would he be to those who are so good by nature that they do not need a change of heart. He is here that he may work in us repentance and faith, but of what use would those be to persons who have no sin to repent of, and no need to believe in a Savior? The whole plan and scheme of redemption contains in it marks and evidences clear and palpable that it is meant for sinners, for guilty men, for such and such alone. All else that there is in man beside his sinnership is not truly his. If I were to preach to-day to sinners with some qualification, I should not be preaching the gospel in its fullest reach. If, for instance, I were to say that Christ Jesus came into the world to save humble sinners, that would be a clipping of the truth; for if any sinner be humble, that humility is not natural to him, but already the work of salvation has commenced in his being made humble. Jesus Christ died to give humility to sinners as well as to save them when they are humble. But surely we must believe in Christ? Yes, and there is salvation for believing sinners; but no man believes in Christ until that faith is given to him from above, and Christ came not to save sinners who make themselves believe, but to save sinners by giving them faith. He not only saves sinners when they repent,

but he goes lower down, for he is exalted on high to give repentance as well as remission of sins. But did he not die for penitent sinners? Assuredly; but he died for them when they were impenitent, and therefore it is that they come to repentance. He who would come to Jesus must come as a sinner, and never think of pleading any sort of goodness or qualification; for "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." SINNERS-write that in capitals, and set it by itself, for it is the whole of the description, and no one may dare to add thereto. Away with your human addition of sensible sinners, and so on; the text is not cumbered and spoiled by any such qualifying words.

III. This leads me, in the third place, to say THAT UPON THIS POINT SPECIAL CLEARNESS IS REQUIRED. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as sinners must always be kept clearly before the human mind; because, as I have said, man does not like the notion, and if you put it baldly and boldly he cavils at it, and waxes wrathful. Hear him mutter about immoral doctrine and encouraging sin. Hear it, and marvel at the audacity which makes a guilty rebel express anxiety about the morals of his God. A set of criminals are shut up in a condemned cell to be hanged, and a message comes that the king freely forgives them, and they exclaim that they will not accept mercy because it might encourage immorality. Morality! What have these lawbreakers to do with that? Surely they are repeating the devil's hypocrisy when he rebuked sin. They are living in sin and yet pretend to be the guardians of universal justice. Vile hypocrisy! When I have known the pens which have written against the gospel under the pretense of advancing morality, I have pitied the paper which they defiled with their black words. Pleaders for morality! Why, men known to be debauched and drunken are often the very loudest talkers against free grace, and the greatest sticklers for morality. Let them go and wash in Jordan seven times and be clean themselves before coming out in that fashion. It is for you and me, being guilty, to get mercy first, and then talk of what we will do in the matter of morality. Know ye not that the man who believeth not in Christ is condemned already? Shall a condemned man cavil at mercy's freeness? On your knees, sir, and plead guilty before the Most High, for so only shall you find grace.

How often are we told in sermons that we are in a state of probation: as if we had to do something by which we should prove our worthiness, and were still in a position in which we might or might not be condemned. My hearers, you are not in a state of probation, no, not one of you. If you are saved, you are saved, and if you are not saved you are lost. You are forgiven, or else you are "condemned already"; and, unless Jesus Christ saves you, you will abide in condemnation for ever and ever. The die is cast, man, and cast against you! You are condemned, and in the book of God so it stands. Christ Jesus came to save the condemned, and blessed shall you be if you are willing to take up the condemned position at this moment, and accept the grace which he has brought for sinners. I say, then, let the truth be made clear, because man will muddle it if he can.

Mark you, if this doctrine is not made very clear you will not lead sinners to look to Christ. If I preach that Jesus Christ died to save men of tender heart, what will be the result of the sermon? Every thoughtful hearer will look to see whether he has a tender heart. Is that a desirable result?

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,"

but there is no life by looking into our own hearts. Suppose I preach certain marks and evidences as tokens of the men whom Christ came to save, then each man will look to see whether he has those tokens within himself: and that is precisely the thing which we do not want men to do, for we desire them to look right away from themselves to Christ alone. If they should imagine that they find some good thing within themselves they will make it the real basis of their hope, and that will be an error of the gravest kind. Sinner, all the hope you can ever have lies in him who died upon the tree. As for yourself, settle it in your mind that you are as bad as bad can be. Give over all hope from your own doings, willings, feelings, and resolves, and no more expect to obtain comfort from your own nature than to find fire in the midst of a rock of ice. Look right away from self to Christ, and Christ alone, for this is the way of salvation.

When a man comes to Christ as a sinner he has taken the safest way. If I say to myself, "Jesus came to save me because I am a believing sinner, or a repenting sinner, or a humbled sinner," then I have to ask the question, "How about my repentance, my humbling, are they genuine?" My

foundation shakes and my trust fails me, because it rests on myself; but when I trust in Jesus because he is the sinner's Savior, and because I am a sinner, then I am beyond doubtful questions.

This also is a constant ground to go upon. Imagine a man who is deeply in debt saying to his creditors, "I am in a terrible fix, but I can promise you ten shillings in the pound." Very well; they accept it. Is he not at ease? Let me whisper in your ear,-he is not worth twopence in all the world. Is he clear? Oh no. He tries a little trading, and puts off the hour of payment, but again he has to call his creditors together, and he confesses, "I am sorry I cannot manage the ten shillings, but I will try to scrape together two-and- sixpence: will you take that?" Yes, they will take the half-crown. Is he not out of his difficulties now? No, he is not one inch nearer, for he is not worth a penny, Again he summons his creditors, and protests that he has been under a mistake, but he could arrange to pay sixpence. Is he not at rest now? Not a bit of it, because he has not a farthing, and he can no more pay sixpence in the pound than the whole twenty shillings. He is absolutely a pauper. What is the best thing for him to do? Why, to own the truth and say, "Here I am, I have no assets whatever: I am in debt over head and ears, and I have not a single penny to pay with. Do whatever you like with me. Put me in prison if you like: sell these bones and the rags which cover them; but there is the truth, you cannot get anything out of me, because I have nothing." Now, if the creditors give him a clear discharge, he is safe and at rest, which he never was while he had even a sixpence to pay. Now ye needy sinners, be wise and go to the Lord in that penniless style and you shall have your debt frankly forgiven. Remember the parable of the two debtors, and the truth which it teaches.

"But let our debts be what they may,  
However great or small,  
As soon as we have nought to pay,  
Our Lord forgives us all."

Assuredly, there is nothing like going to the bottom of a thing, and knowing the worst of your case. I have a friend who had a bad knee, something ailed it, he could not tell what. The doctors blistered, and poulticed, and did a great deal to it, and showed their skill by making bad worse, but they assured him that the knee was not out of joint, but would

come all right by outward applications. Under such professional treatment the patient became quite lame. At last he went to a renowned bone-setter; and as soon as he saw the joint, he said, "I tell you, sir, your bone is out." "Impossible," said he, "the doctors have never hinted at that." "Yes, it is; or if it is not so, we will make it so, and then set it right." With a terrible pull the operator seemed to drag the bone out of its place, and then it flew back again, into its socket, and the man felt that all was right. "Now," said the bone-setter, "walk across the room," and he did so at once. There is nothing like knowing that the bone is out, for then it can be set; but while we understate the mischief we shall not find an effectual cure. Reckon on the worst, and you will not be deceived. If there is something good about you, and you begin trusting in it, that something good will grow less and less, like the twenty shillings which came down to sixpence and ended with nothing; but if you throw up all legal hope and say, "I am a sinner, and if I am saved it must be entirely through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and I accept Christ to save me as a sinner,"- that is a sure and constant foundation to rest upon. Beware of the slippery belief that Christ died for you as long as you are humble, or as long as you are this or that; for, if you talk in that fashion, instead of trusting in Christ you are trusting in your own humility, your own feelings, and there is no soundness in your faith.

Often, beloved, do I feel that this way of coming to Christ, as a sinner, is the only available one for me. I have preached the gospel, not without zeal for the truth, and have tried to consecrate my whole being to my Lord's service, but times out of mind I would not give a brass farthing for all that I have done or felt or been, but I am glad to sink the whole in oblivion, and come to Christ and say, "Save me, for I have sinned." What I rejoice to do I feel sure that my brethren have to do also, and it will be your safety to be so doing continually.

Why, brethren, this doctrine must be true because it glorifies Christ. If Christ comes to save men who meet him half way with their prayers and tears and believings and doings, and he only saves them because of these things, then salvation is half of man and half of Christ; but if it be so that Jesus comes to save sinners, and begins a work in them when they are in their nakedness and filthiness and spiritual death, oh, then, free grace

doth the more abound, and the crown sits securely on the royal head of him who is anointed to be both a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance as well as remission of sins.

I want to say also that the recognition of the truth that Christ came into the world to save men as sinners is essential to salvation. You ask me, "How so?" I reply, "When a man comes before God simply as a sinner he is then upon the line of truth." All the while he was claiming to be this and that, which was good, he was on a false tack; but when he says, "Lord, I have broken thy law, I have done the things I ought not to have done, and have left undone the things that I ought to have done; and if I am saved it must be by thy grace alone"; he is now speaking according to truth. It is something to bring a sinner round to the truth. When he has come to that, he will go further in the right direction. Do you not see that line is doing homage to the law of God, for he confesses that he has broken it, and deserves punishment? Thus the man is already honoring the law of God in his heart: his salvation has begun. Now he does honor to God himself, for he bows before the Most High and sues for mercy. He is already saved from presumption. God must be King, and the man is willing that he should be. even though he himself should be condemned. And now he reads that God's salvation "comes to the guilty," and he cries, "I am guilty; I accept thy mercy." That done, he loves the Lord God for mercy received. Why, the man is being saved before our eyes. He was the enemy of God before, but now a sense of free mercy causes him to love and fear the Lord. The next thing he says is, "Have I been so freely forgiven all my transgressions, not because of anything I was or felt or did, but out of free mercy? Then, Lord, I will strive to avoid every sin, if thou wilt help me." See, his mind is becoming pure, and by the operation of the same blessed truth upon him he will ultimately be perfected and stand before the throne complete, and what think you will be his song? He will join with all the saints and sing, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is nothing like free grace to change the human heart. You may tell a man what he is and what he ought to be, and he will remain unmoved; but tell him that God meets him as a lost, guilty, and condemned sinner, and that simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, he blots out all his sins and transgressions and accepts him through Christ Jesus; why, that makes



the man's heart leap within him for joy, and then he begins to say, "Cleanse me, O God, from this hateful sin, for I love thee because of thy wondrous love to me." Thus Jesus Christ's coming to save sinners makes the point of our being sinners a very essential one in the matter of our being saved from the power of sin.

IV. I close by saying, let us, dear friends, feel THAT IT WILL BE WISE TO ACCEPT AT ONCE THE TEACHING OF THE TEXT. Let us on the spot confess our sinnership. Whether you have been saved or not, come over again to Jesus. Take with you words and say unto him, "We have sinned." Confess your sinnership. Does it trouble you to do so? Have not you abundant evidence of it? Do not confess it with your mouth only, but with your heart. Let me tell you sinners are very rare things: you cannot find them dead or alive. If you go into a cemetery with an intelligent child, the first question it will ask will be, "Papa, where do they bury the sinners? These are all good people who are buried here." Living sinners are equally scarce. We are all surprisingly good, and though we say we are sinners, that is a part of our goodness, for it shows how very humble we are. If we come to detail, and are questioned as to our sins, how many turn out to be no more sinners than the beggars in the street are really lame, or blind, or sick, or sore; many who say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," do but sham their sinnership before God. Now, mark, there is nothing but sham salvation for sham sinners. But you real sinners, you who have broken God's law and know it, and are ready to stand upon the drop of confession beneath the fatal tree of justice, feeling that you could not say a word against divine justice if you were now executed, come and welcome, for Jesus Christ came to save such as you are. Confess your sin, and when you have done so rest on the salvation provided in Christ Jesus.

At this moment I think I speak the language of every child of God when I say the top and bottom, the beginning and the ending of all my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I just trust myself as a sinner with him. The devil often tells me, "You are not this, and you are not that," and I feel bound to own that the accuser of the brethren makes terrible work with my spiritual finery, so that I have to abandon one ground of glorying after another; but I never knew the devil

himself dare to say, "You are not a sinner." He knows I am, and I know it too; and as in due time Christ died for the ungodly, I just rest in him, and I am saved. If I can perish resting in Christ I must do so; but I will tell it throughout the realms of hell that I did trust in Christ, and was lost. I will publish it in the infernal dens that I trusted in Jesus with all my soul, and was confounded. Will it ever be? No, never; for he hath said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Poor sinner, whoever you may be, surely this is a very simple matter; but do not reject it because it is so simple. It is your life. You shall find it your life at this very instant if you will trust my Lord. Have you any doubt about your being a sinner? Then bid farewell to hope, for Christ did not come to save you; but if you know you are a sinner, cast yourself on Jesus now, even now, just as you are. "Will he save me?" Try it, brother, try it; sink or swim, fling yourself upon Christ. Are you still holding to your prayers or your tears, or somewhat of your own? You will perish if you do. You must be disconnected with all grounds of self-hope and self-trust, or they will prove your ruin. Now cut the hawser; let every rope go; break the last thread, and commit yourself to the tide of free grace. You will never be a wreck if you do so. Well does Dr. Watts put it,-

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all."

"You have taken away from us, sir, every hope we ever had, and you make us out to be nothing but sinners." Yes, that is what I want to do; I long to make all things rock and reel under you, till you feel that you have no place for the sole of your feet, and so fall before the cross. This old house of yours which you have been patching up so often will fall upon you before long. Its walls bulge, its roof drops, its timbers are rotten; however much you try to prop it up it will come down and destroy you. I, as an architect, advise you to sweep it all down. Clear every wall away, stick and stone. Yes, and take out the very foundations, for every stone is ruinous. Clear the ground of the whole concern. You complain that there is a deep and ugly trench where the foundations used to be, and I am glad of it, for, behold, the Lord lays in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, elect, precious,

even Christ Jesus, and he that believeth in him shall never be confounded. You must remove all the wood, hay, and stubble, and build with precious stones. None but Jesus, none but Jesus: neither beam, nor stone, nor pin, nor nail, must be our own. We may not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet of self, but Christ must be first, last, midst, and everywhere. What say you, brother sinner? Will you and I have Christ? I will, whether you will or not. Come along. Do not draw back. Take what God freely presents to you, and from this day trust Jesus to be your Savior, and we will meet in heaven. Amen.

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## **Good Earnests Of Great Success**

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. - Acts 6:7

Certain things preceded this prosperity—the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church; some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavour to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who should distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightway the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. Well might great grace rest upon them all, for they loved each other with a pure heart fervently. Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there be divisions amongst you, and one shall say, "I am for this," and another, "I am for that," how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace,

should be present with you, and working among you? But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order, where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren conscientiously to disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a rent, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of any one that evening, contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us; surely he will bless us yet more abundantly than aforesaid."

Moreover, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of eighty or ninety; in fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other, that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens. If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with

the representatives of our Baptist churches met together to pray, I should have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be!" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday, and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless all our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? The Lord send prosperity. Amen, say we, amen from our hearts. And amen we hope all God's saints will say. May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country; and, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? My dear brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth: fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that loved him. The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savour of Jesus Christ's name: our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of his grace shall be displayed. Keep together, brethren, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King himself lead us onward to the fray, and

we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured for such churches as do not enjoy it now; secondly, we shall have a word or two upon the results of such prosperity; and then, thirdly, upon the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.

## I. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?

If we want to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. We must never begin our catalogue of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all thy quickening powers."

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon thee we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, there must be much plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck lately in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching about the gospel, but preaching the gospel. So it was

with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach "Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And it was the same with Luther. Luther's preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are ye saved, and by faith alone." They spake this, and they spake it again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they laboured with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And, my brethren, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the gospel of Christ. We must keep to this. This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified! Look to him—not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church-goings or your chapel-goings, but to Christ Jesus exalted. Look to him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you his children, and for ever to glorify you with himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday School teachers, you must teach this same gospel. I know you do, but full many Sunday School teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those

children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way—"Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath; do not buy sweets on a Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to heaven"—which is not true, and is not the gospel; for the same gospel is for little children as for grown-up men—not "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes, the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we must have much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to enquire this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well-skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands. As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king, and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that, though I hate heresy—I hope your majesty does not suspect me on that account—yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." Now, this was what made the gospel victorious in those days—the stern



integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no grace and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind. Oh! to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practised amongst professors that would have at once to be given up. As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all his power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it; you must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it. Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be holy living as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice, if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add individual, personal exertion. I am so full with one theme today, that if I plough in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it had got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticise it and pull it to pieces. But this was not orthodox; according to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valour and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything

before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But on a sudden they said in the council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home? We should be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armour be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armour once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it in practice.

Combined with this there must be much earnest prayer. The prayer of faith! have we not held it in high esteem, have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith—a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we

have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to this church in a month, ought we ever to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. I tell you, sirs, he can find ministers for his truth—ay, if he willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if he pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what he did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God? The Lord can find his men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham;" and as he could then, so he can now. Let us not despair. If we will but pray for it, our heavenly Father will deny his children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase, and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? then we must all get more intense glowing spiritual life. Do you understand me. There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, with the sluggard—

"You have woke me too soon, I must slumber again,"

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange

bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality! Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! you are glad to get this second man to be your servant; he is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so. On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind; though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master; and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for him who has bought him with his precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord multiply the number of such; yea, may he make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself. It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could

learn to preach somehow or other; wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring; the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth. If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I should preach indeed, and move your souls, I think. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

II. Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, **THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY**—souls are saved.

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for twelve months, in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless, that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength. Richard Knill once said, that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul. And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?

"Let him be crowned with majesty,  
Who bowed his head in death,  
And let his praise be sounded high,  
By all things that have breath."

If you have not forgotten what he suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of his soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of his kingdom, the honour of his fame, the growing enthusiasm of his subjects—to make his excellency apparent, and his praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in your prayers and your efforts, that the number of his disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be to build up the church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of his bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighbourhood are thereby favouring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion, because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some object, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

III. But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, **THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH.**

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried

to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring. One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced; and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited; not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses, but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. "No," the good deacon says, "you know our pew-rents keep up very well; we have not a seat to let in the gallery!" "Ah!" and says the minister, "And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners; at least, if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them." That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpus is left to rot as it may, and to decay as many churches do. Now, were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days; but speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be. You will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle; after I die you will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you,

and save you from it. This is the tendency, however, of every church, it matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people have got to be too great for the gospel, and too proud to receive the truth in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen so long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit amongst us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity, which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly-coloured, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way; ay, and churches too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then "of course" they must go to church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system; the love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together; he is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple truth. "Give me that," says he, "and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I want it; but on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus; let me hear the story of the cross; let me see sinners led to Calvary—it is all I want, and I am well content if I have this."

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder perhaps what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O ye unconverted women, it is about you that we are



concerned. And you, ye unconverted men, it is about you that we are anxious; we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you, and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ. Now look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice, it is said that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ. They were once the bigoted enemies of the gospel, but they became obedient to the faith. Why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived in immorality, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah! well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. A young woman wrote to me the other day— I do not know who she is, but she said, "I cannot tell anybody, but I have done so-and-so, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it it would break her heart." I do not know here, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she says, "Can I be saved?" Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the gospel, and yet sinned. Oh! well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are. Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at his feet. Trust him! Trust him! Do him the honour to believe that he can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been. Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe him; trust him, and he will be as good as ever you can think him to be; for when you think your highest thoughts of him, he is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost. The priests were obedient to the faith; why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved; why should not you be like them? Did you notice how it is described? They were obedient to the faith." Then it seems that the gospel is all summed up in that word "faith." To be obedient to the faith; to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; to trust him because he has suffered in your stead; to believe that the divine justice is

satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith. We sang at the Lord's Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Yes, just as you are come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf. We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected, that his cross should be despised, that his blood should be trampled on. O come to him! He will not reject you. Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. Breathe a silent prayer to him now. Cast your soul upon him, sink or swim.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude,  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

But he can do it. Rely on him, and eternal life is yours.

Brethren and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it be our cry before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve him who served us even to the death. You will never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I

could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when constrained by the love of Christ, he said, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church. The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us, the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times. Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether he will not hear you, and you shall find he will to your soul's comfort. Amen.

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## **Faith's Dawn And Its Clouds**

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. - Mark 9:24

Last Sabbath morning we treated upon the way by which faith comes to the soul. "Faith cometh by hearing." It is our joyful persuasion that on the past Sabbath faith actually came to many, and they were enabled to rest themselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ to their soul's salvation. Now, every good shepherd knows that he ought to look very carefully after the newborn lambs, and, therefore, it seemed to me that it would be most expedient this morning to search after those who have just believed in Christ, and to endeavor to strengthen and help them against the very serious trials which are incident to their present weak condition. When a

man first lays hold upon Jesus he is very apt to be in distress, if his joy be not always at its full height; he is untrained in spiritual conflict, and easily dismayed; the tremor of his former conviction is upon him, and he is prone to relapse into it. The light which he has received fills him with intense delight, but it is not very clear and abiding; he sees men as trees walking, and is ready to conjure up a thousand fears. The weakness of newborn faith, therefore, calls for the compassion of all who love the souls of men. In addition to their own weakness they are liable to special dangers, for at such times Satan is frequently very active. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and the Prince of Darkness labors to bring back those who have just escaped over the confines of his dominion. If souls are never tried afterwards, they are pretty sure to be assailed on their outset from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Bunyan very wisely placed the Slough of Despond at the very commencement of the spiritual journey. The cowardly fiend of hell assails the weak, because he would put an end to them before they get strong enough to do mischief to his kingdom. Like Pharaoh, he would destroy the little ones. He seeks, if possible, to beat out of them every comfortable hope, so that their trembling faith may utterly perish. Perhaps, the text of this morning will be suitable to many here. I trust it may, and that the Spirit of God will give us reflections upon it which shall come home comfortably to all troubled souls. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

In the text there are three things very clearly. Here is true faith; here is grievous unbelief; here is a battle between the two.

I. Very clearly in the text there is TRUE FAITH. "Lord, I believe," says the anxious father. When our Lord tells him that, if he can believe, all things are possible to him, he makes no demur, asks for no pause, wishes to hear no more evidence, but cries at once, "Lord, I believe." Now, observe we have called this faith true faith, and we will prove it to have been so. First, it was faith in the person of Christ. It is a great mistake to fancy that to endorse sound doctrine is the same thing as possessing saving faith, for while saving faith accepts the truth of God, it mainly concerns itself with the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its essence lies in reliance upon Jesus himself. I am not saved because I believe the Scriptures, or because I believe the doctrines of grace, but I am saved if I

believe Christ; or, in other words, trust in him. Jesus is my creed. He is the truth. In the highest sense the Lord Jesus is the Word of God. To know him is life eternal. By his knowledge he justifies many. I do not know that the father in the narrative before us had heard many sermons. I am not sure that he had very clear notions about everything that concerned the Savior's kingdom: it was not essential that he should have in order to obtain a cure for his son. It was a very desirable thing that he should be an instructed disciple, but in the emergency before us the main thing was that he should believe Christ to be both able and willing to cast the devil out of his son. Up to that point he did believe; and, though his faith may have been deficient as well in breadth as in depth, yet it enabled him to realize that the Messiah who stood before him was the Lord, and it led him to place all his reliance upon him. He did not believe in the disciples; he had once trusted them and failed. He did not believe in himself; he knew his own impotence to drive out the evil spirit from his child. He believed no longer in any medicines or men, for doubtless he had spent much on physicians; but he believed the man of the shining countenance who had just come down from the mountain. When he heard him say, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth," he at once said, "Lord, I believe." Beloved hearer, I hope that thou hast come, at some time or other—perhaps it is since last Sabbath day—to put thy trust in Jesus in the same way, believing him to be able and willing to save thee. This is the faith that will effectually save thee. Dost thou rest in him, in him thy God, thy brother, thy Savior; in him as living among the sons of men; in him as bleeding and suffering, as a substitutionary sacrifice, in thy stead; in him as risen from the dead no more to die; in him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, clothed with power to save? Dost thou trust him? If not, whatever thou believest, and however orthodox thy creed, thou art short of eternal life; but, if all thy trust is stayed in him, if thou bringest all thy help from him, if his wounds are thine only shelter, his blood thine only plea, himself thine only confidence, then art thou a saved man, thy transgressions are forgiven thee for his name's sake, thou art accepted in the Beloved. Rejoice with fullness of joy, for thou hast a right so to do, since every gladsome thing is thine.

The faith of this good man was true and saving for another reason. It was

personal faith about the matter in hand, faith about the case which he was pleading. Have you never found it to be wonderfully easy to believe for other people? I know when I was seeking the Savior, I had no doubt about his receiving any other penitent. I felt certain that if the vilest sinner out of hell had come to him, he was able to save him: and though I had no faith in him on my own account, yet had I met with another distressed soul in a similar condition to myself, I believe I should have encouraged him to put his trust in Jesus, though I was afraid to do so myself. To believe for others is an easy matter, but when it comes to your own case, to believe that sins like yours can be blotted out, that you, who have so badly played the prodigal, may be received by your loving Father, that your spiritual diseases can be cured, and that the devil can be cast out of you;—here is the labor, here is the difficulty. But, beloved, we must believe this or else we have not saving faith. O my Savior, shall I trifle in faith by believing or pretending to believe that thou canst heal a case parallel to mine, and yet cannot heal mine? Shall I draw a line and limit thee, thou Holy One of Israel, and say, "Thou canst save up to me, but not so far as I have gone?" Shall I dream that thy precious blood has some power, but not power enough to blot out my sins? Shall I dare, in the arrogance of my despair, to set a boundary to the merits of thy plea, and to the virtue of thine atoning sacrifice? God forbid. Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,—he is able to save me. Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out; I come to him, and he will not, cannot cast me out. Hast thou a personal faith, a faith about thyself, about thine own sins, and thine own condition before God? Dost thou believe that Christ can save thee? Sink or swim, dost thou cast thyself upon him, thine own proper self? He, his own self, bore our sins in his own body on the tree; and we, our own selves, must cast ourselves upon him. If we have so done, then we, like the man in the narrative, have the real faith, the faith of God's elect.

Lest any, however, should think this a very small thing, let me go on to show you that this man's faith was real, because it was faith which triumphed over difficulties, difficulties which typify our own, and hence it was clearly the work of the Spirit of God, for no other will endure the trial. I shall ask thee, dear hearer, whether faith has triumphed over difficulties in thy case. For observe, his child was grievously tormented,

and the malady was of long standing. When the Savior said to him, "How long hath this happened unto him?" he said, "Of a child." Must it not have seemed, now that his son had grown older, a very unlikely thing that he should be recovered. We expect our children to outgrow some of their complaints; but here was one who, after many years, was none the better. Years had only increased but not diminished his pains. Yet in the teeth of that the man believed that Christ could cast that long-established demon out of his son. Dear friend, thy case of sin is similar. The sins of thy youth rise up before thee now: are they not in thy bones? The sins of thine early manhood, and the sins of thy riper years, and, mayhap, the sins of thy decaying years; all these come up before thee. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. Can I, after lying asoak in the scarlet dye till it is ingrained in my very nature,—can I be washed and made whiter than snow? Crimes so long continued, evil habits so deeply rooted, can all these be overcome? O soul, if thou hast true faith, thou wilt say, "Yes," I believe that since Christ is God he can deliver me from all evil, and forgive me all sin. Even if I had lived as long as Methuselah, and had continued all that while in the vilest of transgression, yet Jesus is so mighty to save that he could deliver me in a moment. His word is, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Looking to those dear wounds, those founts of love and blood, I do believe, and will believe, that all my years of sin are gone as in a moment, and like thick clouds before a mighty wind are blown away never to return. Oh, this is faith, poor soul. I pray God enable thee to exercise it.

This man had for a long time considered his son's case to be hopeless. Well he might. In addition to the fact that the child was subject to attacks of epilepsy and to extreme fits of fury, he was deaf and dumb, so that no intelligent expression of feeling could come from him: if at any time he felt stronger and better, he could not give his father a word of hope, he could not utter his gratitude for the sympathetic care that watched over him, neither could he hear any word of consolation which his father addressed to him. The ear was closed and the tongue was bound. Painful affliction, exceedingly painful to the parent, and to be continued year after year! At last the father must have felt there was no use in making any further effort. The child must be controlled, but he could not be

restored; he was a hopeless maniac. Peradventure, there is one here, this morning, who had grown hopeless of salvation; he has felt as if his case was one out of the catalogue of mercy; he has written bitter things against himself, and supposed that God has sealed those bitter things and made them true; but you see the father in the presence of Christ believed over the head of his despair, "in hope believing against hope," and I pray that you may do the same. In the presence of Christ the man's confidence came back to him. Hast thou, my hearer, a hope that can do the same? I never could have believed it was possible for me to be delivered from my sins till now I see that he who came to save me is my Maker; he who came to redeem me is he who bears the earth's huge pillars on his shoulders and sustaineth all things by the word of his power. With him nothing can be impossible. I see his pierced hands and feet, and feel that if he stooped to suffer in the sinner's stead, the merit of his sacrifice must be beyond conception great. In Jesus the hopeless one hath hope, he who had despaired else now bids his heart be of good cheer. Oh, that is true faith which will not suffer itself to be any longer the slave of doubt and despondency now that it sees Jesus the Lord drawing near. It is a mighty faith which refuses to sit any longer in the valley of the shadow of death, but arises and shakes itself from the dust, and puts on its beautiful garments.

The father had another trial for his faith in the fact that he had just then tried the disciples. He brought his child to Christ, and Christ being absent, he asked the apostles who were in the valley what they could do. They tried their best, but having lost their Master's power they utterly failed; and this must have been a very violent trial to the father's confidence. He knew that on other occasions Christ's power had passed through the apostles, and he had wrought his miracles by them; but here was a complete cessation of their healing energy. If Jesus did not choose to work by them on this occasion, the suggestion would arise in the man's heart, "Perhaps his own power also has become lessened." But he put the thought aside, and believed notwithstanding all. And, O soul, hast thou tried ministers and tried God's people, and hoped to get comfort, and hast thou found none? Hast thou gone to the ordinances and found them like dry wells? Hast thou resorted to the hearing of the gospel and found even it to be barrenness to thy spirit? Yes, yet suffer no shadow of



suspicion to cross thy mind as to the Lord's ability or willingness to save thee. Come to the feet of Jesus and still believe in him. Whatever reason may say in thy soul to excite thee to despondency on account of past defeats, believe thou firmly that his power is still invincible; his arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. It was meet that thou shouldst see the failure of man that thou mightest glorify the grace of God; it was meet that the servants should be unable that the Master's ability might be the more conspicuous. May the Lord help thee to believe that though no man can do thee good, though all the pastors and bishops of the church, and all the martyrs and confessors of past ages, and all the apostles, and all the prophets, are unable to find a balm in Gilead that can meet thy case, yet there is a hand, a pierced hand, which can heal thy wounds and bleed a balm into thy soul which shall effectually restore thee. Yes, true faith believes over even such a discouragement as this.

I would have you notice, also, once more, while we are upon this point, that this father believed in Christ and his power to save, though the child was at that very moment passing through a horrible stage of pain and misery. The spirit which possessed this poor child was accustomed to throw him sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Just our condition; for our spirit has sometimes been thrown into the very fire of presumption, and at another season into the floods of despair. We have alternated between the cold of melancholy and the heat of self-conceit. We have at one time cried, "I love pleasure, and after it I will go;" and at another time we have said, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life; I would not live always." When Satan is in a man, and he is full of despair, he goes to all extremes, and resteth nowhere, walking like the unclean spirit himself through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. At the moment while the father was speaking, the poor boy was on the ground wallowing in dreadful paroxysms of his disorder, foaming at the mouth, and gnashing with his teeth. Satan had great wrath, because he knew that his time was short. When the Savior spoke, and bade the devil come out of him, the fiercest struggle of all took place; for the unclean spirit rent the child, and the most terrible cries were heard. Still the father said, "Lord, I believe." Now, it may be, dear hearer, you are this morning yourself full of great trouble, vexed and tormented with innumerable

fears of wrath to come; a little hell burns within your soul, anguish unutterable has taken hold upon you, your heart is like a battle field torn by contending hosts, which rush hither and thither, destroying on every side. You are yourself an embodied agony; you are like David when he said, "The pains of hell get hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." Can you now believe? Will now accept the word of the Most High? If thou canst, thou wilt greatly glorify God, and thou wilt bring to thyself much blessedness. Happy is that man who can not only believe when the waves softly ripple to the music of peace, but continues to trust in him who is almighty to save when the hurricane is let loose in its fury, and the Atlantic breakers follow each other, eager to swallow up the barque of the mariner. Surely Christ Jesus is fit to be believed at all times, for, like the pole star, he abides in his faithfulness, let storms rage as they may. He is always divine, always omnipotent to succor, always overflowing with lovingkindness, ready and willing to receive sinners, even the very chief of them. Sorrowful one, do not add to thy sorrows by unbelief, that is a bitterness which it is superfluous to mingle with thy cup. Better far is it to say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him."

There must be power unbounded in him who deigned to die upon the cross. Come ye to Calvary and see! Can you look to that head crowned with thorns, and mark the ruby drops standing on his brow, and yet be doubtful of his power to save? Can you mark that sacred face, more marred than that of any man—marred with our griefs and stained with our sins, can you gaze on it and remain an unbeliever? Survey that precious body tortured in every part for our transgressions, and can you yet distrust him upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid? Can you behold those hands and feet fastened to the ignominious wood for the guilty? Can you look upon that spectacle of woe, and know that Christ is divine, and yet harbour doubts as to his power to save you? As for myself, I am constrained to cry, "Lord, I believe, I must believe; thou hast thyself compelled my faith." Let all things reel beneath my feet, but the cross of my Lord stands fast. If the Son of God has died for sinners, it is certain that the believing sinner cannot die, but must be saved, since Jesus bled for him. May God grant to every one of us to stand just there where the poor father did as to his faith, and say as he did, "Lord, I believe."

I am forced to leave this head incomplete, for the hour commands me to hasten on. The faith before us was earnest, it led the man to tears of repentance, it taught him to pray, it led him to open confession; in all these points may your faith be of a like character.

II. But, now, we must turn to the second part of the subject, for **HERE IS UNBELIEF**. "Help thou mine unbelief," said he. He had doubted the power of Christ, he had said, "If thou canst do anything for us, have compassion on us and heal us;" but yet he had faith and he had avowed it; he had not kept it secret within himself as though he were ashamed of it; before the scoffing scribes he had confessed, "Lord, I believe." He avowed it, too, with remarkable earnestness, for he said it with tears, as though his heart saturated his confession, running over at his eyes to bedew the words, "Lord, I do believe; do not doubt it, I lie not; I do believe in thee." But, then, he went on to make the confession at the same time there was an unbelief lingering in his soul. "Help thou," said he, "mine unbelief." Albeit that his faith had triumphed over the considerations which I just now mentioned, which appeared enough to damp, if not to quench it, yet these considerations may have had some effect upon his mind: they did not prevent his believing, but they hampered his faith with many questions. Some unbelief lingered, though faith was supreme. Learn from this that a measure of doubt is consistent with saving faith; that weak faith is true faith, and a trembling faith will save the soul. If thou believest, even though thou be compelled to say, "Help thou mine unbelief," yet that faith makes thee whole, and thou art justified before God.

I thought I would, under this second head, mention some reflections which often cause unbelief to trouble the heart which, nevertheless, has been enabled by the Holy Spirit to believe.

First, there are many true believers who at the first are tried with unbelief, because they have now, more than ever they had before, a sense of their past sins. Many a man receives a far deeper sense of sin after he is forgiven than he ever had before. The light of the law is but moonlight compared with the light of the gospel, which is the light of the sun. Love

makes sin to become exceeding sinful.

"My Sins, my Sins, my Savior!  
How sad on thee they fall;  
Seen through thy gentle patience,  
I tenfold feel them all.

I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on thee."

The light of the promise gleaming in the soul reveals the infinite abyss of horror which lies in indwelling sin. In the light of God's countenance we discover the filthiness, the abomination, the detestable ingratitude of our past conduct. We loathe ourselves in our own sight. While we bless God that sin is pardoned, we are staggered to think it should have been such sin as it is, and the natural feeling resulting from our discovery is a fear that we cannot be pardoned. We ask ourselves, can it be that such sins are forgiven? Possibly the memory of certain peculiarly heinous sins becomes very vivid to our conscience: we had half forgotten them, but they start up with dreadful energy, and cast suspicions into our mind as to whether forgiveness is possible. Oh, that we could blot out those evil days! We have said, "Cursed be the sun that it rose on such a day as that in which I so defiled myself with iniquity." Thus, under a sense of sin, though there is the belief that we are pardoned, there may also arise the unbelief against which we need the Lord to help us.

Some have been staggered, at times, by a consciousness of their present feebleness. "Yes," saith one, "I trust the past is blotted out, but then how can I hope that I am saved? What a poor creature I am. I try to pray, but it is not worth calling prayer. I go up to God's house vowing that I will praise his name, and I get talking on the way and forget all about it, and I am dull all through the service. Then I was tempted yesterday, and I spoke unadvisably with my lips, or I did not defend the cause of my Lord and Master against that skeptic as I ought to have done. Only, just lately, I hoped that I had found peace with God, and yet I am behaving like this.

Why I must be a hypocrite, it cannot be that I am a saved soul. Surely if my sins were forgiven me I should act very differently from this." Now that is often the cause of unbelief. The soul still hopes in Jesus and rests in him, and she has nowhere else to go; but for all that the old monster unbelief gives her a desperate twitch, and she trembles while she hopes.

Some others have been made to shiver with unbelief on account of fears for the future. "I am afraid I shall not hold on," says one. "Why, to be a Christian you must persevere to the end. With such a heart as mine, how can I hope to be steadfast: and in such a position as mine, surrounded by so many ungodly associates, how can I hope to persevere? I see so-and-so made a profession, and he is gone back; and I know such an one who said he was a Christian, and he is a worse man than he used to be. Suppose the last end of me should be worse than the first; suppose I should put my hand to the plough and should look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom." Poor heart, it forgets that word, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and remembers not that other word, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Rightly filled with a holy anxiety to hold on to the end, it gives way to improper unbelief, for it ought to rest confident that Jesus changeth not; and, where he has begun the good work, he will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ.

I have known some, again, whose unbelief has been excited by a consideration of the freeness and greatness of the mercy bestowed. I recollect how this staggered me once. I had believed in Jesus, and rejoiced in his salvation, but in meditating upon divine grace I was overcome with fear. What, pardoned, justified, a child of God, an heir of heaven, a joint heir with Christ, one of God's elect, secure of heaven, with a crown waiting for me at the last, and power to win that crown daily secured to me;—why, it seemed altogether too good to be true. Unbelief whispered, "it cannot be." If such great grace had been shown to others I should not have marvelled. If men of great abilities, at high station, and of eminent character, had received such grace, I could have believed it; or even if that holy woman, who had so long been a patient sufferer, had been so blessed, it would have appeared an ordinary circumstance; but for such a sinner as I was to be thus favored appeared to be too strange a

miracle of love. I do remember how the very grandeur of the divine mercy threatened to crush me down and bury me under its own mass of goodness. I could believe that the Lord would give me a little mercy, but that he should give me such mercy, such unexpected favor, almost exceeded belief. And yet, what fully is there in such ideas, for were we not told beforehand that "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts?" Do we not know that we are dealing with a great God, of whom the prophet asks, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin?" Do we think that God will only give according to our stunted measure? Is God to take man for his model? Remember ye that word, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think." Instead of the greatness of the divine mercy staggering us, it ought to console us and assist us to believe, seeing that it is so congruous with his nature. Yet, oftentimes, on this sea of love poor leaky vessels have begun to sink.

I have known, too, not a few, whose unbelief has arisen through a sacred anxiety to be right—a most proper anxiety if not pushed beyond its sphere. The idea has been suggested to them: "Suppose I should be after all presumptuous, and should deceive myself, by thinking I am saved, whereas I am not? What if I should film the wound, when it ought to be lanced, before there can be effectual healing." How I wish that all hypocrites would be troubled with this sort of fear. It would be a great mercy for many boastful professors if they had grace enough to doubt. I think Cowper was right when he said -

"He that never doubted of his state,  
He may, perhaps he may too late."

But yet, this anxiety may be carried too far, and the soul may slide into despondency through it. I ought to be afraid of presumption, but it cannot be presumptuous to believe God's word. I ought to be afraid of saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace;" but if peace comes to me through the word of Christ, I need never be suspicious of it, let it be as profound as it may. I may doubt myself; I may go further, I may despair of self, but I must not doubt the Lord. If he has said, "Trust in me, believe

in me, and thou shalt be saved;" if I believe in him, it is no presumption to know that I am saved. If he has declared that he that believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses; if I have believed in him, I am justified from all my sins. There is far more presumption in doubting the Lord than there ever can be in trusting him. Faith is no more than God's due, it ought never to be looked at as too daring. If I believe in Jesus I have no right to say, "I hope I am saved," for that implies a doubt of God's declaration that the believer is saved. I have no right to say, "I sometimes think I am safe." I am so undoubtedly if I believe in Jesus. It is no matter of opinion, but a matter of certainty. There is nothing in this world about which a man may be so sure as about his own salvation, because other things come to us by the evidence of our own fallible senses, or by the testimony of men who may be mistaken; but the fact that the believer is saved is sealed to us by the testimony of God himself, who cannot lie. When the Scripture says plainly, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," I, having believed, and having been baptized, ought not to question the divine declaration, but should be as sure that, if I have believed, I am saved, as I am sure that I exist. This assurance is attainable, and should be the common condition of the believer. Yet has it often happened, I say, that an anxiety, which was commendable in its outset, has ended in a censurable unbelief.

Once more, I have known unbelief arise in some souls through a most proper reverence for Christ, and a high esteem for all that belongs to him. You remember our text a few Sabbath mornings ago told us of John, who when he saw his Master in all his glory fell at his feet as dead. Ah, when the soul gets near to Jesus it perceives his perfection, and becomes conscious of its own imperfection; it sees his glory, and becomes aware of its own nothingness; it sees his love, and blushes at its own unloveliness; and then it is very, very apt to be tortured with mistrust, though it ought not so to be.

And I have even known when children of God just converted have come into the church, they have had such a high esteem for their brethren and sisters, that they have feared to be numbered with them. When they have heard some earnest brother pray they have said, "Oh, what a prayer, I

shall never be like that man;" and, perhaps, they have listened to the preachings of some servant of God and said, "Ah, I cannot come up to that standard; the very existence of such a man as that condemns me." It is beautiful so see the little children loving the elder sons of the family, and admiring what they see of the father in them; but even this holy modesty may be turned into unbelief, though it ought not so to be; for, O child of God, if Christ be so lovely, thou art on the way to be made like him; and if there be anything beautiful in any of his people, that same shall be given unto thee, for they also are as thou art, men of like passions with thyself; and God who has done great things for them will do the like for thee, for he loves thee with the self-same love.

I have thus set before you the unbelief which often will exist side by side with faith.

III. Now, let us notice very briefly THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO.

It is observable that this poor man did not say, "Lord, I believe, but have some doubts," and mention it as if it were a mere matter of common intelligence which did not grieve him. Oh, no; he said it with tears; he made a sorrowful confession of it. It was not the mere statement of a fact, but it was the acknowledgment of a fault. With tears he said, "Lord, I believe," and then acknowledged his unbelief. Learn then, dear hearer, always to look at unbelief in Christ in the light of a fault. Never say, "This is my infirmity," but say, "This is my sin." There has been too much in the Church of God of regarding unbelief as though it were a calamity commanding sympathy, rather than a fault demanding censure as well. I am not to say to myself, "I am unbelieving, and therefore I am to be pitied." No, "I am unbelieving, and therefore I must blame myself for it." Why should I disbelieve my God? How dare I doubt him who cannot lie? How can I mistrust the faithful promiser who has added to his promise his oath, and over and above his promise and his oath has given his own blood as a seal, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to die, we might have strong consolation. Chide yourselves, ye doubters. Doubts are among the worst enemies of your souls. Do not entertain them. Do not treat them as though they were poor forlorn



travelers to be hospitably entertained, but as rogues and vagabonds to be chased from thy door. Fight them, slay them, and pray God to help thee to kill them, and bury them, and not even to leave a bone or a piece of a bone of a doubt above ground. Doubting and unbelief are to be abhorred, and to be confessed with tears as sins before God. We need pardon for doubting as much as for blasphemy. We ought no more to excuse doubting than lying, for doubting slanders God and makes him a liar.

Then, again, having made a confession of his unbelief as you observe, the father, in the narrative, prayed against it, and an earnest prayer it was. It was, "Help thou mine unbelief." It is very noticeable that he does not say, "Lord, I believe; help thou my child." No, nor does he say, "Lord, I believe; now cast the devil out of my boy:" not at all; he perceives that his own unbelief was harder to overcome than the devil, and that to heal him of his spiritual disease was a more needful work, than even to heal his child of the sad malady under which he labored. This is the point to arrive at, to feel that there is no deficiency in the merit of Christ; no lack of power in his precious blood; no unwillingness in Christ's heart to save me; but all the hindrance lies in my unbelief. There is the point. O God, bring thy power to bear where it is wanted. It is not because the blood will not cleanse me, it is because I will not believe; it is not because Christ's plea is not heard, but because I do not trust that plea. If I am not in the possession of full salvation, it is not because Christ is not mighty to save, but because I do not lean on him fully and entirely. O God, thou seest this is the center of the difficulty, bring, thy power to bear on that difficulty. I ask only this. No more do I cry, "Help me here, or help me there;" but, "Help mine unbelief." That is the Slough of Despond; I carry that in my heart; that is the weak point. "Lord, strengthen me just there." It is well when, in addition to confession, we bring up all the great guns of fervent prayer to bear upon that position which needs to be carried by storm.

And, lastly, this man did well in looking for the help against his unbelief to the right quarter. He did not say, "Lord, I believe; and now I will try to overcome my belief." No; but "Lord help," as if he felt that the Lord alone could do it. No physician can cure unbelief but Christ. He is the physic for it, and he is the physician too. If thou hast any unbelief, take thou the blood of Christ to cure it with. Think of him,—God in the glory of his

person, tabernacling among men, working out a perfect righteousness, dying a felon's death upon the cross in the sinner's stead; think of him as rising from the dead, no more to die: think of him as ascending into heaven amidst the shouts of angels: think of him as standing at the right hand of God with the keys of death and hell at his girdle: think of him as always pleading the merit of his blood before the Father's throne; and, as thou considerest concerning him, in the power of the Spirit, thine unbelief will die, for thou wilt say, "Lord, the thought of thee has helped mine unbelief; while I have been studying thee, and feeding my soul on thee, and making thee to be as bread and wine to my soul, my unbelief has gone. I do believe in thee, and I will; for thou hast helped mine unbelief." Go, any of you who are in trouble about this matter, go where you gained your first faith, go there to get more. If you first obtained your faith at the cross foot, go there again to end your unbelief. View the flowing of his soul-redeeming blood, and continue viewing it till thou shalt by divine assurance know; that he has made thy peace with God. God bless thee in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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## **False Professors Solemnly Warned**

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. - Philippians 3:18-19

Paul was the very model of what a Christian minister should be. He was a

watchful shepherd over the flock; he did not simply preach to them, and consider that he had done all his duty when he had delivered his message; but his eyes were always upon the Churches, marking their spiritual welfare, their growth in grace, or their declension in godliness. He was the unsleeping guardian of their spiritual welfare. When he was called away to other lands to proclaim the everlasting gospel, he seems always to have kept an eye upon those Christian colonies which he had founded in the midst of heathen darkness. While lighting up other lamps with the torch of truth, he did not fail to trim the lamps already burning. Here you observe he was not indifferent to the character of the little church at Philippi, for he speaks to them and warns them.

Note, too, that the apostle was a very honest pastor - when he marked anything amiss in his people, he did not blush to tell them; he was not like your modern minister, whose pride is that he never was personal in his life, and who thus glories in his shame, for had he been honest, he would have been personal, for he would have dealt out the truth of God without deceitfulness, and would have reproved men sharply, that they might be sound in the faith. "I tell you," says Paul, "because it concerns you." Paul was very honest; he did not flinch from telling the whole truth, and telling it often too, though some might think that once from the lip of Paul would be of more effect than a hundred times from any one else. "I have told you often," says he, "and I tell you yet again there are some who are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

And while faithful, you will notice that the apostle was, as every true minister should be, extremely affectionate. He could not bear to think that any of the members of the churches under his care should swerve from the truth, he wept while he denounced them; he knew not how to wield the thunderbolt with a tearless eye; he did not know how to pronounce the threatening of God with a dry and husky voice. No; while he spoke terrible things the tear was in his eye, and when he reproved sharply, his heart beat so high with love, that those who heard him denounce so solemnly, were yet convinced that his harshest words were dictated by affection. "I have told you often, and I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Beloved, I have a message to deliver to-night which is to the same effect as that of the Apostle Paul, and I am afraid it is as necessary now as it was in his time. There are many now among us, as there were then, who walk in such a manner that we recognise them at once as the "enemies of the cross of Christ." I do fear that the evil, instead of having decreased, has multiplied and grown in danger. We have more profession now than there was in the age of Paul, and consequently we have more hypocrisy. It is a crying sin with our churches that there are many in their midst who never ought to be there, who would be fit members of an ale-house or any favourite resort of the gay and frivolous, but who never ought to sip the sacramental wine or eat the holy bread, the emblems of the sufferings of our Lord. We have - O Paul, how wouldst thou have said it to-night, and how wouldst thou have wept while saying it! - we have many in our midst who are the "enemies of the cross of Christ," because "their God is their belly, they mind earthly things," and their life is not consistent with the great things of God.

I shall endeavour, for a short time to-night, to tell you the reason of the apostle's extraordinary sorrow. I never read that the apostle wept when he was persecuted. Though they ploughed his back with furrows, I do believe that never a tear was seen to gush from his eye while the soldiers scourged him. Though he was cast into prison, we read of his singing, never of his groaning. I do not believe he ever wept on account of any sufferings or dangers to which he himself was exposed for Christ's sake. I call this an extraordinary sorrow, because the man who wept was no soft piece of sentiment, and seldom shed a tear even under grievous trials. He wept for three things: he wept on account of their guilt; on account of the ill effects of their conduct; and on account of their doom.

I. First, Paul wept on account of the GUILT of those persons who, having a name to live, were dead, and while uniting themselves with a Christian church, were not walking as they should do among men and before God. Notice the sin with which he charges them. He says, "Their God was their belly;" by this I understand that they were sensual persons. There were those in the early church who, after they sat at God's table, would go away and sit at the feasts of the heathen, and there indulge in gluttony and drunkenness; others indulged in lusts of the flesh, enjoying those

pleasures (so miscalled) which, afterwards, bring unutterable pain even to the body itself, and are disgraceful to men, much more to professors of religion. Their God was their belly. They care more about the dress of their body than the dress of their soul; they regarded more the food of the outward carcass than the life of the inner man. Ah! my hearers; are there not many everywhere in our churches who still bow before their belly-god, and make themselves their own idols? Is it not notorious, in almost every society, that professing men can pamper themselves as much as others? - I mean not all, but some. Ay, I have heard of drunken professors; not men who positively reel through the street, who are drunken in mid-day or intoxicated before their fellow-men, but men who go to the very verge of drunkenness in their social parties; men who take so much, that while it would be an insult to their respectability to call them intoxicated, it would be equally an insult to the truth to call them sober. Have we not some men in our churches (it is idle to deny it) who are as fond of the excesses of the table and surfeit in the good things of this life as any other class of men? Have we not persons who spend a very fortune upon the dress of their bodies, adorning themselves far more than they adorn the doctrine of their Saviour; men whose perpetual business it is to take good care of their bodies, against whom flesh and blood never had any cause to complain, for they not only serve the flesh, but make a god of it? Ah! sirs, the church is not pure; the church is not perfect; we have scabbed sheep in the flock. In our own little communion, now and then, we find them out, and then comes the dread sentence of excommunication, by which they are cut off from our fellowship; but there are many of whom we are not aware, who creep like snakes along the grass, and are not discovered till they inflict a grievous wound upon religion, and do damage to our great and glorious cause. Brethren, there are some in the church (both established and dissenting) - let us say it with the deepest sorrow - "whose god is their belly."

Another of their sins was that they did mind earthly things. Beloved, the last sentence may not have touched your consciences, but this is a very sweeping assertion, and I am afraid that a very large proportion of Christ's church are verily guilty here. It is an anomaly, but it is a fact, that we hear of ambitious Christians, although Christ has told us that he who would be exalted must humble himself. There are among the professed

followers of the humble Man of Galilee, men who strive to gain the topmost round of the ladder of this world; whose aim is, not to magnify Christ, but to magnify themselves at any hazard. It had been thought at one time that a Christian would be a holy, a humble, and contented man; but it is not so now-a-days. We have (Oh, shame, ye churches!) mere professors; men who are as worldly as the worldliest, and have no more of Christ's Holy Spirit in them than the most carnal who never made a profession of the truth. Again, it is a paradox, but it stares us in the face every day, that we have covetous Christians. It is an inconsistency. We might as well talk of unholy seraphim, of perfect beings subject to sin, as of covetous Christians; yet there are such men, whose purse strings were never intended to slide, at least at the cry of the poor; who call it prudence to amass wealth, and never use it in any degree in the cause of Christ. If you want men that are hard in business, that are grasping after wealth, that seize upon the poor debtor and suck the last particle of his blood; if you want the men who are grasping and grinding, that will skin the flint, and take away the very life from the orphan, you must come - I blush to say it, but it is a solemn truth - you must come sometimes to our churches to find them. Some such there are amongst the highest of her officers, who "mind earthly things," and have none of that devotion to Christ which is the mark of pure godliness. These evils are not the fruits of religion, they are the diseases of mere profession. I rejoice that the remnant of the elect are kept pure from these, but the "mixed multitude" are sadly possessed therewith.

Another character which the Apostle gives of these men is that they gloried in their shame. A professing sinner generally glories in his shame more than any one else. In fact, he miscalls it. He labels the devil's poisons with the names of Christ's medicines. Things that he would reckon vices in any other man are virtues with himself. If he could see in another man the selfsame action which he has just performed - if another could be the looking-glass of himself, oh! how he would thunder at him! He is the very first man to notice a little inconsistency. He is the very strictest of Sabbatarians; he is the most upright of thieves; he is the most tremendously generous of misers; he is the most marvellously holy of profane men. While he can indulge in his favourite sin, he is for ever putting up his glass to his eye to magnify the faults of others. He may do

as he pleases; he may sin with impunity; and if his minister should hint to him that his conduct is inconsistent, he will make a storm in the church, and say the minister was personal, and insulted him. Reproof is thrown away on him. Is he not a member of the church? Has he not been so for years? Who shall dare to say that he is unholy? O sirs, there are some of your members of churches who will one day be members of the pit. We have some united with our churches who has passed through baptism and sit at our sacramental tables, who, while they have a name to live, are dead as corpses in their graves as to anything spiritual. It is an easy thing to palm yourself off for a godly man now-a-days. There is little self-denial, little mortification of the flesh, little love to Christ wanted. Oh, no. Learn a few religious hymns; get a few cant phrases, and you will deceive the very elect; enter into the church, be called respectable, and if you cannot make all believe you, you will yet smooth your path to destruction by quieting an uneasy conscience. I am saying hard things, but I am saying true things; for my blood boils sometimes when I meet with men whom I would not own, whom I would not sit with anywhere, and who yet call me "brother." They can live in sin, and yet call a Christian "brother." God forgive them! We can feel no brotherhood with them; nor do we wish to do so until their lives are changed, and their conduct is made more consistent.

You see, then, in the Apostle's days there were some who were a disgrace to godliness, and the Apostle wept over them because he knew their guilt. Why, it is guilt enough for a man to make a God of his belly without being a professor; but how much worse for a man who knows better, who even sets up to teach other people better, still to go on and sin against God and against his conscience, by making a solemn profession, which is found in his case to be a lie. Oh! how dreadful is such a man's guilt! For him to stand up and say,

"'Tis done; the great transaction's done.  
I am the Lord's, and he is mine,"

and yet to go and sin like others; to use the same conversation, to practise the same chicanery, to walk in as ungodly a manner as those who have never named the name of Christ - ah! what guilt is here! It is enough to

make us weep if we have been guilty ourselves; ay, to weep tears of blood that we should so have sinned against God.

II. But the Apostle did not so much weep for them as for THE MISCHIEF THEY WERE DOING, for he says, emphatically, that they are, "The enemies of the cross of Christ." "The enemies;" as much as to say, the infidel is an enemy; the curser, the swearer, the profane man, is an enemy; Herod, yonder, the persecutor, is an enemy; but these men are the chief soldiers - the life-guards in Satan's army. "The enemies of the cross of Christ" are Pharisaic professors, bright with the whitewash of outside godliness, whilst they are rotten within. Oh! methinks there is nothing that should grieve a Christian more than to know that Christ has been wounded in the house of his friends. See, there comes my Saviour with bleeding hands and feet. O my Jesus, my Jesus, who shed that blood? Whence comes that wound? Why lookest thou so sad? He replies, "I have been wounded, but guess where I received the blow?" Why, Lord, sure thou wast wounded in the gin-palace; thou wast wounded where sinners meet, in the seat of the scornful; thou wast wounded in the infidel hall. "No, I was not," saith Christ; "I was wounded in the house of my friends; these scars were made by those who sat at my table and bore my name, and talked my language; they pierced me and crucified me afresh, and put me to an open shame." Far worst of sinners they that pierce Christ thus whilst professing to be friends. Caesar wept not until Brutus stabbed him; then it was that he was overcome, and exclaimed, "Et tu, Brute!" And thou, "Hast thou stabbed me?" So, my hearers, might Christ say to some of you. "What! thou, and thou, and thou, a professor, hast stabbed me?" Well might our Saviour muffle up his face in grief, or rather bind it in clouds of wrath, and drive the wretch away that has so injured his cause.

If I must be defeated in battle, let me be defeated by mine enemies, but let me not be betrayed by my friends. If I must yield the citadel which I am willing to defend even to the death, then let me yield it, and let my foes walk over my body; but oh! let not my friends betray me; let not the warrior who stands by my side unbar the gate and admit the foemen. That were enough to break one's heart twice - once for the defeat, and the second time at the thought of treachery.



When a small band of Protestants were striving for their liberties in Switzerland, they bravely defended a pass against an immense host. Though their dearest friends were slain, and they themselves were weary, and ready to drop with fatigue, they stood firm in the defence of the cause they had espoused. On a sudden, however, a cry was heard - a dread and terrible shriek. The enemy was winding up a steep acclivity, and when the commander turned his eye thither, O how his brow gathered with storm! He ground his teeth and stamped his foot, for he knew that some caitiff Protestant had led the blood-thirsty foe up the goat track to slay his friends. Then turning to his friends, he said "On!" and like a lion on his prey, they rushed upon their enemies, ready now to die, for a friend had betrayed them. So feels the bold-hearted Christian, when he sees his fellow-member betraying Christ, when he beholds the citadel of Christianity given up to its foes by those who pretended to be its friends. Beloved, I would rather have a thousand devils out of the church, than have one in it. I do not care about all the adversaries outside; our greatest cause of fear is from the crafty "wolves in sheep's clothing," that devour the flock. It is against such that we would denounce in holy wrath the solemn sentence of divine indignation, and for such we would shed our bitterest tears of sorrow. They are "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Now, for a moment, let me show you how it is that the wicked professor is the greatest enemy to Christ's church.

In the first place, he grieves the church more than any one else. It any man in the street were to pelt me with mud, I believe I should thank him for the honor, if I knew him to be a bad character, and knew that he hated me for righteousness sake. But if one who called himself a Christian should injure the cause with the filthiness of his own licentious behaviour: ah! that were more injurious than the stakes of Smithfield, or the racks of the Tower. The deepest sighs the Christian has ever heaved, have been fetched from him by carnal professors. I would not weep a tear if every man should curse me who was a hater of Christ; but when the professor forsakes Christ, and betrays his cause: ah! that indeed is grievous; and who is he that can keep back the tear on account of so vile a deed?

Again: nothing divides the church more. I have seen many divisions in journeying through the country, and I believe almost every division may be traced to a deficiency of piety on the part of some of the members. We should be more one, if it were not for cants that creep into our midst. We should be more loving to each other, more tender-hearted, more kind, but that these men, so deceptive, coming into our midst, render us suspicious. Moreover, they themselves find fault with those who walk worthily, in order to hide their own faults against God, and against justice. The greatest sorrows of the church have been brought upon her, not by the arrows shot by her foes, not by the discharge of the artillery of hell, but by fires lit in her own midst, by those who have crept into her in the guise of good men and true, but who were spies in the camp, and traitors to the cause.

Yet again: nothing has ever hurt poor sinners more than this. Many sinners coming to Christ would get relief far more quickly, if it were not for the ill lives of false professors. Now let me tell you a story, which I remember telling once before: it is a very solemn one; I hope to feel its power myself, and I pray that all of you may do the same. A young minister had been preaching in a country village, and the sermon apparently took deep effect on the minds of the hearers. In the congregation there was a young man who felt acutely the truth of the solemn words to which the preacher had given utterance. He sought the preacher after the service, and walked with him. On the road, the minister talked of every subject except the one that had occupied his attention in the pulpit. The poor soul was under great distress, and he asked the minister a question or two, but they were put off very coolly, as if the matter was of no great importance. Arriving at the house, several friends were gathered together, and the preacher commenced very freely to crack his jokes, to utter his funny expressions, and to set the company in a roar of laughter. That, perhaps, might not have been so bad, had he not gone even farther, and uttered words which were utterly false, and verged upon the licentious. The young man suddenly rose from the table; and though he had wept under the sermon, and had been under the deepest apparent conviction, he rose up, went outside the door, and stamping his foot, said, "Religion is a lie! From this moment I abjure God,

I abjure Christ; and if I am damned I will be damned, but I will lay the charge at that man's door, for he preached just now and made me weep, but now see what he is! He is a liar, and I will never hear him again." He carried out his threat; and some time afterwards, as he lay dying, he sent word to the minister that he wanted to see him. The minister had removed to a distant part, but had been brought there by providence, I believe, purposely to chasten him for the great sin he had committed. The minister stepped into the room with the Bible in his hand to do as he was accustomed - to read a chapter and to pray with the poor man. Turning his eyes on him, the man said, "Sir, I remember hearing you preach once." "Blessed be God," said the minister, "I thank God for it," thinking, no doubt, that he was a convert, and rejoicing over him. "Stop," said the man, "I do not know that there is much reason for thanking God, at any rate, on my part. Sir, do you remember preaching from such-and-such a text on such-and-such an evening?" "Yes, I do." "I trembled then, sir; I shook from head to foot; I left with the intention of bending the knee in prayer, and seeking God in Christ; but do you remember going to such-and-such a house, and what you said there!" "No," said the minister, "I cannot." "Well, then, I can tell you, and mark you! through what you said that night my soul is damned, and as true as I am a living man I will meet you at God's bar and lay it to your charge." The man then shut his eyes and died. I think you can scarcely imagine what must have been the feeling of that preacher as he retired from the bedside. He must carry with him always that horrid, that terrible incubus, that there was a soul in hell who laid his blood to his charge.

I am afraid there are some in the ranks of the church who have much guilt at their doors on this account. Many a young man has been driven from a solemn consideration of the truth by the harsh and censorious remarks of Scribes and Pharisees. Many a careful seeker has been prejudiced against sound doctrine by the evil lives of its professors. Ah! ye Scribes and Pharisees, ye enter not in yourselves, and them that would enter in ye hinder. Ye take the key of knowledge, lock up the door by your inconsistencies, and drive men away by your unholy living.

Again, they are "the enemies of the cross of Christ," because they give the devil more theme for laughter, and the enemy more cause for joy, than

any other class of Christians. I do not care what all the infidel lecturers in the world like to say. They are very clever fellows, no doubt, and good need they have to be so, to prove an absurdity, and "make the worse appear the better reason;" but we care little what they say; they may say what they like against us that is false, but it is when they can say anything that is true about us that we do not like it. It is when they can find a real inconsistency in us, and then bring it to our charge, that they have got stuff to make lectures of. If a man be an upright Christian, he never need fear what others say of him; they will get but little fun out of him if he leads a holy, blameless life; but let him be sometimes godly, and at other times ungodly, then he may grieve, for he has given the enemy cause to blaspheme by his unholy living. The devil gets much advantage over the church by the inconsistency of professors. It is when Satan makes hypocrites that he brings the great battering ram against the wall. "Your lives are not consistent" - ah! that is the greatest battering ram that Satan can use against the cause of Christ. Be particular, my dear friends, be very particular that you do not dishonour the cause you profess to love, by living in sin and walking in iniquity. And let me say a word to those of you who, like myself, are strong Calvinists. No class of persons are more maligned than we. It is commonly said that our doctrine is licentious; we are called Antinomians; we are cried down as hypers; we are reckoned the scum of creation; scarcely a minister looks on us or speaks favourably of us, because we hold strong views upon the divine sovereignty of God, and his divine electings and special love towards his own people. In many towns the legal ministers will tell you that there is a nasty nest of people there, who they say are Antinomians - such a queer set of creatures. Very likely, if a good minister enters the pulpit, when he has done his sermon, up comes some man and grasps his hand, and says, "Ah! brother, I am glad to see you down here; sixteen ounces to the pound to-day; our minister gives us nothing but milk and water." "Where do you go?" he asks. "Oh, I attend a little room where we labour to exalt free-grace alone." "Ah! then you belong to that nasty set of Antinomians your minister was telling me of just now." Then you begin to talk with him, and you find that if he is an Antinomian you should very much like to be one yourself. Very possibly he is one of the most spiritual men in the village; he knows so much of God that he really cannot sit down under a legal ministry; he understands so much of free-grace that he is obliged to turn

out or else he would be starved to death. It is common to cry down those who love God, or rather, who not only love God, but love all that God has said, and who hold the truth firmly. Let us then, not as Christians only, but as being a peculiar class of Christians, take care that we give no handle to the enemy, but that our lives are so consistent, that we do nothing to disgrace that cause which is dear to us as our lives, and which we hope to maintain faithfully unto death.

III. Lastly, Paul wept, BECAUSE HE KNEW THEIR DOOM: "Their end is destruction." Mark you, the end of a professing man who has been a hypocrite will be emphatically destruction. If there be chains in hell more heavy than others - if there be dungeons in hell more dark than others - if there be racks that shall more fearfully torment the frame - if there be fires that shall more tremendously scorch the body - if there be pangs that shall more effectually twist the soul in agonies, professing Christians must have them if they be found rotten at last, I had rather die a profligate than die a lying professor. I think I had rather die the veriest sweeping of the street than die a hypocrite. Oh, to have had a name to live, and yet to have proved insincere. The higher the soar the greater the fall. This man has soared high; how low must he tumble when he finds himself mistaken! He who thought to put to his mouth the nectared cup of heaven, finds when he quaffs the bowl, that is the very draught of hell. He who hoped to enter through the gates into the city finds the gates shut, and he himself bidden to depart as an unknown stranger. Oh! how thrilling is that sentence, "Depart from me, I never knew you!" I think I had rather hear it said to me, "Depart, accursed, among the rest of the wicked," than to be singled out, and to have it said, after exclaiming, "Lord, Lord," "Depart from me; I know you not; though you ate and drank in my courts; though you came to my sanctuary, you are a stranger to me, and I am a stranger to you." Such a doom, more horrible than hell, more direful than fate, more desperate than despair, must be the inevitable lot of those "whose god is their belly," who have "gloried in their shame," and "minded earthly things."

Now I dare say most of you will say, "Well, he has stirred the churches up to-night; if he has not spoken earnestly, he has spoken harshly, at any rate." "Ah!" says one, "I dare say it is very true; they are all a set of cants

and hypocrites; I always thought so; I shall not go amongst them; none of them are genuine." Stop a bit, my friend, I did not say they were all so; I should be very wicked if I did. The very fact that there are hypocrites proves that all are not so. "How is that?" say you. Do you think there would be any bad bank notes in the world if there were no good ones? Do you think anyone would try and circulate bad sovereigns if there were no really good ones? No, I think not. It is the good bank note that makes the bad one, by prompting the wicked man to imitate it and produce a forgery. It is the very fact that there is gold in the world that makes another try to imitate the metal and so to cheat his neighbour. If there were no true Christians, there would be no hypocrites. It is the excellence of the Christian character which makes men seek after it, and because they have not the real heart of oak, they try to grain their lives to look like it. Because they have not the real solid metal, they try to gild themselves to imitate it. You must have a few brains left, and those are enough to tell you that if there be hypocrites, there must be some who are genuine. "Ah!" says another, "quite right; there are many genuine ones, and I can tell you, whatever you may think, I am genuine enough. I never had a doubt or fear. I know I was chosen of God; and though I do not exactly live as I could wish, I know if I do not go to heaven, very few will ever have a chance. Why, sir, I have been a deacon the last ten years, and a member twenty; and I am not to be shaken by anything you say. As for my neighbour there, who sits near me, I do not think he ought to be so sure; but I have never had a doubt for thirty years." Oh my dear friend, can you excuse me? I will doubt for you. If you had not doubt yourself, I begin to doubt. If you are quite so sure, I really must suspect you; for I have noticed that true Christians are the most suspicious in the world; they are always afraid of themselves. I never met with a truly good man but he always felt he was not good enough; and as you are so particularly good, you must excuse me if I cannot quite endorse your security. You may be very good, but if you will take a trifle of my advice, I recommend you to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," lest, being puffed up by your carnal fleshly mind, you fall into the snare of the wicked one. "Not too sure," is a very good motto for the Christian. "Make your calling and election sure," if you like; but do not make your opinion of yourself so sure. Take care of presumption. Many a good man in his own esteem has been a very devil in God's eyes; many a pious soul in the esteem of the

church has been nothing but rottenness in the esteem of God. Let us then try ourselves. Let us say, "Search us, O God, and try our hearts; see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." If you shall be sent home with such a thought, I shall bless God that the sermon was not altogether in vain. But there are some here who say that it does not matter whether they are in Christ or no. They intend to go on trifling still, despising God, and laughing at his name. Mark this, sinner: The cry that does for one day won't do for ever; and thou you talk of religion now as if it were a mere trifle, mark ye men, you will want it by-and-bye. You are on board ship, and you laugh at the life-boat, because there is no storm; you will be glad enough to leap into it if you are able when the storm shall come. Now you say Christ is nothing, because you do not want him, but when the storm of vengeance comes, and death lays hold upon you, mark me, you will howl after Christ, though you will not pray for him now; you will shriek after him then, though you will not call for him now. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel." The Lord bring you to himself, and make you his true and genuine children, that you may not know destruction, but that you may be saved now, and saved for ever!

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## **Family Reformation; OR Jacob's Second Visit To Bethel**

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there. -  
Genesis 35:1

There are critical times in most families: times when much decision of character will be needed on the part of the father to guide things aright. They say there is a skeleton in every house, and, if so, I would add that occasionally the unquiet spirit takes to troubling the household, and

needs to be laid. There are times when the evil in the hearts of the children and in the nature of the parents becomes specially energetic, and brings about difficulties and perplexities, so that if a wrong turn were taken, the most fearful mischief would ensue; and yet, if there be grace in the hearts of some or all of the family, a strong and gracious hand at the helm of the ship may steer it right gallantly through the broken water, and bring it safely out of its dangers to pursue its journey much more happily in the future. Now, such a crisis had come to Jacob's family: things had reached a sad pass, and something must be done; everything seemed out of gear, and matters could not continue any longer as they were. All was out of order, and threatened to become much worse. Even the heathen outside began to smell the ill savor of Jacob's disorganized family, and the one alternative was-mend or end.

A stand must be taken by the head of the house. There must be a reform in the household, and a revival of religion throughout the whole family. If you notice, Jacob himself was in a bad way. His business was to remain in Canaan a mere sojourner, dwelling in tents, not one of the people, but moving about among them, testifying that he looked for "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He expected to inherit the land, but, for the time being, he was to be a stranger and a sojourner, as his fathers Abraham and Isaac had been. Yet at Succoth we read that he built booths-scarcely houses, I suppose, but more than tents. It was a compromise, and a compromise is often worse than a direct and overt disobedience of command. He dares not erect a house, but he builds a booth and thus shows his desire for a settled life; and though it is not ours to judge the purchase of land at Shechem, still it looks in the same direction. Jacob is endeavoring to find a resting-place where Abraham and Isaac had none. I will not speak too positively, but the patriarch's acts look as if he desired to find a house for himself, where he might rest and be on familiar terms with the inhabitants of the land. Now the Lord his God would not have it so. The chosen family was intended by the divine purpose to dwell alone and maintain a peculiar walk of separation. The seed of Abraham was ordained to be in the highest sense a Nonconformist tribe, a race of separatists. Their God meant them to be a distinct people, entirely severed from all the nation among whom they dwelt; and so they must be, but the inclination to be like their neighbors



was very manifest in Jacob's family.

The spell of Esau's greatness had no doubt affected the clan of Jacob: they had, from the patriarch himself down to the youngest child, made very willing obeisance before "my lord Esau," and the homage paid was not without its effect. That obeisance was an act which from some points of view we cannot condemn, but it was scarcely becoming in one who was a prince with God, and elect of the Most High, and its effect could not have been elevating. The sons seem to have taken very readily to paying homage to profane Esau, though they were not little children, but young men; they bowed before their noble looking uncle with his grand band of warriors, and were, perhaps, fascinated by the charms of so warlike a member of the family, whose sons were dukes and great ones in the land. It added importance to the shepherds to feel that they were related to a great captain. Now that they had come to Shechem, and their father had purchased a piece of land there, and had built booths, they felt themselves to be of some importance, and they must go visiting, for everybody loves society. And now comes the mischief of it. Jacob's only daughter must visit with the prince of the people. The daughter of Israel is invited to the dances and the assemblies of the upper circles of the land. It is winked at by the father, possibly, and the brothers aid and abet it. She is often away at the residence of Shechem, the fine young Hivite prince, a very respectable gentleman indeed, with mansion and estates; but there comes an ill matter of it, not to be mentioned. Then her brothers in their hot anger run into a sin that was quite as evil as Shechem's crime; by way of making some amends for their sister's defilement, with dastardly treachery they slay the whole of the Shechemites, and so bring the guilt of murder upon a family which ought to have been holiness unto the Lord.

Children of God cannot mix with the world without mischief. The world does hurt to us and we to it when once we begin to be of the world and like it. It is an ill-assorted match. Fire and water were never meant to be blended. The seed of the woman must not mix with the seed of the serpent.

It was when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair,

and took of them as they pleased, that the deluge came and swept away the population of the earth. Abundant evil comes of joining together what God has put asunder. The corpses of the Shechemites and the indignation of all who heard of the foul deed were the direct result of the attempt to blend Israel with Canaan. And now Jacob's household is filled with fear, and the old man himself -a grand man and a believer, but a long way off being perfect-cries out to his sons, in great distress, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." To this his sons only replied, "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"-taking his rebuke in a rough fashion, and by no means showing any sense of shame. They do not appear to have been the worst of his sons, and yet their rage and cruelty were most terrible and when they were charged with their crime they justified it. Wretched indeed was the condition of Jacob's household!

That family was badly arranged from the very beginning. Polygamy needed not to be denounced in so many words in Scripture, because the specimens given of it are all so thoroughly bad that no one can doubt that the thing is radically vicious in its mildest form. It worked shockingly in the case of Jacob. His wife Rachel whom he loved so well had, I fear, been the cause of the introduction into the family of idolatry in the form of teraph, or symbol-worship. She had learned it of her father Laban, and secretly practiced it; and if Jacob was almost aware of it he did not like to say anything to her, his darling, the queen of his soul. Those bright eyes which had charmed him years ago, how could he dim them with tears? The children of Leah took up their mother's cause, and the sons of the handmaids sided with each other, and this made trouble. The many mothers of the family created difficulties and complications of all sorts, so that the household was hard to arrange and keep in good going order. It was not what a believing household should be, and it is not wonderful that affairs so thoroughly went awry that it appeared as if even the salt was losing its savor, and the good seed was dying before it could be sown in the earth, and made to bring forth fruit. A stand must be made. Something behoves to be done, and Jacob must do it. The Lord comes in, and he speaks with Jacob, and since the good man's heart was sound towards God's statutes, the Lord had only to speak to him and he obeyed.

He was pulled up short, and made to look at things, and set his house in order, and he did so with that resolution of character which comes out in Jacob when he is brought into a strait, but which at other times is not perceptible.

We shall take up this incident at this time, and may God grant that we may find practical teaching in it for ourselves and for our families, by the guidance of his gracious Spirit.

Notice, first, God having appeared to Jacob, what was to be done? secondly, what happened in the doing of it? and thirdly, what followed thereon.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS TO BE DONE? The first thing to do was to make a decided move. God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." You must hasten away from Shechem, with its fertile plains, and make a mountain journey up to Bethel, and dwell there. You have been long enough near these Shechemites; mischief has come from your being so intimate with the world. You must cut a trench between yourselves and the associations you have formed, and you must go up to Bethel and remain there awhile. Every now and then, dear brothers and sisters, we shall find it necessary to say to ourselves and to our family, "We must come out from among worldlings, we must be separate. We are forming connections which are injurious to us, and we must snap the deceitful bonds. We are being led into habits and customs in the management of the household which are not such as God would approve. We are doing this to secure favor of one, and doing that to escape frowns from another, and we are not walking straight with the Lord, and therefore to bring us back to our moorings we must come right out and go to Bethel, to the place where God met with us at the first. We must go to our first trysting-place and meet with our Lord again, cost whatever the journey may: though some may feel it to be a cross, yet we must begin again and work upon the old lines. Back to our old Puritanism and precision we must go and renew our vows. Let us go right away from worldliness and get to the Bethel of separation, and draw near to God again. Have you never found, beloved, when you have been very deep in business and very much in the world that you begin to feel heart-sick, and

you cry, "It won't do, I must get out of this; I must retreat into a holy solitude, and enjoy a little quiet communion with God"? Have you not felt concerning your family sometimes, "We are not serving the Lord aright, nor becoming more holy or devoted, everything appears to be going down- hill. We must steer the other way. We must alter our present declining state in the name of God, or else we cannot expect to have his blessing." I know that you have come to such a pass, and have resolved to take a decided step. May the Lord help all of us when we see clearly that something is to be done. May we have grace to end sinful hesitation, and set about amendment at all hazards.

Now they must revive old memories. "Go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." A revival of old memories is often most useful to us, especially to revive the memory of our conversion.

The memory of the love of our espousals, when we went after the Lord into the wilderness, and were quite satisfied to be denied and disowned of all, so long as we might but dwell near to him-that memory is right good for us. It is well to recall that hallowed hour when we, for the first time, set up a family altar, and with our dear ones bowed before the Lord; then we felt that the separated place was a very sweet one, and we were most glad to get right away from the world and to live with Christ, and in Christ, and for Christ, and like Christ. We cannot help blushing as we remember those early days. We did not think that we should have fallen so far short of our ideal. Let the recollection of Bethel, then, come over us, to make us remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, and mourn over our own spiritual declensions. Are you singing,

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still,  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill"?

Then you must come back to your first hours of communion. Where you lost your joy you will find it, for it remains where you left it. If you have

neglected the prayer-closet, if you have ceased from the searching of the word of God, if you have departed from a close walking with Christ, and if you and your families have fallen into a very low state, so that strangers who look in would hardly know whether yours is a godly house or not-if it is so, then go back mourning and sighing to Bethel, and pray that the old feelings may be revived in you. God grant they may. And may you in addition be led to cry, How could I have so much departed from the living God? How could I have played the fool and gadded about so much when I might have rested still in peace if I had lived near to God. This, then, was the work which was to be done by Jacob, first, to make a decided move, and secondly, to revive old memories: have you any call to the like course of action? If so, see ye to it.

But now, again, Jacob must keep an old vow. I do not quite remember how many years old that vow was, but I suppose some thirty or so; yet he had not kept it. He was much younger when he knelt and said, "If thou wilt be with me," and so on, "then this place shall be God's house;" and he has forgotten that vow, or at least he has not fulfilled it all these years. Be very slow to make vows, brethren-very slow. They should be but very seldom presented, because all that you can do for God you are bound to do as it is;-and a vow is often a superfluity of superstition. But if the vow be made, let it not wait beyond its time, and complain of thee to thy God. An old and forgotten vow will rot and breed most solemn discomfort to thy heart; at first it will gnaw at thy conscience, and if thy conscience at last grows hardened to it others of thy powers will suffer the same petrifying process.

Moreover, a vow forgotten will bring chastisement on thee, and perhaps the rod will fall upon thy family. The connection between Jacob's not going to Bethel and the mischief that happened to his daughter Dinah, and the sinning of his sons Levi and Simeon, may not be distinctly traceable, but I feel persuaded that there was such a connection,--the sin of omission in the father led on to sins of commission in the sons. With the sins of his children the Lord chastened Jacob for his breach of promise. Note that the Lord does not remind Jacob of his wrong, nor chide him for it, but he puts him in a position in which he will remind himself of it. It is so gentle-I was going to say so courteous, of our God; he

is so gentle, so tender, that he would rather his servant should recollect the vow than be distinctly told of it in so many words. See, then, Jacob is bound to go and do according to his solemn pledge. Now, dear friend, it may be that part of the business you and I have to do in order to set our families right, is to recollect something we said we would do years ago, but which we have not done. We have had the ability for a long while, but the willingness has not been with us; let us now bestir ourselves and clear our consciences in the matter. God alone knows of it: let not this secret thing lie festering in our hearts and grieving the Holy Ghost. I speak, I believe, very closely home to some of my hearers. Perhaps the message is sufficiently distinct, and I had better say no more, but let your own hearts recollect your neglected promises.

It appeared to Jacob, next, that if he was to fulfill his vow, it was necessary to reform his whole house; for he could not serve the Lord and worship other gods. He said to all that were with him-to his sons first, and then to his hired servants and the rest- "Put away the strange gods that are among you." Yes, it must come to that. If I am to get back to my old position with God I must break my idols.

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be;  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee."

The idols of the family: the acts and deeds of the young folk which would grieve God, the doings of the elder ones which are inconsistent with a profession of faith in Jesus, the ill tempers that have been indulged, the divisions of heart which have come up in the family, with all that is sinful and unlovely, must go, if we are to get right again. There must be a general breaking and burying of idols, or we cannot worship the God of Bethel.

And then next he said, "Be clean." There was to be, I suppose, a general washing, indicative of purgation of character by going to God with repentance and seeking forgiveness. Jacob also said, "Change your garments." This was symbolic of an entire renewal of life, though I fear

me they were not all renewed. At any rate this is what was symbolized by "Change your garments." Alas, it is easier to say this to our families than it is to get them to do it. And do we wonder? Since it is so much easier for ourselves to say than it is for ourselves to do. Yet, beloved, if your walk is to be close with God, if you are to commune with the God of Bethel, you must be cleansed. The Lord cannot commune with us while we wallow in sin. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" Sin must be put away. The best believer that lives must wash his feet if he is to draw near to God as he has done aforetime. All this Jacob was to undertake, and to him who had become so lax with his family it was no small work to screw up his courage and say to Rachel and all of them- " Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." Well, then, the next and last thing which they were to do was to celebrate special worship. "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." When we get wrong and feel that there must be a decided change, we must set apart special times of devotion. We must say to our soul, "Soul, soul thou hast fed so little lately. This leanness of thine comes of neglecting spiritual feasting. Come, thou must humble thyself; thou must lay thyself low before God, and thou must approach the Lord with lowly reverence, and beg to be refreshed with his presence.

Thou must set apart more time for feeding upon Christ, and upon his word, and never be quiet till thou becomest again full of grace and of the Holy Ghost." In families it is often well, when you see that things are wrong, just to call the household together and say, "We must draw near unto God with peculiar earnestness, for we are going astray. We have not given up family prayer, but we must now make it special, and with double zeal draw nigh unto God." I am afraid that some of you neglect family prayer. If you do I am sure it will work evil in your households. The practice of family prayer is the castle of Protestantism. It is the grand defense against all attacks by a priestly caste, who set up their temples arid tell us to pray there, and pray by their mediation. Nay, but our houses are temples, and every man is a priest in his own house. This is a brazen wall of defense against superstition and priestcraft. Family prayer is the nutriment of family piety, and woe to those who allow it to cease. I read the other day of parents who said they could not have family prayer,

and one asked this question: "If you knew that your children would be sick through the neglect of family prayer, would you not have it? If one child was smitten down with fever each morning that you neglected prayer, how then?" Oh, then they would have it. "And if there was a law that you should be fined five shillings if you did not meet for prayer, would you find time for it?" Yes. "And if there were five pounds given to all who had family prayer, would you not by some means arrange to have it?" Yes. And so the enquirer went on with many questions, and wound up with this: "Then it is but an idle excuse when you, who profess to be servants of God, say that you have no time or opportunity for family prayer?" Should idle excuses rob God of his worship and our families of a blessing? Begin to pray in your families, and especially if things have gone wrong get them right by drawing near to God more distinctly. Did I hear you say, "We do not want to be formalists." No, I am not afraid you would be. I am afraid of your neglecting anything that tends towards the good of your household and your own spiritual growth, and therefore I pray you labor at once to acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace. Draw near the Lord again, more thoroughly than you have done before, for it is the only way by which the backslidings of persons and families are at all likely to be corrected. God grant a blessing with these words by the power of the Holy Ghost.

II. And now I come to my second point-WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DOING OF IT? Well, several things happened, and one or two of those were rather surprising. The first was that all heartily entered into the reforming work. I am sure they did, because the fourth verse says, "They gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hands"-all of them- "and all their earrings which were in their ears." He had not said anything about their earrings. Was there any hurt in their earrings? For a woman to wear an earring is not such a dreadful thing, is it? Perhaps not, but I suppose that these earrings were charms, and that they were used in certain incantations, and heathenish customs. It must have been a very sad discovery to Jacob, who himself could not have endured it, to find that wicked superstitions had come into his tents through his winking at the teraphs. The evil had gone on in secret, and though suspected was not actually under Jacob's eye. I dare say he was not quite sure that the teraphs were in the tent, and did not want to be quite sure, because it was



Rachel, you know, who had them, and she-well, she was Rachel-and she had been brought up so differently from Jacob himself, that perhaps Jacob thought he must not press her too severely upon the point. Perhaps he said to himself, "When I talk with her she does not seem at all idolatrous; I believe she is a good woman, and I must recollect her bringings-up, and as she comes from a high-church family I must let her have her little symbols; I do not know indeed that she has a teraph; I have never absolutely seen it;"-but there it was, and it was the nucleus of superstition. She and those around her had become corrupted with the superstitions of the heathen, and these earrings were the indication of their superstitious feeling, if not the instruments of divination.

Now, as soon as Jacob speaks they all give up their idols and their earrings.

I like this. It is a blessed thing when a man of God takes a stand, and speaks, and finds that his family are all ready to follow. Perhaps it was the fear that was upon them just then, the fear of the nations round about which made them so obedient. I am not sure it was a work of grace; but still, as far as outward appearance went, there was a willing giving up of all that could have grieved the Lord. And you will sometimes be pleased, Christian friends, when things get wrong and you determine to set them right, to see how others will yield to your determination. You ought to take courage from this. Perhaps the very person of whom you are most afraid will be the most ready to yield, and the most eager to help. You have been afraid of Rachel, but she has such love for you that she will do anything for you, and give up her teraphs at once. The sons who were so rough in speaking to you when you spoke in your own name, and spoke about yourself and said, "You have made me to stink," and so on, will answer very differently when you speak in God's name. There will be such a power going with God's word that they will yield freely and heartily.

They did so in Jacob's case. All of them gave up their idols, and they buried them in the earth beneath the oak. Would God a day would come to old England when all the crucifixes and priestly vestments, and the whole ruck of the symbols and emblems of superstition could be buried under some grand old gospel oak, never to be disinterred again. If we do

not see this in the nation we will at least secure it in our own houses.

Another circumstance happened, namely, that protection was afforded him, immediate and complete. "They journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." In their way cities abounded, and as it were hemmed them in, and the people might have turned out and cut to pieces the little tribe of Israel, but a message had gone forth from the Lord of hosts, saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm"; and so they journeyed in safety. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"; and now that Jacob has determined to set things right he walks unharmed. You do not know how much of personal trouble which you are now bearing will vanish as soon as you determine to stand out for God. You do not know how much of family difficulty that now covers you with dread will vanish when you yourself have feared the Lord, and have come forth decidedly and determinedly to do the right. No danger shall befall the man who walks with God, for with such a companion malaria breathes health, and curses become blessings; but ye know not whither ye are going, and into what thick woods ye plunge, when ye once forsake the Lord, and walk contrary to his mind. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and if thou dost not respect his jealousy, and walk before him with holy fear, thou shalt be made to feel his wrath.

Since he has known you only of all the people of the earth, for that very reason he will chasten you for your iniquities. This plague of evils shall be stayed when you purge out your idols, but not till then. In the next place the vow was performed. They came to Bethel, and I can almost picture the grateful delight of Jacob as he looked upon those great stones among which he had lain him down to sleep, a lonely man. Perhaps he hunted out the stone that had been his pillow; probably it still stood erect as part of the pillar which he had reared in memory of the goodness of God, and the vision he had seen. There were many regrets, many confessions, many thanksgivings at Bethel. "With my staff I came to this place, but now I am become two bands. Look, my sons! look, Rachel! Look, all of you: this is the spot where when I fled from Esau with nothing but my staff and wallet I laid me down, and the Lord appeared to me; and he has kept me

all my life long. Come, help me as I put together the unhewn stones to make an altar; and this great stone, behold we will pour oil on the top of it, and we will together sing the praises of El-beth-el-the God of the house of God, the God who is a house for his people, the God who has a household of which we form a part, the God under whose wings we seek refuge." I have no doubt that Jacob and his house spent a very happy time at Bethel, where mourning softened thankfulness, and joy sweetened penitence, where every sacred passion in the patriarch's soul found vent, and poured itself out before the Lord. He thought of the past, rejoiced in the present, and hoped for the future, for now he had come to be with God and to draw near to him.

But what else happened? Why, now there came a death and a funeral. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. Her name means a bee. And we have had old nurses ourselves, have we not, who have been like busy bees in our household? Dear old Deborah nursed our mother and nursed us, and is still willing to nurse our children. We do not grow that sort of people now, they tell me. I am afraid we do not grow the same kind of masters and mistresses that they used to have in years gone by. I am not sure about it, but I believe that if there were more Rebekahs there would be more Deborahs. Somehow I think we are generally about as well treated as we treat others, and we get measured into our bosoms very much that which we ourselves measure out. There may be exceptions, and there are, but that is the general rule. Well, dear old Deborah had left Laban's house and gone with Miss Rebekah when she went into the far country to be married; and she had taken care of her mistress' two boys, Jacob and Esau, and had set her heart on the same boy that the mother loved so well, and she had sorrowed with Rebekah when he, having grown up, had been compelled to save his life to flee from his father's household. I cannot tell when she came to live with Jacob. Perhaps Rebekah sent her to live with her favourite son because she thought there were so many in the family that somebody was wanted to look after them all-a person old and discreet to come between Jacob and the perpetual jars of the household. No doubt Jacob often found it pleasant to make the good old soul a confidante in his troubles. And now she dies, and they bury her under the oak, which they call the oak of weeping-Allon-bachuth. Is it not strange that when you are trying to get right there comes a great sorrow?

No, it is not strange; for you are trying to purge out the old leaven, and the Lord is going to help you. You are trying to set everything right with him, and he comes and takes away one of the best people in the house who helped you most of all, one of the staunchest old Christian people that you ever knew, whom you wanted to live for ever, and he does it not to hinder but to help you in your labor. He knows best: a touch of the pruning-knife was wanted by the vine of Israel, that it might bring forth more fruit. The good nurse died when they seemed to want her most, but it was better for her to die then than that she should have departed when Dinah's shame and Simeon's crime had made the household dark. It was better that she should live to see them purged from idols and on the road to her old master Isaac, for then she would feel as if she could say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." The moral of the incident is that the Lord may heat the fire all the more when he sees the refining process going on, and we must receive the further trial as a token of love and not of anger if he smites us heavily when we are honestly endeavoring to seek his face.

III. This is what happened while they were doing it. Now we close with the third head, namely, WHAT FOLLOWED THEREON. All this putting away of idols and going to Bethel-did anything come of it? Yes. First, there was a new appearance of God. Read the ninth verse. "And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him": this was a new appearance of God. Some of you will not understand what I say, but I leave it to those who know the Lord: there are times when God is very near to us, I wish it were always so; but some of us can mark out epochs in our spiritual history in which we were wonderfully conscious that God drew near to us. We felt his awful presence, and were glad. The Lord seemed to put us in the cleft of the rock, and make his glory pass before us. I have known such times. Would God I knew them oftener! It is worth while to have been purged and cleansed, and to have done anything to be favored with one of those divine visits in which we almost cry with Paul, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth." A clear view of God in Christ Jesus and a vivid sense of Jesus' love is a sweet reward for broken idols and Bethel reformations.

The next thing that came of it was a confirmation to Jacob of his title of prince, which conferred a dignity on the whole family. For a father to be a prince ennobles all the clan. God now puts upon them another dignity and nobility which they had not known before, for a holy people are a noble people. You that live in God's presence are in the peerage of the skies. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." He first makes them princes, and then to crown it he makes them princes of princes, because if all his people are princes it follows that those who are princes among his people are princes among princes. The Lord has a way of conferring high spiritual dignities upon those who seek to order their households aright, and to keep their hearts clean and chaste before him. Such honor have all the saints who follow the Lord fully. God help us to keep close to Jesus, and enjoy daily communion with him.

And then, next, there was given to Jacob and his family a vast promise, which was, in some degree, an enlargement of a promise made to Isaac and to Abraham before. "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins." I do not remember anything said to Abraham about a company of nations, or about kings coming out of his loins, but out of the loins of Israel, a prince, princes may come. God puts upon his promise a certain freshness of vastness and infinity now that Jacob has drawn near to him.

Brethren, God will give us no new promise, but he will make the old promises look wondrously new. He will enlarge our vision so that we shall see what we never saw before. Have you ever had a painting which hung neglected in some back room? Did it one day strike you that you would have it framed and brought into a good light? When you saw it properly hung on the wall did you not exclaim, "Dear me! I never noticed that picture before. How wonderfully it has come out"? And many and many a promise in God's word will never be noticed by you till it is set in a new frame of experience. Then, when it is hung up before you, you will be lost in admiration of it. Sin makes the promises to be like old pictures coated over with dirt. There must be a cleansing of ourselves, and then it will be

like a careful cleaning of the picture, from which no tint suffers, but all receive a new bloom. God will make his Bible seem a new book to you.

You will find joy in every page, and your soul shall dance for joy as you see the great things which God has prepared for you, ay, and for your children also if they are walking in the truth, for "the promise is unto us and to our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." With Jacob by the new appearing of the Lord the inheritance was confirmed, for thus runs the Scripture: "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." So, dear friends, all the blessed covenant of grace with all the appurtenances thereof shall be made distinctly and clearly yours when you have gone to Bethel and with holy decision drawn near to the Lord your God.

I will not detain you except to say that you may also expect very familiar communion. Notice the thirteenth verse, "God, went up from him in the place where he talked with him." Talked with him! Talked with him! It is such a familiar word. God talking with man. We say "conversing" when we are speaking in a dignified manner; but "talking!" Oh that blessed condescension of God when he speaks to us in the familiar tones of his great love in Christ Jesus. There is a way of converse with God which no tongue can explain: they only know it who have enjoyed it. Brethren, there are fellowships with God to be enjoyed of which a large number of Christians have no idea. He who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven and that are in earth dwells with lowly ones. Idols broken, and garments changed, and altars built, and the soul kept near to God, and then "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." This is so inestimably precious a boon that I urge you to seek after it, urging myself most of all.

The chapter closes with the death of Rachel, and so, perhaps, when we get nearest to God there may come another trial. The old tradition was that no man could see God's face and live. It was not true, but' it contained a truth, for scarcely can a man enter the secret place of thunder and have communion with God without special trial. Yes, it is even so, for "even our God is a consuming fire." He asks the question, "Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?" and the answer is, "He that hath clean hands

and a pure heart, that shutteth his ears from hearing of blood," and so on, "he shall dwell on high." When we come to dwell with him who is fire, the fire must burn, and we must feel it. That hallowed flame will consume much that our unhallowed flesh would like to keep, and there will not be a burning without our enduring sharp smart and pain. God's furnace is in Zion, and his fire is in Jerusalem. He will purify the sons of Levi as silver is purified. "Who shall abide the day of his coming? for he will be as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap." Yet if we are in a right state that is exactly what we want. O that our sinfulness were wholly burned up! Trial is welcomed if sin may but be conquered. Even Rachel may die if Jesus lives in us but the more. Lord, give us grace and thy presence, even if we pass through the furnace a thousand times in consequence thereof. Hear us, for Jesus' sake Amen.

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## **Fast-Day Service**

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a Solemn Fast, Humiliation, and Prayer before Almighty God: in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins, and for imploring His Blessing and Assistance on our Arms for the Restoration of Tranquillity in India.

### **BRIEF INVOCATION.**

O God, the God of heaven and of earth, we do this day pay Thee reverence, and meekly bow our heads in adoration before Thine awful throne. We are the creatures of Thine hand; Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves. It is but just and right that we should pay unto Thee our adoration. O God I we are met together in a vast congregation for a purpose which demands all the power of piety, and all the strength of prayer. Send down Thy Spirit upon Thy servant, that he, whilst trembling

in weakness, may be made strong to preach Thy Word, to lead forth this people in holy prayer, and to help them in that humiliation for which this day is set apart. Come, O God, we beseech Thee; bow our hearts before Thee; instead of sackcloth and ashes give us true repentance, and hearts meekly reverent; instead of the outward guise, to which some pay their only homage, give us the inward spirit; and may we really pray, really humiliate ourselves, and really tremble before the Most High God. Sanctify this service; make it useful unto us and honorable to Thyself. And O Thou dread Supreme, unto Thee shall be the glory and the honor, world without end. Amen.

Let us now praise God by singing the first Hymn. I shall read it through; and then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to sing it through.

Before Jehovah's awful throng,  
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;  
Know that the Lord is God alone;  
He can create and he destroy.

His sovereign power, without our aid,  
made us of clay and form'd us men!  
And when like wand'ring sheep, we stray'd,  
He brought us to his fold again.

We are his people, we his care,  
Our souls and all our mortal frame;  
What lasting honors shall we rear,  
Almighty Maker to thy name?

We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,  
High as the heavens our voices raise;  
And earth with her ten thousand tongues,  
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.

Wide as the world is thy command;  
Vast as eternity thy love;  
Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,



When rolling years shall cease to move.

EXPOSITION.

DANIEL 9:1-19.

"In the first year of Darius the Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

"In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

"We have sinned, and have committed, iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

"Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

"O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."

There is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if he were not merciful. He is merciful—as merciful as if he were not just, and in very deed more merciful than if he were too lenient; instead of blending a wise severity of justice with a gracious clemency of long-suffering. My brethren, we

should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not to-day to bow down before the thundering Jove; you need not come before implacable deities, who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made. Our God delights in mercy, and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain; yea, when Britain shall have forgotten it, and only the page of history shall record his mercies, God will still remember what he did for us in this day of our straits and our difficulties. As to the hope that he will help us it is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear. It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us; and if we ask him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain's God has done, and how he has heard her cry, and answered the voice of her supplications.

"Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

"Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

"And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under this whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

"As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn front our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

"Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

"And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly."

The prophet in his prayer pleads what God has done for them, as the reason why he should make bare his arm; he tells how God delivered

Israel out of Egypt; and he therefore prays that God would deliver them from their present trouble. And, my brethren, not Israel itself could boast a nobler history than we, measuring it by God's bounties. We have not yet forgotten an armada scattered before the breath of heaven, scattered upon the angry deep as a trophy of what God can do to protect his favored Isle. We have not yet forgotten a fifth of November, wherein God discovered divers plots that were formed against our religion and our commonwealth. We have not yet lost the old men, whose tales of even the victories in war are still a frequent story. We remember how God swept before our armies the man who thought to make the world his dominion, who designed to cast his shoe over Britain, and make it a dependency of his kingdom. God wrought for us; he wrought with us; and he will continue to do so. He hath not left his people, and he will not leave us, but he will be with us even to the end. Cradle of liberty! Refuge of distress! Storms may rage around thee, but not upon thee, nor shall all the wrath and fury of men destroy thee, for God hath pitched his tabernacle in thy midst, and his saints are the salt in the midst of thee.

"O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

"Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

"O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

And now for a few moments let us endeavor to pray:

PRAYER

Our Father, which art in heaven," we will be brief, but we will be earnest if Thou wilt help us. We have a case to spread before Thee this day. We will tell out our story, and we will pray that Thou wouldst forgive the weakness of the words in which it shall be delivered, and hear us, for Jesus' sake. O Father, Thou hast smitten this our land, not in itself, but in one of its dependencies. Thou hast allowed a mutinous spirit to break out in our armies, and Thou hast suffered men who know not Thee, who fear neither God nor man, to do deeds for which earth may well blush, and for which we, as men, desire to cover our faces before Thee. O Lord God, Thou couldst not bear the sin of Sodom; we are sure Thou canst not endure the sin which has been committed in India. Thou didst rain hell out of heaven upon the cities of the plain. The cities of Inde are not less vile than they, for they have committed lust and cruelty, and have much sinned against the Lord. Remember this, O God of Heaven.

But, O Lord our God, we are not here to be the accusers of our fellow-mall; we are here to pray that Thou wouldst remove the scourge which this great wickedness has brought upon us. Look down from heaven, O God, and behold this day the slaughtered thousands of our countrymen. Behold the wives, the daughters of Britain, violated, defiled! Behold her sons, cut in pieces and tormented in a manner which earth hath not beheld before. O God, free us, we beseech Thee, from this awful scourge! Give strength to our soldiers to execute upon the criminals the sentence which justice dictates; and then, by Thy strong arm, and by Thy terrible might, do Thou prevent a repetition of so fearful an outrage.

We pray Thee, remember this day the widow and the fatherless children; think Thou of those who are this day distressed even to the uttermost. Guide the hearts of this great multitude, that they may liberally give and this day bestow of their substance to their poor destitute brethren. Remember especially our soldiers, now fighting in that land. God shield them! Be Thou a covert from the heat! Wilt Thou be pleased to mitigate all the rig ours of the climate for them! Lead them on to battle; cheer their hearts; bid them remember that they are not warriors merely, but executioners; and may they go with steady tramp to the battle, believing that God wills it that they should utterly destroy the enemy, who have not only defied Britain, but thus defiled themselves amongst men.

But, O Lord, it is ours this day to humble ourselves before Thee. We are a sinful nation; we confess the sins of our governors and our own particular iniquities. For all our rebellions and transgressions, O God have mercy upon us! We plead the blood of Jesus. Help every one of us to repent of sin, to fly to Christ for refuge and grant that each one of us may thus hide ourselves in the rock, till the calamity be overpass, knowing that God will not desert them that put their trust in Jesus. Thy servant is overwhelmed this day; his heart is melted like wax in the midst of him; he knoweth not how to pray. Yet Lord if Thou canst hear a groaning heart which cannot utter itself in words, thou hearest his strong impassioned cry, in which the people join. Lord save us! Lord arise and bless us; and let the might of Thine arm and the majesty of Thy strength be now revealed in the midst of this land, and throughout those countries which are in our dominion God save the Queen! A thousand blessings on her much-loved head! God preserve our country! May every movement that promotes liberty and progress be accelerated, and may everything be done in our midst, which can shield us from the discontent of the masses, and can protect the masses from the oppression of the few. Bless England, O our God. "Shine, mighty God, on Britain shine;" and make her still glorious Britain, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Lord accept our confessions; hear our prayers, and answer us by Thy Holy Spirit! Help Thy servant to preach to us; and all the glory shall be unto Thee, O Father, to Thee, O Son, and Thee, O Holy Spirit; world without end. Amen and Amen.

Let us now sing the second hymn. It is made up of verses selected from different psalms, which I thought to be appropriate to the occasion

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne,  
Thy saints have dwelt secure  
Sufficient is thine arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.

Our foes insult us, but our hope  
In thy compassion lies  
This thought shall bear our spirits up,  
That God will not despise.

In vain the sons of Satan boast  
Of armies in array;  
When God has first despised their host,  
They fall an easy prey.  
Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come  
Be thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

Hoping to receive help from God's Holy Spirit, I shall now proceed to address you from a part of the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of Micah: -

SERMON.

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. - Micah 6:9

This world is not the place of punishment for sin; not the place; it may sometimes be a place, but not usually. It is very customary among religious people, to talk of every accident which happens to men in the indulgence of sin, as if it were a judgment. The upsetting of a boat upon a river on a Sunday is assuredly understood to be a judgment for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. In the accidental fall of a house, in which persons were engaged in any unlawful occupation, the inference is at once drawn that the house fell because they were wicked. Now, however some religionists may hope to impress the people by such childish stories as those, I, for one, forswear them all. I believe what my Master says is true, when he declared, concerning the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, that they were not sinners above all the sinners that were upon the face of the earth. They were sinners; there is no doubt about it; but the falling of the wall was not occasioned by their sin, nor was their premature death the consequence of their excessive wickedness. Let me, however, guard this declaration, for there are many who carry this doctrine to an extreme.

Because God does not usually visit each particular offense in this life upon the transgressor, men are apt to deny altogether the doctrine of judgments. But here they are mistaken. I feel persuaded that there are such things as national judgments, national chastisements for national sins—great blows from the rod of God, which every wise man must acknowledge to be, either a punishment of sin committed, or a monition to warn us to a sense of the consequences of sins, leading us by God's grace to humiliate ourselves, and repent of our sin.

O, my friends, what a rod is that which has just fallen upon our country! My poor words will fall infinitely short of the fearful tale of misery and woe which must be told before you can know how smartly God hath smitten, and how sternly he hath chidden us. We have to-day to mourn over revolted subjects, for to-day a part of our fellow-countrymen are in open arms against our government. That, of itself, were a heavy blow. Happily the government of this land is so constituted that we know little of revolutions except by name; but the horrors of anarchy, the terrors of a government shaken to its foundations, are so great, that should I preach alone upon that subject, you might hear the rod, and cry aloud beneath its strokes. But this is as but the letting forth of water. A flood succeedeth. The men that have revolted were our subjects, and I challenge all the world to deny what I am going to say: they were our subjects rightly. Whatever the inhabitants of India might be (and undoubtedly that people have grave faults to find with us), the Sepoys had voluntarily given themselves up to our dominion, they had themselves taken oaths of fealty to Her Majesty and their officers, and they have no cause to murmur if they are made to endure the sentence uttered by a government of which they were the sworn and willing supporters. They were always petted, always dandled upon the knee of favoritism. Their revolt is not the revolt of a nation. If India had revolted, history might perhaps have taught us that she had patriots in her midst, who were delivering her from a tyrannical nation; but in the present case it is only men who are impelled by a lust and ambition for empire, who have risen against us. And, ah I my friends, what crimes have they committed! Not to-day shall I detail their acts of debauchery, bloodshed, and worse than bestiality—this tongue will not venture to utter what they have dared to do. Ye would rise from your seats and hiss me from the pulpit which I now occupy, if I

should but dare to hint at the crimes which have been done of them, not in secret, but in the very streets of their cities.

And, again, equally as painful, we have now rebels to be executed. I look upon every gallows as a fearful chastisement. I regard every gibbet as being a dreadful visitation upon our land; and I think that whenever the arm of the ruler is outstretched for the punishment of death, it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction to it. Just as the father thinks it a high affliction to chastise his child, so should a country ever esteem it to be a visitation when they have to punish, especially with the punishment of death. Now, these men must be punished; both heaven and earth demand it. I am no soldier, I love not war; I do not believe that this is a war at all, in the proper sense of the term. We are not fighting with enemies; our troops are going forth against revolted subjects—against men who, by their crimes, by their murder, and by other unmentionable sins, have incurred the punishment of death; and as the arrest of a murderer by authority of the law is not war, so the arrest of Indian Sepoys, and their utter destruction is not war—it is what earth demands, and what I believe God sanctions. But it is a horrible necessity. It is a dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of our fellow-subjects; we must look upon it as being an affliction: and, to-day, amongst the other evils that we bemoan, we must bemoan this—that the sword must be taken out of its sheath, to cut off our fellow-subjects by their thousands. The rod, the rod, THE ROD hath indeed fallen heavily; no mortal tongue can tell the anguish it hath caused, nor perhaps can we yet dream where its ill effects shall end.

Remember, however, the words of my text. It is a rod; but it is an appointed rod. Every deed that has been done against us has been appointed by God. God is most fully to be cleared from the sin of it, but it is undoubtedly true that he has overruled and permitted it. The rod was ordained of God. I myself see God everywhere. I believe that "the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king, and the chaff from the hand of the winnower as steered as the stars in their courses." And I see God in this war. The wheels of providence may revolve in a mysterious manner, but I am certain that wisdom is the axle upon which they revolve, so that at last it shall be seen that God, who



ordained the rod, only permitted it that greater good might follow, and that his name might be exalted through the earth. The sin is man's own deed, but the affliction that we suffer through it, God hath ordained. Let us bow before it, and let us now hearken to the exhortation of the text—"Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it."

I shall have your attention whilst as briefly as I can I endeavor to bid you hear this rod of God.

First, let me remark, it would have been as well if we had heard this rod BEFORE IT FELL upon us. God's rod by the wise man may be heard before it smiteth. He that understandeth God's moral government, knows that sin carries punishment in its bowels. A wise man believing revelation, could have prophesied that God would visit us. The sins of the government of India have been black and deep. He who has heard the shrieks of tormented natives, who has heard the well-provoked cursing of dethroned princes, might have prophesied that it would not be long before God would unsheath his sword to avenge the oppressed. With regard to India itself, I am no apologist for our dominion there; with regard to the Sepoys, they are our voluntary subjects, they deserve the utmost rigour of the law. From their own oath they were our subjects; and if they have revolted let them suffer the punishment of their treason. But had it been the Indian nation that had revolted, I would have prayed God that they might have been brought under British rule again, for the sake of civilization, but I would not have preached a crusade against them, lest haply we should have been smiting patriots who were but delivering an oppressed country. My brethren, I say it would have been as well if the rod had been heard before it fell. If in the midst of sin the Indian government had paused, and endeavored to undo the evil, it would have been well for them—if instead of following the policy of creed they had followed the policy of right, they might have looked for divine support. They never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindoos at all. I believe myself (for it in no way infringes the law of right) entitled to my religion; but if my religion consisted in bestiality, infanticide, and murder, I should have no right to my religion, unless I were prepared to be hanged for it. Now, the religion of the Hindoos is neither more nor less than a mass of the rankest filth that ever imagination could have

conceived. The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Had they given a decent character to their demons, we might have tolerated their idolatry; but when their worship necessitates everything that is evil, not religion, but morality must put it down. I do not believe that in this land there ever ought to have been any toleration for the Agapemone, a place of lust and abomination, where sin is committed before which God's sun might blush, never ought to be tolerated. Any religion that does not infringe upon morality is beyond the force of legislature. But when once religious teachers teach immorality, and when once a religion compels men to sin, down with it; no toleration to it. It is impossible that there should be any quarter strewn to vice, even though embellished with the name of religion. If it be any man's religion to blow my brains out, I shall not tolerate it. If it be any man's religion to meet me as the Thugs do, and garotte me, and murder me, I shall not tolerate his Thugism. If it be a man's religion to commit bestial acts in public, I for one would touch his conscience, but believing that he has none, I would touch him somewhere else. Such a religion as the religion of the Hindoo, the Indian Government were bound, as in the sight of God, to put down with all the strength of their hand. But they have allowed it, in some cases they have even aided and abetted their filthy deeds; and now God visits them; and, I repeat, it would have been well if they had heard the rod before it fell; they might have perhaps avoided all this evil, and certainly they would have avoided the remorse which some of them must feel in having thus brought it upon themselves.

But it has fallen. The rod has smitten; the scourge has ploughed deep furrows upon India's back. What then? "Hear ye the rod" that has fallen. Now, it is an opinion published by authority—and who am I, that I should dispute the great authorities of England?—that one part of the reason for this dreadful visitation, is the sin of the people of England themselves. We are exhorted this day to humble ourselves for sin. Granting me that as being a truth—and mark, I am not the originator of it; it is in the Proclamation—who am I, that I should dispute such a high authority as that?—it is our sin that has brought it us, so they say—what, then, are our sins? Now, I will be honest with you—as honest as I can, and I will try and tell you. What are the most glaring sins for which, if it be true that God is now punishing us, are the most likely to have brought this visitation upon

us?

First, there are sins in the community that never ought to have been allowed. O Britain, weep for deeds which thy governors have not yet strength of mind to stop. We have long been allowing the infamous nuisances of Holywell-street; bless God they are pretty well done for! But now what do I see every night? If I return from preaching in the country, in the Haymarket and in Regent-street, what stares me before my eyes? If there be a crime for which God will visit England, it is the sin of allowing infamy to walk before our eyes thus publicly. I do not know whose fault it is—some say it is the fault of the police: it is somebody's fault, that I do know, and against that somebody I do now most solemnly protest. It is a most fearful thing that those who are honest and moral cannot walk the streets, without being insulted by sin in the robes of the harlot. My voice perhaps this day may reach some who have power to repeat this protest powerfully and successfully. I see before me gentlemen who are the representatives of the press. I believe they will do their duty in that matter; and if they will sting as some of them can sting, right sharply, they perhaps may be able to sting a little virtue into some of our governors, and that will be a good thing. But I do protest that this has been one of the causes why God has visited us, if indeed our sins have brought this evil upon us, as I verily believe. Look ye too, men and brethren, at some of those amusements of yours, in which ye are wont to indulge. God forbid I should deny you those of your amusements which are innocent, but I must maintain that they should be always moral; when we know that lords and ladies of the land, have sat in playhouses, and listened to plays that were a long way from decent, it is time that some voice should be lifted up against them. These are glaring sins. I am not raking now for private faults; we have had these things before our eyes, and there have been some that have dared to protest against them long ago. I say, these sins of the community in part have brought the rod upon us.

But, my friends, I am inclined to think that our class sins are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy down-trodden! In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age

there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping-stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. "Pitch him in." He is only a poor clerk, he can live on a hundred a year. Put him in! There is a poor time-keeper: he has a large family; it does not matter; a man can be had for less: in with him! Here are the tens, the hundreds, and the thousands that must do the work. Put them in; heap the fire; boil the cauldron; stir them up; never mind their cries. The hire of the laborers kept back may go up to heaven: it does not matter, the millions of gold are safe. The law of demand and supply is with us, who is he that would interfere? Who shall dare to prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor? Cotton-lords and great masters ought to have power to do what they like with the people: ought they not? "Ah! but ye great men of the earth, there is a God, and that God has said he executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. And yet the sempstress in her garret, and yet the tailor in his den, and yet the artizan in his crowded factory, and yet the servants who earn your wealth, who have to groan under your oppression, shall get the ear of God, and he will visit you. "Hear ye the rod." It is for this the rod falleth on you.

Mark, again, the sins of merchants. Was there ever an age when the merchants of England had more fallen from their integrity? The mass of them, I believe, are honest to the core; but I do not know who among them are so. We can trust none in these times. Ye heap up your companies, and ye delude your myriads; ye gather the money of fools; ye scatter it to the winds of heaven, and when the poor call upon you ye tell them it is gone: but where? O! England, thou wast once true, upright, honest; men could not rightly call thee, then, "Perfidious Albion;" but now, O Britain, alas! for thee! Unless thou dost recover thyself, who can trust thee? God will visit the nation for this, and it shall be seen that this alone is one of the things which God would have us hear, when we hear the rod.

There are many of you that are poor. I saw you smile when I spoke to the rich. I will have at you also. If we are to humble ourselves this day as a nation, ye have cause also to humble. Ah, my God, what multitudes there are of men who deserve but little of their employers, for they are eye-

servers, men-pleasers, and do not with singleness of heart serve the Lord. Were men better workmen, their masters would be better. There are hundreds of you that are here to-day who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls, when you ought to be busy at your own work—who, when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else. And how many there are in what are called the lower ranks—and God forgive the man that invented that word, for we are none of us lower than the other before the Judge of all the earth—how many are there that do not know what it is to look up to God, and say, "Though he has made me a servant, I will discharge my duty, and I will serve my master and serve my God with all my might." Many are the sins of the poor. Humble yourselves with the rich; bow your heads and weep for your iniquities; for these things God doth visit us, and ye should hear the rod.

It is impossible for me to-day to enter into all the sins of illiberality, of deceit, of bigotry, of lasciviousness, of carnality, of pride, of covetousness, and of laziness which infest this land. I have tried to indicate some of the chief, and I pray God humble us all for them.

And now, "Hear ye the rod." O church of God, the rod has fallen, and the church ought to hear it. I am afraid that it is the church that has been the greatest sinner. Do I mean by "the church" that established by law? No, I mean the Christian church as a body. We, I believe, have been remiss in our duty; for many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of low estate. Our ministers were great and haughty; they understood the polish of rhetoric, they had all the grandeur of logic; to the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs, for the people knew not what they said, neither did they regard them. The churches themselves slumbered; they wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy, and they slept right on; and, whilst Satan was devouring the world, and taking his prey, the church sat still, and said, "Who is my neighbor?" and did not arouse herself to serve her God. I do hope that we have already seen the beginning of a revival. The last year has seen more preaching than any year since the days of the apostles. We are stirring in ragged schools, and in various efforts for doing good; but still the church is only half awake; I fear she still slumbers. O church of God! awake I awake I awake! for verily the rod has fallen for thy sake. "Hear thou the rod, and him that

hath appointed it."

We have had many rods, friends; we have had many great afflictions, and we did bear them for a time; and now I close my sermon by saying, "Hear ye the rod, when the rod SHALL AGAIN BE STILL." We trust that in a little while our soldiers will carve us out peace and victory with their triumphant swords; we trust that, perhaps this very day a great fight is being fought, and a great victory being won. I seem to hear to-day the shout of the triumphant warrior; I think I hear the trump of victory even now. The hour of prayer is often the hour of deliverance. At any rate, we hope that ere long this black cloud will be overblown, and then I fear you will all forget it. You will pray to-day: will you pray when victory comes? You will buy some fireworks, will you not? That is how you will thank God! You had a victory over a potent enemy, and peace was established: your votive offerings consisted of rockets and illuminations—grand offerings to the Dread Supreme! If a heathen were here he would say, "Their God is the God of humiliation, not the God of victory: their God is a God of trouble, certainly not the God of blessings, for they forget him when they receive deliverance." I remember, when last time the cholera swept through your streets, ye hurried to your churches, and ye prayed; terror sat upon your countenances, and many of you cried aloud for deliverance. It came. What did you do? Alas! for your piety! It was as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passed away. It will be so again. It is but as the lashing of the water; it is smitten, but it soon recovers itself, and all marks are effaced. It is so with this land; I fear it is so with each of us to a degree. How often have you and I been laid upon our beds with cholera, or with fever, or with some other disease which threatened to take us away! We prayed; we sent for the minister; we devoted ourselves to God; we vowed, if he would spare us, we would live better. Here thou art, my hearer, just what thou wast before thy sickness. Thou hast forgotten thy vow; but God hath not forgotten it. Thy resolutions were filed in heaven, and in the day of judgment God shall take them forth, and say, "Here is one solemn covenant broken; here is another vow forgotten, another resolution made in sickness broken after recovery!" I do think that to-day will be a most solemn mockery if our humiliation ends to-day. With some of you it will not even begin to-day, and, therefore, it will not end, for it is not begun. But the mass who will pray to-day, will they pray

in a week? Not they; they will go their way, to heap again the faggots of their sins upon the pile of vengeance, and still stand by and weep, because the fire is burning, the fire which they themselves have kindled. Oh! my hearers, permit me to charge home to your hearts; and would God that he would make the charge of my language against your consciences as heavy as the charge of British soldiery against the enemy! How many of you have been awakened, convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement! How many times have you vowed you would repent! How many times have you declared that you did hear the rod, and that you would turn to God! And yet you have been liars to the Almighty; you have defrauded the Most High; and whilst the bill is due it still stands dishonored. Tremble! God may smite you yet; and if to-day you are despisers of Christ, remember, you have no guarantee that you will be in this world another hour. You may before this sun is set stand before your Maker's bar. What then? what then? what then? To perish for ever is no light matter; to be cast into the flames of hell is no little consideration. "Turn ye, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Repent! "The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And remember that when he gives repentance and faith he has appended the blessing to them. "Jesus Christ of the seed of David" was nailed to a cross; he died that we might not die, and to every believer heaven's gate is open, to every penitent the path to paradise is free. Sinner I dost thou believe? If so, Christ hath blotted out thy sin. Be happy! Soul! dost thou repent? Thou art safe. God has helped thee to repent, and inasmuch as he hath done that, he hath proved that he loves thee.

Oh! if I might but have some souls won to Christ to-day, what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor, that is all. For this I do not labor. God is my witness, I sought you not; never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man. When God first sent me to the ministry he bade me fear no man, and I have not yet met the man to whom I have feared to tell of God's truth. Nor you have I sought to please, nor you have I sought to gather here. I would preach the gospel; may God give me some souls as my reward! And if but one poor sinner shall look to Jesus, clap your wings, ye angels! enough is done, for God is honored.

I have done my sermon, but I want to make an appeal to you to give liberally.

Lives there a man in England who will this day refuse his help to those of his countrymen who have suffered? No; there does not live such a man—not such a Briton. Is there a miserable miscreant without a heart, who will, when God has given him enough, shut up his bowels of compassion against those whose sons and daughters have been murdered, and who themselves have escaped as by the skin of their teeth? No, I will not slander you by such a supposition. I cannot think that I have such a monster here. When the box shall pass round, give—give as you can afford; if it be a penny, let the working man give. You that are rich must not give pence, however. Many a man has said, "There is my mite." He was worth a hundred thousand pounds, and it was not a mite at all; if he had given a thousand it would only have been a mite to him. Give as ye can afford it; may God be pleased to grant a liberal spirit.

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# The Fatherhood Of God

Our Father which art in heaven. - Matthew 6:9

I think there is room for very great doubt, whether our Saviour intended the prayer, of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer, and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to his disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace, and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Doth not one say, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do?" Why, then, should ye mock God by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." For how can he be your Father? Have ye two Fathers? And if he be a Father, where is his honor? Where is his love? You neither honor nor love him, and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach him, and say, "Our Father," when your heart is attached still to sin, and your life is opposed to his law, and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath, and not a child of grace! Oh! I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words; and until you can in sincerity and truth say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and in your lives seek to honor his holy name, do not offer to him the language of the hypocrite, which is an abomination to him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ's own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, whereby we are to fashion all our prayers, and I think we may use it to edification, and with great sincerity and earnestness, at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood; but I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterwards to work out on more costly stuff; but I never imagined the

design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were: but I cannot cross the sea on a chart. It is a map; but a man is not a traveler because he puts his fingers across the map. And so a man may use this form of prayer, and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to his disciples. I feel that I cannot use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, It does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in heaven. There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly; and the various other petitions which this prayer contains require, I feel, to be expanded, when I come before God in private; and I must pour out my heart in the language which his Spirit gives me; and more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groanings of my spirit, when my lips cannot actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer; it is matchless, and if we must have forms of prayer, let us have this first, foremost, and chief; but let none think that Christ would tie his disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace with boldness, as children coming to a father, and let us tell forth our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teacheth us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we shall have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon the double relationship mentioned: "Our Father which art in heaven." There is sonship—"Father;" there is brotherhood, for it says, "Our Father;" and if he be the common father of us, then we must be brothers; for there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to help us before we are able to utter this—"The spirit of adoption," whereby we can cry, "Our Father which art in heaven." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with the double argument of the text, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. "Our Father which art in heaven," is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

#### I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is sonship—"Our Father which art in heaven." How are we to understand this, and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal, and

that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God's son, and that therefore every man has a right to approach the throne of God, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." To that I must demur. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through adoption and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not his children. Hath he not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the fullness thereof? and are they his children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings; but he made the angels, who stand in an eminently high and holy position, are they his children? "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son?" I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God; and I must demur to the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father. Doth not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the relationship, and those who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven," are something more than God's creatures: they have been adopted into his family. He has taken them out of the old black family in which they were born; he has washed them. and cleansed them, and given them a new name and a new spirit, and made them "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" and all this of his own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace.

And having adopted them to be his children, he has in the next place, regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God. He has "begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and no man hath a right to claim God as his Father, unless he feeleth in his soul, and believeth, solemnly, through the faith of God's election, that he has been adopted into the one family of which is in heaven and earth, and that he has been regenerated or born again.

This relationship also involves love, If God be my Father, he loves me. And oh, how he loves me! When God is a Husband he is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well eared for. When God is a Friend, he is the best of friends, and sticketh closer than a

brother; and when he is a Father he is the best of fathers. O fathers! perhaps ye do not know how much ye love your children. When they are sick ye find it out, for ye stand by their couches and ye pity them, as their little frames are writhing in pain. Well, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ye know how ye love your children too, when they grieve you by their sin; anger arises, and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye, than your hand is heavy, and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them; and every time you smite them you seem to cry, "Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his stead!" And God, even our Father, "doth not afflict willingly." Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, compelled to it; even the Eternal arm is not willing to do it; it is only his great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow. But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain, and that he had been buried by Joshua "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He knows then how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever, and the terrors of eternity never can unbind. But, parents, although ye love your children much, and ye know it, ye do not know, and ye cannot tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; and I am sure you will say, "What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?" But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving him, but that while he has all these treasures, he should set his heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere name; there is all our Father's great heart given to us in the moment when he claims us as his sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves also, the duty of love to God. Oh! heir of heaven, if thou art God's child, wilt thou not love thy Father? What son is there that loveth not his father? Is he not less than human if he loveth not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loveth not the woman that brought him forth, and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favourites of heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we loose him? Shall we not

say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee? My father, I will give thee my heart; thou shalt be the guide of my youth; thou dost love me, and the little heart that I have shall be all thine own for ever."

Furthermore, if we say "Our Father which art in heaven," we must recollect that our being sons involves the duty of obedience to God. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against his wishes; if he be a father, let me note his commands, and let me reverentially obey; if he hath said "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread him, but because I love him; and if he forbids me to do anything, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption, and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to themselves in it; but with the child of God, there is no motive at all; he can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ because I hoped to get to heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned." For the child of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works; and the fear of hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that, and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude, and until we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue; for if a man has done what is called a virtuous action because he hoped to get to heaven or to avoid hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? and what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no hell to fear and no heaven to gain, because heaven is his own and hell he never can enter, that man is capable of virtue; for he says -

"Now for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss;  
I pour contempt on all my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross" -

to his cross who loved, and lived, and died for me who loved him not, but who desires now to love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought

that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh, and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation, can never violate or weaken. A man hath a child; that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses; it becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot, and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child is a child, and the lunatic child is a child still; and if we are the fathers of such children they are ours, and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake the fact that they are our sons. Oh! what a mercy, when we transfer this to God's case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes—how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, "I was as a beast before thee." God brings before us the truths of his kingdom; we cannot see their beauty, we cannot appreciate them; we seem to be as if we were totally demented ignorant, unstable, weary, and apt to slide. But, thanks be unto God, we are his children still! And if there be anything worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, "Children are doubtful blessings." I remember to have heard one say, and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast—"Woman! you may be suckling a viper there." It stung the mother to the quick, and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother's breast, when it grows up, brings that mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

"Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth  
To have a thankless child!"

ungodly, vile, debauched—a blasphemer! But mark, brethren: if he be a child he cannot lose his childship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son; let us deny him the house because his conversation might lead others of our children into sin, yet our son he is, and must be, and when the sod shall cover his head and ours, "father and son" shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as long as time shall last. The prodigal was his father's son, when he was amongst the harlots, and when he was feeding swine; and God's children are God's children

anywhere and everywhere, and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from his heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-faiths and Feeble minds. The fatherhood of God is common to all his children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often looked up to Mr. Great-heart, and you have said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons, and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not a whit more God's child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than thou. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you. You have children yourselves; one is a son grown up, and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing still in arms. Which is most your child the little one or the big one? "Both alike," you say. "This little one is my child near my heart and the big one is my child too." And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one.

"This cov'nant stands secure,  
Though earth's old pillars bow;  
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,  
Are one in Jesus now;"

and they are one in the family of God, and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child; one may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely, this,—that our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges. Time would fail me, if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian's joyous privileges. I am God's child: if so, he will clothe me; my

shoes shall be iron and brass; he will array me with the robe of my Saviour's righteousness, for he has said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and he has also said that he will put a crown of pure gold upon my head and inasmuch as I am a king's son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I his child? Then he will feed me; my bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure; he that feeds the ravens will never let his children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl, and the sheep and the bullocks, certainly his children shall not starve. Does my Father deck the lily, and shall I go naked? Does he feed the fowls of the heaven that sow not, neither do they reap, and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knoweth what things I have need of before I ask him, and he will give me all I want. If I be his child, then I have a portion in his heart here, and I shall have a portion in his house above. for "if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," "If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together." And oh! brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, proves that all things are ours—the gift of God, the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

"This world is ours, and worlds to come;  
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

Are there crowns? They are mine if I be an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye hath not seen? and is there music that ear hath not heard? All these are mine, if I be a child of God. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Talk of princes, and kings, and potentates: Their inheritance is but a pitiful foot of land, across which the bird's wing can soon direct its flight; but the broad acres of the Christian cannot be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth. he is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this, and more than I can enumerate, is involved in our being able to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

The second tie of the text is brotherhood. It does not say my Father, but our Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point.



"Our Father." When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet, and you must include them all; for all God's elect ones, though they be uncalled as yet, are still his children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher's beautiful little parables there is a story like this: "Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him, and said, 'My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?' Abraham answered and said, 'My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.' 'Oh, my father,' answered the son, is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful; for are not these their own ways?' Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said, 'Come now, follow me.' And he led the youth to a hut. and said to him, 'Behold.' There was a child which was an imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, 'Why weepest thou? Then the mother said, 'Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and this source of joy is sealed to him.' " Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them, and they do not know Christ; the Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world, and yet, they know not the face of their Father. When thou sayest "Our Father," think of the many of thy brothers and sisters that are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of thy poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil; think of him, led astray to infamy, and lust, and perhaps to murder, and in thy prayer pray thou for them who know not the Lord.

"Our Father." That, then, includes those of God's children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah! there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles; but yet they are God's children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down, and say, "My Father," but "Our Father." "If you please, I cannot put in Sir. So-and-So, for I think he is a heretic." Put him in, sir. God has put him in, and you must put him in too, and say, "Our Father." Is it not

remarkable how very much alike all God's people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a prayer-meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another, the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist, and the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe—at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology, but there was none. "Saints in prayer appear as one." for when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say "Our Father," and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When thou prayest to God put in the poor; for is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, though they be poor in this world. Come my sister, if thou bowest thy knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My brother, is there wealth in thy hand, yet I pray thee, remember thy brethren of the horny hand and the dusty brow; remember those who could not wear what thou wearest, nor eat what thou eatest, but are as Lazarus compared with thee, while thou art as Dives. Pray for them; put them all in the same prayer and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea—those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus, and let thy prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which art in heaven." And after thou hast prayed that rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the faint-hearted; go about doing good, minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees—that thou art a brother unto all the brotherhood of Christ, a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly

what is the spirit with which we must be filled, before we can pray this prayer. If I had a foundling here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors; he has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity, but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father. There is a nameless charm there: we cannot describe or understand it: it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there, and that cannot be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the childship of the child. And what is that spirit of a child—that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I cannot tell you unless you are a child yourself, and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father?" I cannot tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nought like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself there is nought more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock how sweet then to say "My Father," and to believe that his strong hand is on the helm!—when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain, and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say "My Father," and seeing that Father's hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs because we can say, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done." Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, "there is more eloquence in that word, 'Abba. Father,' than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together." "My Father!" Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven's own bliss in that word, " My Father," when applied to God, and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the

living God.

My hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, ye are miserable men. May God himself bring you to know him! May he teach you your need of him! May he lead you to the cross of Christ, and help you to look to your dying Brother! May he bathe you in the blood that flowed from his open wounds, and then, accepted in the beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honor to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. "Our Father." That is, "Lord, hear what I have got to say. Thou art my Father." If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in aught that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some boon or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands; but when I come as a law-breaker, and only come to crave for mercy, or for favors I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say. "Lord, if I call thee King thou wilt say, 'Thou art a rebellious subject; get thee gone.' If I call thee Judge thou wilt say, 'Be still, or out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.' If I call thee Creator thou wilt say unto me 'It repenteth me that I made man upon the earth.' If I call thee my Preserver thou wilt say unto me, 'I have preserved thee, but thou hast rebelled against me.' But if I call thee Father, all my sinfulness doth not invalidate my claim. If thou be my Father, then thou lovest me; if I be thy child, then thou wilt regard me, and poor though my language be, thou wilt not despise it." If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right language. I may sometimes feel when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at me. But if I had my Father here and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid he will misunderstand me; if I put my words a little out of place he understands my meaning somehow. When we are little children we only prattle; still our father understands us. Our

children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk, and strangers come in and say, "Dear me, what is the child talking about?" But we know what it is and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that any one could print, and a reader make it out, we know they have got certain little wants, and having a way of expressing their desires, and we can understand them. So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things; we cannot put them together but our Father, he will hear us. Oh! what a beginning is "Our Father," to a prayer full of faults, and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! "Father, forgive the language! forgive the matter!" As one dear brother said the other day at the prayer meeting. He could not get on in prayer, and he finished up on a sudden by saying, "Lord, I cannot pray to-night as I should wish; I cannot put the words together; Lord, take the meaning take the meaning," and sat down. That is just what David said once, "Lo, all my desire is before thee"—not my words, but my desire, and God could read it. We should say, "Our Father," because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. "Our Father." "Lord, give me what I want." If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect he will give it me. He may out of his charity; but if I come to a father, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move thy bosom; I shall not have to speak to thee as the beggar who crieth in the street: for because thou art my Father thou knowest my wants, and thou art willing to relieve me. It is thy business to relieve me; I can come confidently to thee, knowing thou wilt give me all I want. If we ask our Father for anything when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly; but it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger's house trembling, and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you somewhat; but if you go to your father's table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course, and feast to your full, and you rise and go, and feel you are indebted to him; but there is not a grievous sense of obligation. Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child's obligation—an obligation which

impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh! if he were not my Father, how could I expect that he would relieve my wants? But since he is my Father, he will, he must hear my prayers, and answer the voice of my crying, and supply all my needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then; your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father's heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind. I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers, and their two sons went away to some remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practiced. Suppose these two sons were decoyed and deluded into idolatry. The news comes to England, and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater. The second father says, "Well, if it will help him in trade I don't care, if he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves most, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the best. He loves his son; therefore he cannot give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins, and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when he is angry as when he smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind, and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins, and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ; and may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ though you have strayed from him long; and though his love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you, and bring you to his house rejoicing!

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## Fear Not

Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy redeemer the Holy one of Israel. - Isaiah 41:14

I shall speak this morning to those that are discouraged, depressed in spirit, and sore troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceeding great darkness, through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery, and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner. Frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry, has been led to feel the weight of sin; he trusts also he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the gospel. In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ; with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents, all that he has, to the great work of serving God; he thinks it easy to fulfill his vow; he doth not count the cost; he reckons it will be easy to forsake gay companions, to renounce old established habits, and to become a Christian. Alas! before many days he finds out his mistake, if he did not reckon without his host he certainly reckoned without his heart, for his evil heart of unbelief had deceived him, he knew not how hard would be the struggle, and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of grace within him. He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits; he discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits, as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye. He sits down then, and he says, "If this be the trouble at the outset what may I expect as I proceed. O my soul, thou wast too fast in dedicating thyself to God; thou hast undertaken a warfare which thy prowess can never accomplish; thou hast started on a journey for which thy strength is not adequate; let me again return unto the world;" and if the Spirit saith, "Nay, thou canst not," then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery, and cries, "I can not go back and I can not go forward; what must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged because of the way." The same feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who has been long experienced in the things of the divine life

will sometimes be over taken with a dark night and a stormy tempest; so dark will be the night, that he will not know his right hand from his left, and so horrible the tempest, that he can not hear the sweet words of his Master, saying, "Fear not, I am with thee." Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep o'er the Christian; he will be subjected to as many trials in his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it be not so with all of you it is so with me. I have to speak to-day to myself; and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart - Why I can not tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers; I need God's Holy Spirit; and I felt that I could not preach to-day, unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer the Holy One of Israel. Christian brethren, there are some in this congregation, I hope many, who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ: let them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the word of our text. First, before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness: "Worm Jacob." Secondly, there must be trust in promised strength; and thirdly, there must be fear removed by that promise: "Fear not, for I will help thee."

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success, and for doing God's work well and triumphantly, is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God's warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet, and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty - when he says, "I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory, defeat is not far



distant. God will not go forth with that man who goeth forth in his own strength. He who reckoneth on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." They that go forth to fight, boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust, and with their armor stained with defeat; for God will not go forth with the man who goeth forth in his own strength. God hath said it; men must serve him, they must serve him in his own way, and they must serve him in his own strength too, or he will never accept their service. That which man doth, unaided by divine strength, God never can accept. The mere fruits of the earth he casteth away; he will only have that, the seed of which was sown from heaven, sprinkled in the heart, and harvested by the sun of grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness, before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying to-day, "Well, sir, if that be a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent." Well, do not marvel, do not wonder. Depend on this: God will empty out all that thou hast before he will ever put his own into thee; he will first empty out all thy granaries, before he will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water; but there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in his own battles but the strength which he himself imparts, and I would not have you that are now distressed in the least discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the preparation for your being filled, and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up.

Are there others of you that would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. "Worm," says he, "I am no worm: I am a man; a man is the most glorious thing that God has made; I am not going to be called a worm; I am a man - I can do anything; I want not your revelations; they may be fit for children, for men of childish minds that only learn by believing: I am a man: I can think out truth; I will make my own Bible, fashion my own

ladder, and mount on it to heaven, if there be a heaven, or make a heaven, if that be all, and dwell in it myself." Not so, however, he who is wise and understandeth; he knows that he is a worm, and he knows it in this way:

First, he knows it by contemplation. He that thinks, will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men; but those who think, must think their pride down - if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up now your eyes, behold the heavens, the work of God's fingers; behold the sun guided in his daily march; go ye forth at midnight, and behold the heavens; consider the stars and the moon; look ye upon these works of God's hands, and if ye be men of sense, and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, ye will say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" My God! when I survey the boundless fields of ether, and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein - when I consider how vast are thy dominions - so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary - I marvel that thou shouldst look on insects so obscure as man. I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the ephemera upon the leaf, and I have called him small. I will not call him so again; with me he is great, if I put myself in comparison with God. I am so little that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightyness of Jehovah - so little, that the difference between the animalculae and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man. Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead; consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world; behold Him who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty; let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite, and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal, and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe. The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's throne, and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel what base nothings, what insignificant specks we are when compared with our all-adorable Creator. Labor, O soul, to know thy nothingness, and learn it by contemplating God's greatness.

Again, if you want to know your own nothingness, consider what you are in suffering. I was thinking, the other evening, how small a matter it must

be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits; we know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve, but one poor nerve, and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep; we do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have "smiled at Satan's rage, and faced a frowning world;" and God does but put his hand on our hearts, and just let one of the strings run loose, and what discord there is in our spirits; we are annoyed at the slightest matter; we wish to be continually alone; the very promises yield us no comfort; our days are nights, and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves. How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing thou art, if so little a thing can overthrow thee. Ye have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous; did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress, and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, "Am I a seal or a whale, that thou settest a watch upon me? What am I, that thou shouldst visit me every morning, and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sore vexed? What am I, that thou shouldst make me a butt for thine arrows, and a target for thy wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing; I am but a shadow that passeth away and declineth. Oh deal not hardly with thy servant, for thy mercies' sake." Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself, if God blesseth it to him.

Again: if you would know your own weakness, try some great labor for Christ. I can understand how some minister who preaches to his hundred-and-fifty on a Sabbath-day, and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his cravat, and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church; I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop - because he does nothing; he has nothing at all to try him; but I can not imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms, being proud because he had to do such a deed as that. I can not conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the reformation, and teaching the truth of God with power, saying to himself, "Lo! this great Babylon that I have builded." I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing, sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self; but I can not conceive, if you nerve yourselves to

great labors, but what you will have to say, "Lord, what a worm am I that thou shouldst call me to such work as this!" Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God, and you will find them saying, "I marvel that God should use me thus!" "This day my mind was exceedingly cast down," says one of them, "for God had called me to a great labor, and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did to-day." Says another, "I have to-morrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master, and I can say that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure, but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which he has engaged me." Go and do something, some of you, and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride, and letting some of it blow away. If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do - go and thrash the mountains, and beat them small; make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them, and then rejoice in God: and if you can do that,

"The more God's glories strike your eyes,  
The humbler you will lie."

Devout contemplation, sharp suffering, hard labor - all these will teach us what little creatures we are. Oh! may God by all means and every means keep us, well understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!

How easy it is, my brethren, for you and I to fly up! How hard to keep down! That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, that till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets we shall never hear the last of it. If any man telleth me that he is humble, I know him to be profoundly proud; and if any man will not acknowledge this truth, that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation, let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it. Do you know what is the sweetest flattery in all the world? It is that flattery that Caesar's courtiers of old gave to him, when they said Caesar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered. We do not hate flattery, any one of us; we all like it. We do not like it if it is labeled flattery; but we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion,

We all love praise.

"The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,  
The modest shun it, but to make it sure."

We all love it, every soul of us, and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God, and acknowledge that pride which is woven into our nature, and ask him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise - "Fear not, thou worm Jacob."

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Saviour, it is necessary **THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH.** "I Will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." It is a certain fact, that though men be worms, they do what worms never could do; although men be nothing they do accomplish deeds which need even the power of the Infinite to rival them. How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the worms; it must be some secret energy which gives them might. The mystery is unravelled in the text. "I will help thee, saith the Lord." In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly criticised it, and sent it back with this message - "I see nothing wonderful in the sword; I can not understand why any man should be afraid of it." The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind: "Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword, but I did not send the arm that wielded it; if you had examined that, and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery." And now we look at men, and see what men have done, and we say, "I can not understand this; how was it done?" "Why, we are only seeing the sword; if we could see the heart of infinite love that guided that man in his onward course, we should not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory. Now, the Christian may remember, that little though he be, God is with him; God will help him, and that right early. Brethren, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself, and says, "It is of no use; I can

not do it." Let him alone: he will do it. He is all right. The man who says, "Oh there is nothing in it, I can do it," will break down to a dead certainty. But let him begin, by saying, "I know what I am at, and I feel confident I can not do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel today;" that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious. But it must be because he puts reliance upon help promised. Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle; you have been so dispirited this last week, through divers adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion. Now, man, here is a brother comrade that is passing through just the same; he comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshish, like Jonah did of old, only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away; and he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, "Brother, do not let you and I play deserters, after all; let us up to arms, and still fight for our Master; for the promise says, "I will help thee, Brother, what an all-sufficient promise that is - "I will help thee." Why, it matters not what God has given us to do; if he helps us we can do it. Give me God to help me, and I will split the world in halves, and shiver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor; ay, and if God be with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child bloweth a bubble. There is no saying what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man, and he can do all things. Put God into a man's arm, and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with, but he will lay the Philistines in heaps: put God into a man's hand, and he may have a giant to deal with, and nothing hut a sling and a stone; but he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long; put God into a man's eye, and he will flash defiance on kings and princes; put God into a man's lip, and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech. There is no fear of a man who has got God with him, he is all-sufficient; there is nothing beyond his power. And my brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help always comes in at the right time. We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not want to be helped. "O!" says one, "I do not think that I could die for Christ; I feel I could not; I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die." Well, you just won't feel that, because you are not going to die, and God will not give you strength to die with, to lay up till the dying time comes. Wait till ye are dying, and then he will give you strength to die. "O!" says

another, "I wish I felt as strong in prayer as so-and-so." But you do not want much strength in prayer, and you shall not have it. You shall have what you want, and you shall have it when you want it; but you shall not have it before. Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach - that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God hath been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along, and given me strength that has been equal to my day. So it must be with you. God will come in when you want him - not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. "I will help thee." I will help thee when thou needest help! And oh! brethren, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace, but it is no honor; but to be helped by God, what an honor that is! When the Christian prophet preacheth his Master's word, and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty, to strengthen him for his days work, that he may not fear the people, what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death, and feels that God has put the wing of the angel over him, to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennobles and honors him to have God with him! To have his strength girding his loins and nerving his arm, is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, "O, if I were a cherub I would stand with wings outstretched, and I would bless God for opportunities for serving him;" but I thought within myself, "I have an opportunity of serving God, but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish thou hadst not put the load on me." And then it struck me, "Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that?" Do they ever for a moment say, 'I have not strength enough to do it!'" No, if a cherub had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head and say, "My Lord; I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it." And so must the Christian say; "My God, dost thou command? It is enough: 'tis done. Thou never didst send us to a warfare at our own charges, and thou wilt never do so; thou wilt help us, and be with us to the end."

Before we can do much, then, we must know our own weakness; and believe God's strength.

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must, then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, OF FEAR. The prophet says, "Fear not;" thou art a worm, but do not fear; God will help thee; why shouldst thou fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear, when we are not certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons:

Get rid of fear, because fear is painful. How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy; when he doubts, he is miserable. When the believer looks to his Master and relies upon him, he can sing; when he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with, because it never pays the expenses, and never brings in any profit - the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained. It knoweth not how to exist when it gives way to fear. Up, Christian! thou art of a sorrowful countenance; up, and chase thy fears. Why wouldst thou be for ever groaning in thy dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair for ever beat thee with his crabtree cudgel? Up! drive him away! touch the key of the promises; be of good cheer! Fear never helped thee yet, and it never will.

Fear, too, is weakening. Make a man afraid - he will run at his own shadow; make a man brave, and he will stand before an army and overcome them. He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God bringeth blessings, but the fear of men bringeth a snare, and such a snare that many feet have been tripped by it. No man shall be faithful to God, if he is fearful of man; no man shall find his arm sufficient for him, and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe, and quietly wait. We must not fear; for fear is weakening.

Again; we must not fear; for fear dishonors God. Doubt the Eternal, distrust the Omnipotent? O, traitorous fear! thickest thou that the arm which piled the heavens, and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What! shall the Eternal fail thee? Shall the faithful Promiser break his oath? Thou dishonorest God,



O unbelief! Get thee hence! God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind; leave off doubting him, and begin to trust him, for in so doing, thou wilt put a crown on his head, but in doubting him thou dost trample his crown beneath thy feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian; for in so doing thou dost lower thyself. The more thou believest, the greater thou art; but the more thou doubttest, the less thou becomest. It was said of the worlds conqueror, that when he was sick, he puled like a child. "Give me some drink," cried one, like a sick girl, it was said to his dishonor. And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian, who lives in secret on his God, and professes to trust alone in him, that he can not trust him; that a little child will overcome his faith? O, poor cockle-shell boat, that is upset by a rain-drop! O poor puny Christian that is overcome by every straw, that stumbles at every stone! Then, Christian men, behave like men! It is childish to doubt; it is manhood glory to trust. Plant your foot upon the immoveable Rock of Ages; lift your eye to heaven; scorn the world; never play craven; bend your fist in the world's face, and bid defiance to it and hell, and you are a man, and noble. But crouch, and cringe, and dread, and doubt, and you have lost your Christian dignity and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord." Then why shouldst thou fear?

I feel that my voice fails me, and with it my very powers of thought too, and therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ, and I say to them, brethren, you and I can do nothing of ourselves; we are poor puny things; but let us attempt great things, for God is with us; let us dare great things, for God will not leave us. Remember what he has done aforetime; and remember what he has done of old he will do again. Remember David the shepherd-boy. Think ye well of Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget ye not the jawbone of the ass, and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also. You know not, ye atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith; and the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. O for grace to trust God, and there is no telling what ye can do. Worms, ye are nothing, but ye have eaten princes; worms ye are nothing, but ye have devoured

the roots of cedars, and laid them level with the earth; worms, ye are nothing, but ye have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea, and wrecked mighty navies; worms, ye have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If ye have done this yourselves, what can not we do? your strength lies in your mouths; our strength lies in ours too. We will use our mouths in prayer, and in constant adoration, and we shall conquer yet, for God is with us, and victory is sure.

Ye trembling souls! dismiss your fears;  
Be mercy all your theme:  
Mercy, which, like a river, flows  
In one continued stream.

Fear not the powers of earth and hell;  
God will these powers restrain;  
His mighty arm their rage repel,  
And make their efforts vain.  
Fear not the want of outward good;  
He will for his provide,  
Grant them supplies of daily food,  
And all they need beside.

Fear not that he will e'er forsake,  
Or leave his work undone;  
He's faithful to his promises -  
And faithful to his Son.

Fear not the terrors of the grave,  
Or death's tremendous sting;  
He will from endless wrath preserve -  
To endless glory bring.

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## **A Feast For The Upright**

For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. - Psalm 84:11-12

In this sweet Sabbath Psalm the writer rejoices in the house of God. He evidently loves the place of godly assembly, the place where prayer and praise were offered by the united tribes of his people. But, brethren, there was no superstition in this love. He loved the house of God because he loved the God of the house. His heart and flesh cried out, not for the altar and the candlestick, but for his God. True, his soul fainted for the courts of the Lord, but the reason was that he cried out for the living God, saying, "When shall I come and appear before God?" Brethren, it is well to take an interest in the place where you gather for worship. I am always glad when brethren are moved to contribute towards the necessary maintenance of the building and the provision for its cleanliness and propriety. I hate that God should be served in a slovenly way. Even the place where we meet to worship should show some sign of reverence for his name. But still our respect for our place of assembly must never degenerate into a superstitious reverence for the mere structure, as though there were some peculiar sanctity about the spot, and prayer offered there would be more acceptable than elsewhere. The great object of our desire must be to meet with God himself. In hearing, the point is to hear the voice of God. In singing, the charm is truly to praise the Most High. In prayer, the main object is to plead with God, and so to speak that our cry comes up before him, even into his ears. Let us always recollect this, and never rest content with merely going to a set place. Let us reckon that we have failed if we have not met with God. Let us come up hither with strong desire for communion with the Lord in spirit and in truth.

The Psalmist also knew right well that the spiritual law runs through everything: he perceived that character is an essential, not only to acceptable worship, but to all real blessedness. In our text he speaks not of those who `visit the temple, but of those who walk uprightly, and trust in God. There is no necessary blessedness in visiting tabernacles and temples. In all assemblies for worship the question is, Who are they that

gather? Are their hearts in God's ways? Are their souls thirsting after God? The promises are very rich; but to whom are the promises made? What if they are not made to us? Then, the richer they are the more sorrowful will be our loss of them.

Before I unfold the inexhaustible treasures of this marvellous portion of Scripture, I want to dwell upon this fact, that these things are for a special people. The blessing is to the man that walks uprightly: the true-hearted man, whose course is sincere, righteous, honest, and just. He stands firmly, and he walks erect; he does not bend and lean towards the right or to the left; he has no sinister motives or crooked policies; he is straight as a line, and is not to be swayed by any sidewinds. It is a very suggestive figure; an upright man is not twisted, or doubled up, or wrongly inclined, or tortuous in his ways and thoughts: he stands on the square, and is distinctly perpendicular. This is the man who will enjoy the blessing from the God of Israel. Sin is a twist, and it is a twist that robs us of the blessing in our text. But, since no man is upright by nature, we are reminded of the way by which we come to be upright,- "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." We must have faith as the groundwork of all. Then "faith worketh by love," and purifies the soul; and by this purification the man is made to walk uprightly. Oh, to be resting where God bids us rest, namely, in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus! Oh, to be depending where all must depend - upon the faithfulness of the covenant-making and the covenant-keeping God. Such a man has a solid rock beneath his foot. He trusts in God, and so he stands firmly, and is able to walk uprightly, because he has a firm foothold. Judge ye, then, yourselves. Are ye trusting in the Lord? Are ye walking uprightly? If so, here is "a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

I would say to every child of God who can claim the character I have been describing, come you to the text and freely enjoy it. What, does no star of hope shine in your midnight sky? Do clouds surround you and thicken into an impenetrable gloom? Come you to the text, for "the Lord God is a sun." Here is an end to all your darkness. When he appears the night vanishes, and your light has come. Are you in great danger? Do perils surround you?-temptations from the world, assaults of Satan, uprisings

of your own corruption? Do you feel us if you moved in the center of a fierce fight? is it as much as you can do even to hope that you will escape the fiery dart? Come you to the text, then, and behold how he that keepeth Israel has provided for your safety. Read the blessed words, "The Lord God is a shield." He is a broad shield that shall cover you from head to foot, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Here is perfect safety for all who take Jehovah to be their helper. "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul."

But peradventure you tell me that you feel empty of all good, and dry of all joy. Spiritual life is at a very low ebb with you. You can scarce believe, much less reach to full assurance. You scarcely feel enough life to exhibit the tenderness you sigh for, and you cannot reach to the faith you desire. I hear your groanings, but come along with you. Here is the exact word for you. "The Lord will give grace." His rich free favor waits to bless the undeserving, and it is so strong and influential that those who have nothing in themselves may at once receive every precious thing. The God of all grace will give grace.

"Ay," say you, "I have grace, but I find that the gracious life is a very struggling one. I am contending from day to day with my inward corruptions; and, besides, the infirmities of old age have been creeping upon me for years, and I feel them so bitterly that I wish for the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest." Friend, you need not fly far. The text promises you the best possible rest. The Lord who says that he will give grace now tells you that he will give glory. Wait a little longer. The sun which shineth more and more will come to perfect day. "It is better on before." Glory will soon be in your actual possession-much sooner than you think. Between you and heaven there may be but a step. Perhaps ere another sun has risen on the earth you may behold the face "of the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off." At any rate, here is comfort for you: the same Lord who will give grace will also give glory.

Do I hear another brother sighing because he is in the depths of poverty? And is that poverty not only of bread and of water, but a poverty of soul?

Do you feel straitened in spirit, and so weak that you can hardly call a promise your own? Yet, dear brother, if you are trusting in the Lord, and he has helped you to walk uprightly, do not hesitate, but come to the text, and dip your bucket into this deep and overflowing well, and fill it up to the brim; for what does the text say? "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Here is everything for nothing; everything for you; everything to be had at once according as you shall require it. It is God's word, not mine, God's own sure word which gives you all this blessing. Come, then, quit the dust and the darkness. Mount into brightness, and rejoice in the Lord your God, who bids you shout for joy.

Have you fears about the future? I need not stay to tell you how sweetly the text will lull them all to sleep. Yet suffer me these few sentences. Do you fear the darkness of future trial? The Lord God is your sun. Do you fear dangers which lie before you in some new sphere upon which you are just entering? The Lord will be your shield. Are there difficulties in your way? Will you need great wisdom and strength? God's grace will be sufficient for you, and his strength will be glorified in your weakness. Do you fear failure? Do you dread final apostasy? It shall not be. He who gives you grace will, without fail, give you glory. Between here and heaven there is provender for all the flock of God, so that they need not fear famishing on the road. He that leads them shall guide them into pastures that never wither, and to fountains that are never dried up, for "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Is not this a glorious text? It overpowers me. It is a gem of priceless value. I feel as if I could not place it in a proper setting, but must needs hold it up just as it is, and turn it this way and that, and bid you mark how each facet flashes forth the light of heaven. It is a true Koh-i-noor among the gems of promise. It is so many-sided, so transparent, so brilliant it belongs to the King of kings, and he bids us wear it this day. What shall I hope to say which will be worthy of this supreme Scripture? How can my words set forth fitly this word of the Lord? It would not be an ill way of considering my text if I were to preach from it in this fashion.

First let us observe what God is: "The Lord God is a sun and a shield." By

nature he is both these to his people, and as such he is ours; for is not this a leading article in the covenant of grace, "I will be their God"? "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." The Lord has given himself to me as he is, even as Jehovah, the I AM. Is God omnipotent? He is almighty for his people. Is he omniscient? His wisdom cares for them. Is God omnipresent? Is God immutable? Is God eternal? Is God infinite? He is ours in all those respects. The Lord God is a sun and shield, and as sun and shield he belongs to those who are trusting in him and walking uprightly.

If we preached thus our second head would be what God will give. The Lord will give grace and glory. He has given them, is giving them, and will give them; for the tense may be taken as you choose. He always will give free favor and kindly aid. He has given you grace hitherto, and done great things for you, and he will show you greater things than these.

"His grace will to the end  
Stronger and brighter shine;  
Nor present things, nor things to come,  
Shall quench the spark divine."

He will supply you with grace and glory us the generous grants of his love. They are not a wage, but a gift. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Glory will come to you on free-grace terms.

And then there is, thirdly, what the Lord will withhold; and what is that? Why, nothing at all that is good, for "no good thing will he withhold." We have among us some men who are great at withholding. If they give, it costs them an effort; but if they withhold their purse-strings are in their natural condition. Our God never was a withholding God yet: he maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good. Ever since that first day when "he spake and it was done," he has gone on manifesting himself to this world, outpouring himself in goodness, spreading his own care and love over all, so that he is to be found filling nil space and sustaining all existence. God's blessedness delights in scattering blessing. To withhold would not enrich him as to give does not impoverish him. Specially to his saints does he abound; to them he gives all things. "No good thing will he

withhold from them that walk uprightly."

I am not going to preach from the text in that way. We shall survey it in another fashion. Here flows a living stream: bring your buckets with you. Take care that you do not come to this river of life merely to gaze on its surface: the river of God is full of water, and it is all intended for our use. Oh, for a hearty draught at this good hour! Here is enough and to spare; make free with it, O ye trusters in the Lord.

I. First, then, out of five particulars, here are, for God's people, BLESSINGS IN THEIR FULNESS, for "the Lord God is a sun."

The blaze of my text almost blinds me. It does not say, "God is light," though that is true, for he is light, and in him is no darkness at all; but the words are, "the Lord God is a sun." Then, if God is mine, I have not only light, but I have the source of light. I have for my possession the central sun from whom all light comes to this world. We have heard of one who received apples from a friend and was grateful; another was more highly favored, for his friend planted his garden with fruit trees. You and I have fruits from God: and therein we are favored. Ay; but we have the Lord himself, and thus we have the tree of life, and a perpetual supply most fresh, sweet, and constant. It is well to get a drink from a pitcher; but it is better to be like Isaac, who dwelt by the well; because then, if the pitcher becomes empty, there is an abiding supply from which to fill it. God is the source of all conceivable good, yea, inconceivable blessing lies in him, and as such he belongs to his people. There might be light apart from the sun, but there could be no blessing apart from God; and on the other hand every sort of blessing is in God, and nothing is wanting in him. He who is all good, and the source of all good, has made himself our divine possession.

God is a sun: that is infinity of blessing. No man among us can conceive the measure of the light and heat of the sun. I suppose that calculations have been made by which the heat of the sun has been thought to be estimated; but the calculations must be beyond all ordinary numeration. Concerning the sun, its light, heat, and influence are beyond conception great. His light and heat have been continually streaming forth



throughout many ages, and yet they are unabated to this hour; all that has come forth of it is far less than that which still remains. For all practical purposes the light and heat of the sun are infinite; and certainly in God all blessedness is absolutely infinite. There is no measuring it. We are lost. We can only say,- "Oh, the depths of the love and goodness of God!" In being heirs of God we possess all in all. There is no bound to our blessedness in God.

Further, if God be called a sun it is to let us know that we have obtained an immutability of blessedness, for he is "the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God is not love to-day and hate to-morrow: he saith "I am God, I change not." There are said to be spots in the sun which diminish the light and heat which we receive; but there are no such spots in God: he shines on with the boundless fullness of his infinite love toward his people in Christ Jesus. "This God is our God for ever and ever." If we were to live as long as Methuselah we should find his love and power and wisdom to be the same, and we might confidently count upon being blessed thereby. What treasures of mercy do you and I possess in being able to say, "O God, thou art my God!" We have the source of mercy, the infinity of mercy, and the immutability of mercy to be our own.

There much must be added concerning God as a sun-that he is for ever communicating his light and heat and excellence to all who are about him. I cannot conceive the sun shut up within himself. An unshining sun is a sun unsunned; and a God that is not good and pouring forth his goodness has laid aside his deity. It is contrary to the very notion and idea of an infinitely good God for him to restrain his goodness, and keep it back from his people. Thus then, beloved, you have not only God supremely good, but God abundantly giving himself out to his people. He is not a spring shut up and a fountain scaled, but a spring-head ever flowing in winter and in summer. Nothing in God is reserved from his believing people. He gives himself to you in all his fullness. All your needs shall be abundantly satisfied out of the riches of his goodness.

Had ever man such a task as I have in trying to speak of what is altogether unspeakable? Who shall fully extol this sun? Stand you out in

the open and look the sun full in the face for a little; and when blindness threatens you learn how little we can know of the greater sun, the Sun of righteousness. And if thought fails, what shall speech do? How can it be possible for men to speak aright on such a text as this,- "The Lord God is a sun." Go, ye cold words, and be exhaled in presence of this central fire! Yet I can show you enough to let you see that there is more than I can show you. I can say enough to let you know that there is a great deal more than I can say or than you can hear. To speak on this theme calls for some of those words which they speak in heaven in the full blaze of the glory: words such as mortal tongues cannot compass. Fully to set forth the wondrous height and depth of this promise might need that same Spirit who of old dictated it to the Psalmist, and placed it in the sacred page. "The Lord God is a sun"- here is blessedness in its fullness.

II. Now, secondly-and this is a deeply interesting point-this glorious word of God gives us BLESSINGS IN THEIR COUNTERPOISE.

Let me explain myself. One blessing alone might scarcely be a blessing; for in being too great a blessing it might crush us. We may have too much of a good thing. We want some other boon to balance the single benediction. So notice here, "The Lord God is a sun and shield." "Sun and shield" hang before my eyes like two golden scales. Each one adds value to the other. When God is a sun to his people it may be he warms them into temporal prosperity with his bright beams, so that their goods increase, their body is in health, their trade succeeds, and their children are spared to them: they are grateful to God, and joyful because of the blessings which he has bestowed upon them. He gives them their heart's desire. He permits them to enjoy the blessing of this life as well as the promise of the life that is to come. Yet danger lurks herein. You have heard of sunstroke, and prosperous persons are very apt to feel it. Our poor heads cannot bear the full beams of the sun of prosperity: we are smitten down with pride, or carelessness, or worldliness, or some other ill. It is trying for the soul to bask in the unclouded sun. Temporal gains are blessings in themselves, but such is our poor nature that we do not make blessings of them, but we often make idols of them, and then they become curses. What a sweet mercy it is that when God prospers his own children, and is a sun to them, he comes in at the same time and nets as

their shield. The same God who is the pillar of fire to the hosts of Israel is also their pillar of cloud. Our hymn well puts it-

"He hath been my joy in woe,  
Cheered my heart when it was low,  
And with warnings softly sad,  
Calmed my heart when it was glad."

When everything is bright with us the Lord knows how to sober his children's spirits so that they use, but do not abuse, the things of this life. Even when they most abound with worldly joys he makes his people feel that these are not their heart joy. He shades us from the noxious effect of wealth and content. He maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith. He suffers not the sun to smite us by day. Is not this a gracious style of counterpoise?

"The Lord God is a sun and shield," too, when he shines upon us spiritually. Oh, how I do rejoice in the sunny side of spiritual life: I do not always get it; but when I do reach it how happy I am. My heart is ready, like the gnats in the sunbeams, to dance up and down with intense delight. When God shines upon our soul, what gladness! what ecstasy! Then truly we would hardly change places with the angels, and as for kings and princes, we pity them. My God, do thou lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and I ask no more: it is heaven below. I know some of my brethren are often moping in the dungeon, but I warrant you that when they do get out they can dance with the nimblest, and they call for the merriest tunes, too, for theirs is no second-rate delight.

It is a great mercy that when God gives his people great spiritual joys he usually gives them a humbling sense of themselves at the same time. The shadow of their former depressions prevents their being unduly excited with their present joy; or else the forecast of another chastisement is given them, and this sobers them when they are inclined to be lifted up. The Lord has ways and means of letting his people be as happy as they can be; but yet not happier than they ought to be. He gives them grace so that they can be full of assurance, and yet full of holy fear; always rejoicing and yet never presuming; lifted up and yet lying low before the

Lord. He gives them a well-mixed experience, and so forms an all-round character. While he is to them a sun producing rapid growth, he is also a shield forbidding their being burned up: he is their great Benefactor, but also their wise Chastener, and in both alike he blesses them.

Look at the text another way. When the sun shines upon a man he is made the more conspicuous by it. Suppose a hostile army to be down in the plain, and a soldier in our ranks is sent upon some errand by his captain. He must pass along the hillside. The sun shines upon him as he tries to make his way among the rocks and trees. Had it been night he could have moved safely, but now we fear that the enemy will surely pick him off; for the sunshine has made him conspicuous. He will have need to be shielded from the many cruel eyes. Christian men are made conspicuous by the very fact of their possessing God's grace. Ye are the light of the world, and a light must be seen. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. If God gives you light, he means that light to be seen; and the more light he gives you the more conspicuous you will be. He is your sun, and he shines upon you; you reflect his light, and so become yourself a light; and in doing so you run necessary risks. The more brightly you shine the more will Satan and the world try to quench your light. This, then, is your comfort. The Lord. God who is a sun to you will also be a shield to you. Did he not say to Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" He will defend you against the dangers of publicity, or even of popularity; and if he sets you upon a high place he will make your feet like the feet of a gazelle, so that you shall stand upon your high places.

Consider the text yet again, still keeping to this idea of counterpoise. "The Lord God is a sun," and a sun manifests a thing, and this manifestation is not always a joy to us, but we need a defense with it. When the Lord shines in upon the heart of his people they begin to see their sin, their guilt, their fall, their corruption: and then the Lord is a shield, and they are not overcome by the discovery. When they see the danger at the same time they see the defense, and when they see the disease they see the remedy. It is a blessed thing not to see sin except at the same time we see the Savior. It is a blessed thing not to have a sense of weakness in self except it be accompanied with a sense of strength in the Lord. These two things most wisely balance each other, else the revealing Spirit of God in

showing us so much of our evil hearts might almost drive us mad. If a man could see all his past sin, and all his present danger, and all the trials of his future life, he might lie down in despair, unless at the same time he was made to perceive that, if the Lord be a sun to reveal our danger, he is also a shield to secure our safety.

The Lord thus in his grace aboundeth toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He multiplies the value of the blessing by his wise way of dispensing it. He gives us the bitter medicine, but he also allots us the sweet cordial. He will sometimes chide, but he will not always do so. He will not give us too much of one blessing lest it cloy and breed satiety. He will give us another favor which shall make up a healthful mixture; yea, thus he doth with all things, so that they work together for our good.

Dwell on my text, and especially on this noteworthy point in it- blessings in their counterpoise.

III. Very briefly let me submit to you the third idea, namely, BLESSINGS IN THEIR ORDER; for there is a due and meet succession in my text. "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory."

The Lord is to us first a sun and then a shield. Remember how David puts it elsewhere,- "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Light first, salvation next. He does not save us in the dark, neither does he shield us in the dark. He gives enough sunlight to let us see the danger that we may appreciate the defense. We are not to shut our eyes and so find safety, but we are to see the evil and hide ourselves. Ought we not to be very grateful to God that he so orders our affairs? Ours is not a blind faith, receiving an unknown salvation from evils which are unperceived; this would be a poor form of life at best. No, the favor received is valued because its necessity is perceived. The heavenly sun lights up our souls and makes us see our ruin, and lie down in the dust of self-despair; and then it is that grace brings forth the shield which covers us, so that we are no more afraid, but rejoice in the glorious Lord as the God of our salvation.

Then notice the order of the next two things-grace and glory: not glory first: that could not be. We are not fit for it. Neither in body nor in soul

are we fit for glory before grace. We could not possibly receive glory while we are sinners, for a glorified sinner would be a strange sight. Grace must first blot out our sin. To take the rebel from the prison and put him among the children would be dangerous work unless his crime were pardoned and himself reconciled to his king. Grace must come in to change the nature. We could not enter glory or enjoy it by any possibility while we are sinful at heart. An unregenerate heart could not enter into the joy of the Lord. Only the pure in heart can see God; carnal eyes are blind to spiritual things. Grace must renew us or glory cannot receive us. Grace must change, regenerate, sanctify, or we cannot take our places among the perfected ones. Glory without grace would be mockery. The prepared place would be no heaven if the people were not prepared also.

As in this case there is order, you will find it so in all the arrangements of the Lord's house. One blessing is a stepping-stone to another: the holy leads on to the holiest. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The Lord gives mercies in succession, and he never gives you number two till you have been qualified for it by receiving number one. "They go from strength to strength." He gives life, and then life more abundantly. First grace, and then grace upon grace. God aboundeth towards us in all wisdom and prudence, leading us, as we do our boys, from their first-class books up to their classics, and taking care to ground us in each successive ascent of knowledge. Step by step we rise towards God, until at last we shall see the Savior's face and shall be like him.

Blessings in their order. Treasure this up, for it may be a ground of comfort to you. When you get clamouring for number seven, it may, perhaps, calm you a little if you remember that you must first have number six. Plod on step by step. Walk without fainting from one stage to another, and you shall surely come unto the Mount of God.

IV. Fourthly, and again briefly, BLESSINGS IN PREPARATION AND BLESSINGS IN MATURITY. "The Lord will give grace and glory." Grace is glory in the bud; you shall see the rod of Aaron full of blooming graces; but this is not all,-glory is grace in ripe fruit: the rod shall bear ripe almonds. The Lord will give you both the dawn and the noon, the Alpha and the Omega, grace and glory.

Let us be very grateful that God does deal in preparatory mercies. If he had provided heaven, and we were to make ourselves fit for it, we should never get there. Ay, and there are many stages of spiritual experience which are not to be attained unless God gives us preliminary educating grace to come at them. The blessing is that all that is needful to reach any gracious attainment is as much promised as the blessing itself.

Is it so, my poor friend, that you cannot this morning lay hold of a promise? You are such a babe in grace. Well, our heavenly Father has an infant class in his school, and a nursery in his house: he will teach you as a child, and give you a child's portion upon which you shall feed, and by which you shall grow. Do not be afraid to ask of God the beginnings of things. I know that sometimes in our prayers we feel that we are so blameworthy for our stupidity that we hardly dare ask to be taught the simple truths which we ought to know; but we must not give way to this proud humility, we must beg even to be taught our A B C. Suppose we need to be helped to overcome an irritable temper, let us not be ashamed to own the need, but confess it, and pray for help. Do we need grace to bear our little daily trials? Then let us seek everyday grace. Ask for a babe's blessings, for God is prepared to give them. Does he not say, "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms"? "The Lord will give grace and glory."

Brethren, we shall need much training to fit us to sing among the choristers above. Discords and false notes abound, and we must be tutored out of them into a richness of sweet tones and ordered harmonies. If we look into ourselves carefully we shall be shocked with the sight of our own unworthiness to mingle with perfect beings. I do not know how you feel about yourselves, but I grow worse and worse in my own judgment. I hope that I am more sanctified in many respects, but I am also more conscious of my need of fuller sanctification. The fact is that the more light a soul obtains the more it perceives its darkness and laments it. The more God makes you holy the more unholy you will judge yourself to be. No man groans so deeply, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" as the man who is nearest to complete deliverance from all evil. The last relics of sin are more

horrible to the godly man than the full empire of sin to the newly awakened. Even the very thought of sin, the flitting of it through his soul like a bird across the sky, becomes a calamity to the full-grown saint, and he cries out against it. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He who glories that he is perfectly sanctified must either have lowered the standard of holiness or else he has an overweening conceit of his own excellence. He who does not daily struggle against sin is in darkness and error, and I fear the life of God is not in his soul. In proportion as God has dealt with a man he will cry out for a something yet beyond him, and press forward to that which is before. Oh, how I long to be perfectly rid of sin and of every liability to fall into it. And here is the mercy-that the Lord will give grace. All the grace that is wanted to make you absolutely perfect God will bestow. He will reveal his righteousness from faith to faith, and we shall go from grace to grace. Faith shall lead on to full assurance, hope shall brighten into expectancy, love shall flame into burning zeal, and so we shall rise on eagles' wings from grace to glory. Not only the light of the lamp in its full brilliance, but the wick and the oil and the trimming, the Lord will give.

Furthermore, the Lord will not deny you the maturity, namely, glory. He who gives us to breakfast in grace will cause us to sup with him in glory.

Now, here I am altogether beaten. What shall I say of glory? What do I know of it? Matthew Wilks once said, "Man is the glory of the world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." This is true; but still what know any of us of glory in its heavenly sense? The Lord will give us nothing less than glory. We deserve shame: he will give us glory. We deserve misery, but he will give us glory. We deserve condemnation, but he will give us glory. We deserve death and hell, but he will give us glory.

What is glory? He that has been in heaven five minutes can tell you better than the sagest divine that lives; and yet he could not tell you. Nay, the angels could not tell you, you could not understand them. What is glory? You must enjoy it to know it. Glory is not merely rest, happiness, wealth, safety; it is honor, victory, immortality, triumph. You know what men call "glory" here below. The people climb to the house-tops and throng the



streets, and sound the clarions because a conqueror has returned from war and brings with him huge spoils. See how he stands erect, drawn in his chariot by milk-white steeds. Follow him up the Via Sacra to the Capitol at Rome. Men count him happy because he is surrounded with glory. What is this glory? Smoke, noise, dust, and oblivion, that is all. But glory as the Lord uses the term, what is it? It is that which surrounds himself, for he is the King of glory. It is that which crowns every attribute, for we read of the glory of his power and the glory of his grace. It is the outcome of all his plans and thoughts and works, for in all things he is glorified. It is that which his dear Son inherits, for he has entered into his glory. We shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory. Yes, it is of this unutterable thing that we shall partake, and that so soon! "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

V. Now, fifthly and finally, BLESSINGS IN THEIR UNIVERSALITY. I have noticed that the lawyers, who will always go into particulars as much as ever they can in their deeds-an excellent method of adding to their fees-yet usually are obliged to sum up with a general clause which includes all they have said and all they ought to have said; they use some sweeping final sentence to comprehend all the mentionable and unmentionables, all that can be recollected and all that might be forgotten. Now, the last part of my text is of that character- "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Is there some good thing which does not come to us by the Lord's being our sun? We shall not lose on that account. Is there another good thing which cannot be included in God's being our shield? We shall not be deprived of that. Is there some good thing that cannot be comprehended in grace? I cannot imagine what it can be, but if there be such a thing we shall not miss even that. Is there some good thing that is not comprehended even in glory? Well, it does not matter, we shall have it; for here stands the boundless promise,- "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

"Well," says some one, "but God has denied me many good things!" Ay, then they would not be good things to you. What has God done to you, then? "He has made me to be sickly in body, he has caused me to be poor, and I am tried in many ways." In this he has fulfilled his word, that no

good thing should be withheld from you. I have known a lather who boasted that he never laid a hand on his children by way of chastising them. I sometimes wished that he had done so, for his children were a sad plague to all who called at the house. Now, that father was withholding a good thing from his children,-a touch of the birch would have been most wholesome. Our heavenly Father never says of any of his elect, "I never laid a hand upon them"; but it is written, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without chastisement. O thou who art tried and afflicted, the Lord has not withheld from you the blessing of his rod. Accept trials from God, and believe that they are tokens of his love. If there is anything you wish for, and cannot get it from God, then, depend upon it, it would not be a good thing for you. If there is any apparently evil thing which comes to you plenteously, and you would gladly avoid it, depend upon it, it really is a good thing or else the Lord would not have sent it to you.

"Alas," cries one, "there are many good things which I have not received." Whose fault is that? What does the text say? It does not say, "I will force all my children to enjoy every good thing." No, but, "No good thing will he withhold." There are thousands of mercies that we do not enjoy, not because they are withheld, but because we do not take them. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. We are empty because we do not accept the fullness of Christ. If we were to be introduced into some of the depots in London that are full of articles most rich and rare, and the owners were to say, "Now, take whatever you please," we should help ourselves with a degree of liberality: but when the Lord takes us into the storehouses of his grace we have not faith enough to ask large things. We might have ten times as much-ten thousand times as much-if we would. Many of God's people are pining on a pittance when they might feast in plenty. They are eating the coarsest meal, and wearing the roughest garment-I mean spiritually,-and going about sighing and crying, and doubting and fearing, and all the while there is the bread of heaven on the table for them, and the robe of Christ's righteousness is prepared for them to wear. They might dwell at heaven's gate, but they condemn themselves to the dunghill.

Come, brothers, let us change all this, and if the Lord has said, "No good

thing will I withhold," let us put him to the test. Among other things, let us ask him to give us more joy in the Lord-a fuller assurance and confidence in him; and he will give it to us. Do not let us be poor by self-inflicted poverty, but let us rise to the riches which are presented to us in this blessed text. I wish I knew how to preach from it; but pray take an hour this afternoon, and do with the text as the cow does with the grass when she has been round the meadow and satisfied herself. She lies down and chews the cud. If you will ruminate by meditation you will find more in the text than I shall ever be able to bring out of it. May the Lord feed you upon this choice portion, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Feast Of The Lord**

The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. - John 2:9-10

I has exhausted my time [this morning](#) by describing the feast of Satan - how at the four tables, whereat did sit the profligate, the self-righteous, the worldly, and the secretly sinful, the course of Satan, was always on this wise, - first, the good wine, and when men had well drunken, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded, and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness for ever. I had then in my second point to show, that the rule of Christ's banquet is just the very reverse - that Christ doth always give the best wine last - that he doth save the good things until the end of the feast; nay, that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall, and are exceeding bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter, and sweeter, and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah, and especially when we shall enter into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, "Thou hast kept the

good wine until now."

Now, my dear friends, this is a great fact, that Christ's feast increaseth in sweetness. When first the lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup he set upon the table was but a very little one, and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men - "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." There was to them but little sweetness there: much to us, because we can understand it better, and some to them, because God's Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof patriarchs and ancient saints did drink; but beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which we drink. He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is more highly favoured than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation. Our fathers did eat manna, but we do eat the bread that came down from heaven; they did drink of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that living water whereof if a man drink he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness; the cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them; there was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow, much that was delightful to the faith of the true believer; but we must remember that we are drinking to-day of that wine which prophets and kings desired to drink of, but died without a taste thereof. They guessed its sweetness; they could by faith foresee what it would be; but lo! we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God hath given to us in this mountain wherein he hath made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, beloved, the text still stands true of us - there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to patriarchs, and kings, and prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noon-day which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's church; and who knoweth how long, ere the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Know ye not that the

King of Heaven is coming again upon this earth; Jesus Christ, who came once and broached his heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in his hand: behold, he comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto himself the throne of his father David. You and I, if we be alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips; and if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behind hand, for "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Saviour hath reserved to the last. Saints! ye cannot tell what golden goblets those are of which ye shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. Ye cannot tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press, shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer thee, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time.

And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which he uses to all his Church, I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this: First, The fact that the believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last; secondly, The reason of Christ for so doing; and thirdly, The lesson which we ought to learn therefrom.

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL THE LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best beloved who have their names upon the breastplate of the great high priest, who are purchased with his blood, and are very dear to his soul, who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day whence another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of affliction. Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the

dunghill of disease. Ye may go and climb to many a chamber where ye shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases, loathsome, protracted, and painful, and ye shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life. I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body, and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge; but these have had so little instruction that they cannot get mental food ready for themselves; if they read they can scarce understand, and they have hard bondage in this life, which maketh their life bitter and hindereth them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moment's rest. Oh, beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now?" Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! for there, she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, ye may have had to suffer sickness and sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness, and a thousand of this world's ills: what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. Ye shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labour with that murderous needle; but ye shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun, and ye shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from his countenance. Ye shall have no more infirmities; immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up; that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow, and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, but quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. Ye shall no more be poor; ye shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. Ye shall no more have to labour; there shall ye rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your uprightness. Ye shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution; ye shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when he shall come to be admired of them that love him. What a change for such! The best wine indeed is kept to the last, in their case, for they have never had any good wine here, to the eyes of men, though secretly

they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put his cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable: they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favoured of God's children, all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favoured! how greatly gifted! how much blessed! Ah, Paul, thou couldst talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third heaven. What draughts of joy the apostle Paul must have had! what lookings into the deep things of God! what soarings into the heights of heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favoured of God; to have his mind expanded, and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High. But ask the apostle Paul whether he believes there is anything better to come, and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received; and, beloved, he was not disappointed. There was a heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have all that they can need of this world's goods; they seem to be free from earthly care, and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong; they have much love to the Redeemer; they are engaged in some delightful work, and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still calm sea. God is with them, and they are greatly blessed; they spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever they do, it prospereth; whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is with them, in whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua,

that land is given to them to be an inheritance to them for ever. But, beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet heheld. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room be in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher." They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more. They shall be nearer to Christ ; they shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had; and they shall feel that their Master hath kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe, that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state, and in each of these we shall have to say, that Christ hath kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the believer enters into rest by faith; the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness; the promise is fulfilled. "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God giveth to his beloved sleep; there is a peace that passeth all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife, and alarms, - a peace which the worldling knoweth not of, nor can he guess it.

"A holy calm within the heart,  
The pledge of glorious rest.  
Which for the church of God remains,  
The end of cares, the end of pains."

But beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink to-day is dashed with some drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts; the cares of this world will come, doubts will arise; live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes; thorns in the flesh must come. But oh! the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." What good wine shall that be! God hath a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest, and ceased from their own works, as God did from his, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View heaven under another aspect. It is a place of holy company. In this



world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel; blessed be the Lord; the righteous have not all failed from among men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth - of men and women with whom you used to go up to God's house and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips, and what sweet balm you had in the days of your sorrow when they comforted and consoled you: and you have friends still left, to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul, and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart, and that you can enjoy union and communion with them. But beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here, is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect, that in heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honourable and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses, and talk with him of all his life of wonders; we shall walk with Joseph, and we shall hear from him of the grace that kept him in his hour of peril; I doubt not you and I shall have the privilege of sitting by the side of David, and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of heaven make but one communion, they are not divided into separate classes; we shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks, and hold fellowship with all of them; nor need we doubt but that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy me too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point, that in heaven we shall know even as we are known, and shall perfectly know each other; and that indeed, makes us long to be there. "The general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in haven." Oh, to get away from this poor church here, that is full of strifes and divisions, and bickerings and jealousies and animosities - to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much grace, and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk - no hasty tempers, - where we cannot possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note - when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of Paradise a

cause of strife - when we shall walk in the midst of them all, and see love beaming from every eye, and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh! that will be the best wine. Are you not longing to drink of it? - to enter into that great church fellowship, and attend those glorious church meetings,

"Where all the chosen race  
Shall meet around the throne,  
To bless the conduct of his grace,  
And make his wonders known."

Again, look at heaven, if you will, in the point of knowledge. We know very much on earth that makes us happy; Jesus Christ hath taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It is a world of ignorance, but still through grace we have entered into the school of the gospel, and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We had to make many ugly pothooks and hangers, and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy; but nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our heart with joy; - the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ; these great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, brethren, the best wine is kept till the last, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof, and permit us to read it all, then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old casks of knowledge that contain the richest wine, and Christ shall stave them in, and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now, - we could not bear many things, and therefore Christ keeps them back; but

"There shall you see and hear and know  
All you desired or wished below,  
And every power find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy."

You may, if you please, look at heaven in another sense - as a place of manifestations and of joys. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of

manifestations of himself which Christ is pleased to afford to his poor children on earth? No, beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus saith unto his beloved, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves." But, what must be the fellowship of heaven? I fail to-night in attempting to talk to you of the best wine, for this simple reason - I believe there are very few men that can preach of heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone. Baxter might write a Saint's Rest, but I am no Baxter - would God I were! The day may come perhaps, when I may talk more copiously of these blessings; but at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of the communion of heaven, I seem overcome, I cannot imagine it; for the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in his embrace forever. Oh! we must wait until we get there, and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into his arms, that we should feel his embrace, that we should fall at his feet, and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were dissolved away in ecstasy - to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which he hath spoken to us of when he said: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you." Truly he hath kept the best wine until the last.

II. And now, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly.

The Lord might have given us the best wine first, but he will not act as the devil doth; he will always make a broad distinction between his dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again, he will not give us the best wine first, because that is not his good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all; and the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet.

Again; your Father doth not give you the good wine now, because he is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans men used to drink bitter things, and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making his children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of heaven. I cannot think that heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knoweth best the sweet of rest? Is it not the labourer? Who understandeth best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who hath dwelt in the land of war? Who knoweth most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who hath passed through a world of sorrow? Ye are having your appetites sharpened by these trials; ye are being made ready to receive the fulness of joy that is in the presence of God for ever.

Again, the Lord hath this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that he may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to heaven to-night, and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time; because, methinks, in heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of heaven - and there be some of you that have had but few trials, but few doubtings and fearings, and tribulations and conflicts, - you will talk of how God delivered you; but you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah! what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah, and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains, and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him for ever. And Jeremiah, - I often think what a deal we shall get out of Jeremiah in eternity, - what he will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience, he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to heaven, will have enough to

think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all; she said in her prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt save me, only one thing I can promise thee. If thou wilt take me to heaven thou shalt never hear the last of it, for I will praise thee while immortality lasts, and I will tell the angels thou savedst ME." And this is the constant burden of heaven. They are each one wondering that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles, and these soul conflicts, and such like, we should have very little to talk about in heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in paradise. I bless God I did not go to heaven when an infant: I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials, and yet a life of sustaining grace. There will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God's reasons.

III. And now, dear brethren and sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home, and I thought to myself, "Ah! the horse goes well, because he is going home;" and the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, cause he is going home." You know, if we were going from home, every rough stone in the road might check us, and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road; we may be ancle-deep in fear, but it is going home; I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven, and he does not care how loudly howl the winds, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot: he is going homeward. Let that cheer thee, Christian, and make thee travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge thee to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because thou art going homeward.

Again: if we have the best things to come dear friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they

only seem to be so. A traveller who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an inn, he may grumble a little at the want of accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off to-morrow, he is only stopping a short time at the inn; he says, "I shall get home to-morrow night," and then he thinks of the joys of home, and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travellers. It will soon be over. We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbour, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be only one upper room; ah! we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise. We shall soon be at the journey's end, and then the road will not signify, long as we have got there. Come! let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming; let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come.

Once more; if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did; he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and you and I are often tempted to do it; but you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy, and full of delights of sinful pleasure. We ought to say, "Ah! my good wine is to come; I can bear that you should have your turn; my turn will come afterwards; I can be put off with these things, and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores; my turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham's bosom, and your turn is to come too, when in hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments.

Christian, what more shall I say to thee? - though there be a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last. "Take heed to thyself, that thou also keepest thy good wine until the last. The further thou goest on the road, seek to bring to thy Saviour the more acceptable sacrifice. Thou hadst little faith years ago: man! bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Thy Master is better to thee every day, and thou shalt see him to be the best of all Masters and friends. Seek to be better to thy Master every day; be more generous to his cause, more active to labour for him, more kind to his people, more diligent in prayer; and take heed that as thou growest in years thou

growest in grace, so that when thou comest at last to the river Jordan, and the Master shall give thee the best wine, thou mayest also give to him the best wine, and praise him most loudly when the battle shall just be over, and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of paradise."

And now, dear friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavouring to bring forth this good wine; but it is written that God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, but that ear hath not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you to-night your ear would have heard it, and the text would not have been true; and as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I cannot be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say, - the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to heaven, for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange, but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo; for although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen heaven anywhere but close to Calvary. When I have seen my Saviour crucified, then I have seen him glorified; when I have read my name written in his blood, then I have seen afterwards my mansion which he has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear for ever. Live near to the Saviour, man, and you shall not be very far off heaven. Recollect, after all, it is not far to heaven. It is only one gentle sigh, and we are there. We talk of it as a land very far off, but close it is, and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here to-night? Heaven is close to us; we cannot tell where it is, but this we know, that it is not a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe, and blessed for ever.

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## Fencing The Table

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. - 1 Corinthians 11:28

There are two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church, and only two,—Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These have been so misinterpreted, perverted, and abused, that the wish has sometimes crossed the mind of spiritual persons that they had never been instituted. We do not wonder that there should be a denomination of Christians who have given them up, though we think that, in this matter, they have not acted according to the Word of God. We ourselves retain them, for this reason only, because we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained them; and we desire to observe them exactly as Christ ordained them; and thus only shall we find them instructive and helpful to our souls.

Baptism, the immersion of the believer in water, is the token of his death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. It sets forth the fellowship which he has with his Lord as the apostle tells us: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him;"—not that the plunge into the water confers any grace upon the person who is baptized, but it is the type, the emblem, the instructive symbol of the new birth, which new birth consists in passing, by death and resurrection, into newness of life. You all know that we are only born once. A thing can only have one true beginning. Hence, baptism is never to be repeated. Once done, it is done for ever.

The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper; and, as baptism sets forth, typifies, (mark you, nothing more than typifies,) and is the emblem of the new birth, so the Lord's Supper is the emblem of the spiritual feeding of that new life. Now, though a man is born only once, he eats a great many more times than once, and drinks a great many more times than once. Indeed, to eat and to drink often, are necessary to the maintenance of our life. If we neglected to do so, we should soon find ourselves in an ill case. Hence, the Supper of the Lord, representing, as it does, the spiritual



feeding of the new-born life upon the body and blood of Christ, (and only representing it, mark you,—not really doing it in any carnal sense,) is oftentimes to be repeated. We find that the early Christians very frequently broke bread together; I think they did so almost every day. It is recorded, by some of the early fathers, that the first Christians seldom met together, on any day of the week, without commemorating the death of Christ. Augustine mentions this and he seems to have taught that, at least once in the week, on that blessed day which celebrates the resurrection of our Lord, Christians should meet for the breaking of bread. I think that, the oftener we meet for this purpose, the better it is for us. The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time; we are not under a law which binds us to this period or to that. Our Lord leaves it very much to our own loving hearts; but the words that Paul quotes, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," certainly imply that we should often "do this" in remembrance of our dear Lord and Savior.

A simple feast, even of bread and wine, a feast often celebrated, would be liable to be trifled with and misapplied. Hence, as paradise of old was guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, so stands this simple Supper of the Lord guarded with a flaming sword, of which my text is a portion: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Now, with this thought upon our minds, let us go to the text itself, and observe how we are bidden to examine ourselves before we come to the table of the Lord. We will speak, first, concerning the necessity for this examination; next, the person who is to perform it; then, the vital points of the examination; and, lastly, the spirit in which we should come to the table after we have examined ourselves.

#### I. First, then, THE NECESSITY FOR THIS EXAMINATION.

The sense of that necessity will be very strongly impressed upon us if we remember that many have profaned the table of the Lord. Hence it is incumbent upon us to examine ourselves lest we should do the same. Years ago,—our grandfathers recollect it well,—men had to "take the sacrament," as it was called, before they could be made mayors of towns,

or hold certain offices in the municipalities, and, in that way, the communion table became a passport to secular office. I tremble as I think how the laws of this land compelled men—though they ought never to have yielded obedience to such laws,—to eat and drink judgment or condemnation to themselves as they profaned this holy ordinance. Others have made it, as I fear that some still make it, a means of obtaining alms; coming to the communion table because those who are members of the church are helped in the time of their poverty, or there is a distribution of alms money among the needy communicants. Ah, dear friends, however poor you may be, it would be better for you even to starve than to get help in this way if you are not really the Lord's people. If any of you have acted thus, I charge you, before Almighty God, to do so no more. If we have any suspicions that we have ever done such a thing, we may well examine ourselves concerning that matter, and sincerely repent if we have so sinned against the Lord.

Others come to the communion as a piece of sheer superstition, really believing, poor deluded souls, that, when they take the wafer into their mouths, they actually eat the flesh of Christ. Such a monstrous doctrine as that is only fit for cannibals, it is not a doctrine of Christianity. What a profanation of the ordinance it is to come to it with such a notion as that! If any of us have the slightest idea that, to partake of what is called "the sacrament"—though there is no such name as that for it anywhere in Scripture,—confers grace, let all such thoughts be banished from our minds at once.

It is not a converting ordinance, nor a saving ordinance; it is an establishing ordinance and a comforting ordinance for those who are saved. But it never was intended to save souls, neither is it adapted to that end; and if it be so misrepresented, it is apt rather to be the means of damning than of saving the soul, for he that so eats and drinks may, in very deed, be eating and drinking damnation to himself.

I fear that there are others who come to the communion table out of mere form. I find that it is the custom of certain persons to do this always on Christmas day and on Good Friday, though what particular sanctity there can be about those two days, I am sure I cannot tell. I see little enough of

holiness about them, and a great deal of sheer superstition. But let all of us be careful that we never come to the communion simply because it is the first Sabbath in the month, or even because it is the day of our Lord's resurrection, and because, as church-members, we feel that we ought to come there. I mention these things—although I hope, to the most of you, they are unnecessary,—because they are necessary to a certain class of persons who, in one or other of these ways, thoughtlessly profane the table of the Lord.

But, brethren and sisters in Christ? we need to examine ourselves, because it may be that, though free from these evils which I have mentioned, we have come to this solemn feast without due solemnity without serious thought, without the proper preparation of heart or the right observance of the ordinance. We have come very often to the communion table, yet there has been but little real heart-fellowship with Jesus. There has been bread upon the table, and in our mouths, but we have not discerned the Lord's body. There has been wine there, but we have not looked through the sign to the blood of which it is only the symbol. If it has been so with any of us, we have, to that extent, eaten and drunk unworthily, and I know not how much of deserved chastisement God may have laid upon us on that account but the apostle's words have often been fulfilled since his day, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

This examination is necessary, next, because the purpose of this ordinance requires that we should be in a fit condition for its observance. What is the object of this ordinance? "This do in remembrance of me," says the Lord Jesus; but you cannot remember what you do not know. Then, how can you remember an unknown Christ? By coming to the communion table, you are supposed to let men see, as they look on at this ordinance, that you believe that Christ lived and died to save sinners. But suppose that you do not believe it,—that you do not, at any rate, in your heart savingly believe it; then, you are not a fit person to proclaim that truth to others by means of this ordinance. The Lord Jesus Christ does not want his enemies to be his remembrancers; he wants his friends to cherish his memory, and to keep the fact of his death prominently and permanently before the eyes of the world. It must be his friends who must

do this. Besides, this ordinance is one special means of communion between Christ and his people, but what communion can there be between you and Christ if you are a son of Belial? If you love sin, and continue to live in sin, what possible fellowship can you have with the holy Christ? Will he have communion with a man who even comes to his table drunk,—or who comes from dishonest actions all the week:—or who has been singing a lascivious song, but now turns to join with those who laud and magnify the name of the thrice holy God? Imagine not that Jesus Christ will welcome such as you are to his table. If you do come, it will be at your most imminent peril. It can do you no good; it must be a curse rather than a blessing to you. So, let us examine ourselves, because those, who come to the table of the Lord, ought to be of such a sort that the purposes and objects, for which the ordinance was instituted, may be realized in them.

But let us specially examine ourselves, because, if we come not aright, we shall incur very severe penalties,—the penalties which I have already mentioned to you. Let me again read to you these solemn words: "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And then follows the sure penalty upon true believers who, nevertheless, come in an unfit state to the table. I have read it to you before, but I will read it again: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Rush not in to the sacred place, but come with that gracious timorousness—nay, rather, with that holy boldness which becomes a sinner who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and is robed in his spotless righteousness.

And, dear friends, once more, there is a necessity for us to examine ourselves, because we must know that there are, among us, some who are, doubtless, partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily. We have known, to our great sorrow, of some who have been harbouring an unforgiving spirit, yet who have dared to come to the communion table. When I have really known that this has been the case, I have prevented

the wrongdoer from sitting down with us; but, unknown to me, and to other ministers, it must often have happened that persons have come, professing to be Christians, yet all the while not manifesting the true spirit of Christianity toward some offending brother or sister. You remember how even the loving apostle John writes, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Then, alas! there are some, who, by coming to the communion, profess to be Christians, yet who, nevertheless, are all the while living in shameful sin which they dare not have discovered Christ. This is one of the greatest sources of sorrow to true ministers of Christ, and it has made us often wring our hands with agony, and weep bitter tears before the Lord, when we have seen trees looking fair and green, but which, inwardly, as Bunyan said, were "so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box." Their profession was a false one; for, all the while, their moral character was unsound. There was a rottenness about them which no one discovered till, upon some fatal day,—fatal to their own reputation, but good for the church's purification,—they were exposed, and driven out with shame. Judas was found out at last; Ananias and Sapphira were at last found out, and cut off from amongst the people of God, and the unclean and unholy among the early Christians were excommunicated from the assembly of the saints.

Now, brethren and sisters, if, to your own personal knowledge, this has been the case with others, forgive me when I ask,—Is there not at least the possibility that it may also be the case with you? At any rate, you will do well to examine yourselves; and if, after having honestly examined, you can say, "No, that is not the case with me," then bless God that you can truthfully say so. Take no credit to yourselves, but give to God's grace the whole of the praise. Still, do look thoroughly to this matter. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." I, as a minister, am bound to examine myself, because there have been eminent preachers of the gospel who, nevertheless, have lived unhallowed lives. No preacher may dare to say, "My office screens me from this test." Deacons and elders of the church, you must examine yourselves, because you have known church-officers who have brought disgrace upon the offices that they have filled.

And you, Sunday-school teachers, open-air preachers, tract-distributors, and the like,—and you, members of the church,—however useful you may be, and however highly you may be respected by your fellow-members, I beseech you, nevertheless, shirk not this duty, but let each one examine himself ere he comes to sit down at the table of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak about THE PERSON WHO IS TO PERFORM THIS EXAMINATION: "Let a man examine himself."

Let not anyone say, "I was examined by the proper officers of the church, before I was admitted into church-membership, so I do not need any further examination." Now, mark, it is the duty of every church, in receiving members, to judge all applicants by their fruits. "By their fruits shall ye know them," is our Lord's own test. We must have a credible profession of faith, supported by a life that is consistent therewith, but that is all upon which we can form a judgment. We cannot examine the heart, and we cannot infallibly judge the life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that a certificate of church-membership is to excuse him from the duty of personal self examination, he is grievously mistaken. No, dear friend, you know what your secret thoughts are, and what your private actions are; and therefore it is to yourself that this duty is committed: "Let a man examine himself."

"Well, but," someone may say, "my friends—my private friends—are quite satisfied concerning my spiritual condition. I have been talking to my godly mother; I have been conversing with my praying father; I have had sweet fellowship, just lately, with a good old Christian friend; and they all seem perfectly satisfied with me." I am glad they are; but Paul says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Let a man examine himself." There is no greater error under heaven than to try to shift the responsibility of our own personal religion on to friends or to so-called "priests." There can be no more gigantic imposture than the supposed sponsorship of infants. It amazes me that anybody can dare to say, on any child's behalf, that it shall renounce the pomps and vanities of this world, and all else that is mentioned in the Church Catechism. But it would be an equally gigantic imposture if we were to establish a sponsorship for grown-up people.

Both of them are wicked, and neither of them can be carried out; we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people, the apostolic rule must remain: "Let a man examine himself." Look ye well to the state of your own souls; and, to this end, go to God in prayer, and say, as David did, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE VITAL POINTS IN THIS EXAMINATION? There are a good many, but I have arranged them under five heads for the sake of brevity, and to help your memories.

First, my dear friends, examine yourselves concerning your knowledge. There are some who are too ignorant to come to the table of the Lord. They may have taken their MA. Degree at Oxford or Cambridge, they may even be Doctors of Divinity, and yet be too ignorant to come to the Lord's table. What knowledge is necessary for coming aright to the table? I answer,—Saving knowledge—a living knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "This do in remembrance of me." You cannot remember a person you never knew; so you must be acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ if you would observe this ordinance as he instituted it. There is the bread upon the table. Have you ever known what it was to be spiritually hungry? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the only food that can relieve the hunger of your spirit? Have you learned to know him through feeding upon him by faith? Then, you are a fit person to partake of the bread on the communion table, because you are a person who understands what it signifies, you who have been satisfied by feeding upon Christ. There is also the wine-cup upon the table. Were you ever spiritually thirsty? Did you then see how the Lord Jesus Christ, by his atoning sacrifice, has fully met all the needs of your soul? Have you really partaken of Jesus Christ, and has your heart been refreshed, and revived, and cheered by the application to it of the precious blood of Jesus? If so, you understand the meaning of that communion cup, and you are a fit and proper person to partake of it. But if you have never known this spiritual hunger and thirst, —if you have never realized your own spiritual needs, and if you have not known what it is for Christ to supply those needs, I charge you to keep away from this table until you do know these things. Otherwise, you will

be eating and drinking in utter ignorance; and the mere physical acts will be of no service whatsoever to you. May the Lord give you to know him whom to know is life eternal, and when you do know him, then come to his table, for you will not then eat and drink unworthily.

Then, next, examine yourselves concerning your faith. Knowledge is all in vain without faith; and the knowledge, of which I have been speaking, is a knowledge that is closely allied with faith. Are you trusting alone in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ? I have asked myself that question many scores of times, and I do not recollect that I ever had any hesitancy about how to answer it. I know that I am trusting in Jesus. If I am really living,—if there is any truth in my own consciousness,—I am sure that I have trusted my soul, for time and for eternity, wholly to the keeping of that Savior who lived, and died, and rose again for sinners. Well, that being so, I have a right to come to the communion. Christ wants believers at his table; they are his own children. If you are believing in him, he invites you to come, and you will be welcome if you do come. You will not eat and drink unworthily, dear friend, if you apprehend, by faith, that Christ's flesh is meat indeed and his blood is drink indeed. You will come to the table in the right manner.

In the third place, I want you to examine yourselves concerning your repentance. In the emblems upon the communion table, I can see something of what it cost your Lord to redeem you from sin, and death, and hell. The bread, representing the flesh of Jesus, is separate from the wine, which represents his blood, and the separation of the blood from the flesh indicates death,—a bleeding away of life in the most acute anguish. It cost your Lord untold agony to redeem you from going down into the pit, so can you ever imagine that any man is a fit person to participate in the emblems which set forth that agony if he has never felt, in his own soul, any agony on account of sin? What right has an impenitent person to come where the death of Christ, on account of sin, is specially set forth! A heart that has never been broken, because of sin,—shall it come and remember the broken body and broken heart of Jesus? A heart of stone, that has never been melted,—shall it come and remember his precious flesh that was melted in the agonies of Calvary? If your eyes have wept no tears of repentance, how can you properly



remember him whose veins wept blood to redeem his people from their sins? It is a contrite heart and a broken spirit that Christ wants here. Only with such persons will God deign to dwell, and only with such will Christ commune, either at his table or anywhere else. See to it, then, that you have genuine repentance.

The next vital point for self-examination is love. Examine yourselves concerning your love. I think, brethren, that none of us can worthily eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, unless we truly love our Lord; so I venture to put the question to each one of you here. I know not your names, but the name that is used by our Lord Jesus will do for you. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" You answer, "Yes," do you? Then I will put the question again: "Simon, son of Jonas, Jesus says to thee, 'Lovest thou me?'" And yet a third time I may put it: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" 'Tis Jesus with the pierced hand, and with the pierced feet, who speaks, and he says, "Lovest thou me?" This is the test of whether you may come to his table, or not. Can you answer, "'Yea, Lord; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.'" Sometimes, my friends hardly know it, for I am not always as consistent as I should be. Sometimes, Lord, I have even to question it myself, but Thou knowest that, deep down in my heart, notwithstanding all my coldness and forgetfulness, all my wanderings, and all my faults, thou knowest that I do love thee." Come along, brother; come along, sister; you will not eat and drink unworthily if this is true concerning your love to your Lord.

There is one other matter which is vital, and that concerns obedience. Examine yourselves concerning your obedience; for, unless a man obeys the commands of Christ, he does not prove that he really loves Christ. If we truly love him, we shall keep his commandments. If Paul had said that no one had a right to come to the communion unless he was perfect, I certainly could not come and I feel sure that there is no one in the whole world who would have the right to come. Perfect? Ah, perfect weakness; and if anybody says he is perfect in any other sense than that, he must be possessed of perfect folly. But the obedience that we must have is of this sort. Dost thou desire to be perfectly obedient to thy Lord? Dost thou, in thy heart, desire to be rid of every sin, and to forsake every false way? Is there any sin that thou wouldst fain harbour and indulge? Then, thou art

not truly obedient; but canst thou, on the other hand, say, "Lord, I would be purged from every evil of every kind, and I desire to obey thee in all things. No matter how it may grate upon my feelings, or how contrary it may be to my wishes, where thou biddest me, I will go, and what thou commandest me, I will do,—thy grace helping me"? Is that what you say? Then, you may come to the communion, for Jesus himself welcomes you. But if you will not give up sin, if you have even one pet sin that you still determine to keep, you are a traitor to Christ, and you have no more right to come to his table than Judas Iscariot had.

IV. Now, in closing, I want to speak a few words concerning THE SPIRIT IN WHICH, AFTER THIS SELF-EXAMINATION, WE OUGHT TO COME TO THE COMMUNION.

Ought we not to come, dear friends, each one of Us, in the spirit of holy wonder? This is the Lord's table, and I am coming, with the Lord's redeemed people, to eat and drink at it; what a wonder that I am here! I never come to the communion without being astonished at the amazing grace of God to me, and especially as I think of this great church which God has been graciously pleased to gather in this place. How much I owe to him! How constantly am I struck with the marvels of his mercy to me! And each one of you, my fellow-believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, has some peculiar reason for feeling the same kind of wonder in your own case.

Next, we ought to come to the communion with a sense of self-abasement. Brethren, we ought to think little of ourselves everywhere; but when we come to the table of our Lord, we ought to shrink to nothing, —yea, to less than nothing. In the wilderness, man did eat angels' food, but angels never ate such food as this; yet we are permitted to come and partake of it. So, let us sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, till we are lost in wonder, love, and praise that we should ever be permitted to come to this sacred feast.

Let us come, at the same time, in a spirit of strong desire. I believe that, in a sermon, people always get good when they come desiring to get it. A hungry congregation will be sure to be fed; and if we come to the

communion table feeling, "My Lord and Master, I desire to meet with thee. The bread alone will not satisfy me; I want to feed spiritually upon thy flesh. The wine will not quench my soul's thirst; I want spiritually to receive thy blood into my inmost soul. I desire, with all passionateness of holy ardor, to put my finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust my hand into thy side;"—if you come to the communion in this spirit, longing for Christ, you shall have him. Open your mouths and pant for him, and the living waters shall quench your soul's thirst.

Then come to the table with a believing hope. Perhaps you have not seen your Master's face lately, you have been sorrowfully walking in darkness. Come to the communion hoping that he will look through the lattice, and reveal himself to you. Do you not know that the two ordinances are windows of agate and of carbuncle to the opened eyes of his people? Mayhap, your loving Lord will look again through one of those windows while you are sitting at his table. So, come expecting him; come with your heart wide open to receive its rightful Lord and Master, and with your eyes of love looking up to him, and, surely, if the eyes of your love look up to him, the eyes of his love will look down upon you. If you come to his table, singing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies;"—if you come passionately desiring to enjoy his company;—then you may also come with the full confidence that his company will be given to you.

I have only one thing more to say. Come to the communion table resolved that if, in the ordinance, you do not find your Lord;—if, in the breaking of bread, he is not manifested to you; and if, in the pouring forth of the wine, you get no taste of his love; you will still trust in him. Do not depend on outward signs and visible evidences, but say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' and if his table should yield me no spiritual meat, I will still cleave to my Master; and if he will only let me be as a dog beneath his table, I will eat the crumbs that fall there, and so shall I live, for in every crumb of his mercy there is life everlasting."

As for you, who perhaps have never thought upon this subject I have to say just this to you, and then I have done. Remember that religion does not begin with ordinances. While I have been speaking to professing

Christians concerning the communion, I hope that none of you have been thinking of it as a saving ordinance. You, as sinners, have to exercise faith in Christ before you have anything to do with believers' baptism; you have to come to Christ himself before you are qualified to come to the Lords table. As soon as you have, by faith, received Jesus Christ himself as your Savior, the tokens and emblems of his death will become instructive to you; but until Jesus Christ is wholly yours, hands off all these holy things! For, as uncircumcised Philistines would have had no right to be at the Paschal supper, so have those, who are not renewed in heart with that circumcision that is made without hands, no right to come to the feast of Christian love which is reserved for the followers of the Crucified. Come ye to Jesus, to Jesus only, and put your trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Fellowship With God**

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. - 1 John 1:3

Fellowship with God was one of the richest privileges of unfallen man. The Lord God walked in the garden and talked with Adam as a man talketh with his friend. So long as he was willing and obedient, Adam ate the fat of the land, and among the rich dainties and "wines on the lees well refined," of which his soul was a partaker, we must number first and foremost, unbroken communion with God, his Father and his Friend. Sin, as it banished man from Eden, banished man from God, and from that time our face has been turned from the Most High, and his face has been turned from us;—we have hated God, and God has been angry with us every day. Christ came into the world to restore to us our lost patrimony.

It was the great object of his wondrous sacrifice to put us into a position which should be equal and even superior to that which we occupied in Adam before the fall, and as he has already restored to us many things that we lost, so among the rest—fellowship with God. They who have by his grace believed, and have by the precious blood been washed, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God," and they have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand. So they who are in the kingdom, and under the dispensation of the second Adam, have restored to them in all its fullness that fellowship which was lost to them by the sin and disobedience of their first federal head. John was among the number of those who had enjoyed this privilege with Christ in his flesh. He had been Christ's chosen companion, elect out of the elect to a choice and peculiar privilege. During the incarnation, he was one of the favored three who had enjoyed the closest intimacy with the Redeemer; he had seen Christ in his transfiguration, had witnessed the raising of the dead maid, had been with the Lord in the garden, and he had lingered with him even when the thrust was given after death, and the blood and water flowed from his pierced heart. John had the nearest, the dearest, the closest fellowship with Christ in the flesh. As he had laid his head upon Christ's bosom, so had he laid all his thoughts and all the emotions of his mind upon the heart's love and divine affection of his Lord and Master but Christ was gone; it was no more possible to hear his voice, to see him with eyes, or to handle him with hands, yet John had not lost his fellowship, though he knew him no more after the flesh, yet he knew him after a nobler sort. Nor was his fellowship less real, less close, less sweet, or less divine, than it had been when he had walked and talked with him, and had been privileged to eat and drink with him at that last sacred feast. John says, "Truly our fellowship is"—not was—"is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

And now, my brethren and sisters in the common faith of our Lord Jesus, this morning I trust that many of us can say, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Did the apostle John need to say, "Truly"—as much as though some doubted or denied it? We, too, have sometimes an occasion to make as solemn an affirmation as he has done.

There are certain sectaries who exalt the form of their church government into a sine qua non of piety, and they say of us that it is impossible that we should have a fellowship with Christ, because we follow not after them. Because we reject not the ministry which God has appointed, to take up with some newly-devised scheme, by which everyone is to instruct his brother, forsooth therefore we have not the fellowship which is reserved for their sect and party. We have been led, when they have spoken very bitterly, to question ourselves; but after deep searchings of heart, in reply to them we can say, "Brethren, whether you be right, or we be right in the matter of church discipline or organization, yet we can assure you that 'truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'" And oftentimes the doctrinalist—the man who thinks more of the doctrine of Christ than of the person of Christ, and who couples therewith the conceit that he himself must be right, and all others wrong, —because we may not be able to endorse all the heights of his doctrine, or, on the other hand, may not be able to join with him in his legal statements—says, "O these people! there are many of them, but they can have no fellowship with God, because they do not sound our Shibboleth, they do not join with us in every separate dogma which we teach, and therefore the Lord is not with them." Ah, but we can say to them, "Brethren, we are content to leave these doctrinal disputes to the Great Arbiter of right and wrong; we have formed our opinion of Scripture; we hope, as in the sight of God, and as before the Most High, we can say, we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." But whether this be so or not, we protest to you, "Truly," yes, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And perhaps the experimentalist—the man who attaches undue importance to his own particular form of experience—may cry out that the minister has not had the same experience of human depravity as himself; he may condemn us utterly because we do not give prominence to a certain favourite but unhealthy standard of spiritual conviction. Well, we can say to him, "We have preached what we do know, we have testified what we have seen, and if we cannot go to all the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, as yet, we hope to grow; but we can say, even should you doubt our declaration, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'"

This brings me immediately and directly to the text. You will perceive that there is suggested by the text, a quiet investigation, leading to a most solemn affirmation. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And then there is, secondly, in the former part of the text, a most affectionate desire, leading to appropriate action. Our desire is, that you may have fellowship with us, and, therefore, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

I. First, then, let us in all quietude and stillness of heart, talk this matter over with one another, and see if it be not so, that we have had, and do have real FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

Now, brethren, we have had fellowship with the FATHER. In order to have fellowship with any man, there must be a concord of heart. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" At the very bottom of fellowship there must be a likeness; we must have like wishes, like desires; we must have espoused like ends, and our spirits must be welded together in the intention to effect like purposes. Now, I think we can avow, this morning, in the first place, that we do feel a sweet concord with God in his eternal purposes. I read the Book of God, and I find that he hath ordained Christ to be the Head of his Church, and that he hath chosen unto himself "a number that no man can number." I find it revealed in the Word of God that he is a God of distinguishing and discriminating grace; that he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," that he will bring many sons unto glory, "to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Brethren, cannot you and I say, as in the sight of a heart-searching God, we have full accord with God in his purposes? Why, we love them, we delight in them, the decrees of God are satisfactory to us. If it were possible for us to alter the roll in which his divine intentions are written, we would not do it, we feel that whatever he has ordained must be right, and as for his ordination of his people unto eternal life, and his loving them above all people that be on the face of the earth, why this is one of the richest joys that we know. The doctrine of election is a sweet cordial to the child of God. I can cry, "My Father, thou art King, thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to

nought the things out are; and in this I have fellowship with thee, for I can exclaim, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'"

Again, we have fellowship with God in the object for which the purpose was first formed, namely, his own glory. Ah, the deeds of the Most High tend to manifest his majesty and glorify his Godhead. O brethren, do not we sympathise with God in this object? Give glory unto him, give glory unto him, O all creatures that his hand hath made! The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged, and most inflamed is, that he in all things may be glorified. He knows, for he can read the heart, that oftentimes, when we have ourselves been bowed down, and we have been made as the very dust of the earth, we have said, "This is still my comfort, that he is exalted, that he still reigneth, and doeth as he wills arming the armies of heaven, and among the people of this lower world." Do you not desire his glory as he desires it? He has purposed to stain the pride of all human boasting, and to make the world know that Jehovah is God, and "that beside him there is none else" do not you also desire the same, and do you not daily pray, "Let him be magnified from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof; let all creatures call him blessed, let all that have breath, praise, laud, and magnify his name?" In this, then—in his purpose, and in the object of his purpose, we have "fellowship with the Father."

And now, have we not fellowship with him in the plan by which he effects that purpose? It pleased him, that in "the fullness of time, he should send forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He laid one foundation, and one only, and he said concerning it, that "other foundation shall no man lay but that which is laid." God has chosen "the stone which the builders refused," that it might be made the "headstone of the corner:" this is the Lord's doing, and cannot we say, "It is wondrous in our eyes?" As he is unto God "the chief corner stone, elect, precious," so "unto you that believe He is precious." Looking at all the plan from the beginning to the end, do you not agree in it? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, the most glorious scheme that could



have been devised? And as from its first fountain in predestination, onward to the ocean of glory, you traverse the ever-flowing stream, do you not say of it in all matchless course, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world, and who having, chosen us, will glorify us and bring us to himself at the last?" Yes, there is not a single word that we would alter, there is not a line in this divine scheme that we would wish to change. If it approves itself to him, it certainly approves itself to us, if he chose it as the plan of divine operation, we adore his choice, we reverence both the wisdom and the love which planned and carried out the design.

And yet more I think we may add, we have fellowship with God in the most prominent characteristics of that plan. Throughout the whole way of salvation, you have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed lustre. You have seen his grace in forgiving the sinner, but you have seen his holiness in avenging sin upon the substitute. You have seen his truthfulness acting in two ways, his truth in threatening,—by no means sparing the guilty, his truth in the promise,—"passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin." Throughout the whole Divine plan of salvation, there is not a single blot upon any of the attributes of the Most High. "Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of Sabbath," is still the son of angels, even when they see sinners who were once the vilest of the vile, brought to share their joys, and sing their songs. And, brethren, do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? Would you have him unjust that you might be saved? I think you would say, "Never! never! not even for my sake let him be unjust." Would you have him unloving to others, that he might make you his favourite? No! and there is no trace of anything like this. You would not have him retract his threatening, for then you might fear that he would forget his promise. I am sure, as you look upon the character of God, as he manifests it in the face of Jesus Christ, your soul is filled with ineffable and delightful adoration; you can sing unto him, "Great art thou, O God, thy mercy endureth for ever," and taking up the words of David, you can say, "I will sing of mercy, and of judgment; unto thee, O God, will I sing!" In the purpose, then, in the object of that purpose, in the plan by which the purpose is achieved, and in the characteristics of that plan, the believer in Christ has fellowship or sweet

concord with the Father.

But to proceed a step further: we have a most divine and precious communion with the Father in the objects of his love. When two persons love the same thing, their affection becomes a tie between them. The two may love each other, but when in the course of providence, children are brought into the house, their children become another bond between their parents, each of them mutually giving their hearts to their little ones, feel that their hearts are yet more fully given the one to the other. Now, there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did not he say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" And cannot you and I add, "Yes, he is our beloved Savior, in whom we are well pleased?" Is it not written, "It pleased the Father to bruise him?" And do we not feel that ye have found a divine pleasure and satisfaction in looking into his wounds, his agonies, and his death? And has not Father determined to glorify his Son Jesus? And is not the fondest thought of our heart that we may help to glorify him here on earth, and may spread his glories even in heaven, by telling to the angels, and principalities, and powers, the height and depth of his lovingkindness? Does the Father love the Son?—even so do we love him, not to the same infinite extent, for we are finite beings, yet with sincerity, even as the Father loves Jesus, so sincerely do we love him -

"A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,  
Had I no love for thee;  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
O may I cease to be!"

So in this, then, we have fellowship with the Father, seeing that we are both agreed in loving the Son. Does the Father love the saints?—even so do we. Doth he declare that "Precious shall their blood be in his sight? "Does he bear, and carry them, and show his interest for them? Will he say that "His delight is in his people," and that "they are his peculiar portion," and his "choice heritage?" My soul, canst thou not say, in the midst of all thy doubts and fears—"I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I love the brethren?" Canst thou not protest, "O my heart! that the excellent of the earth are all thy delight, where they dwell,

I would dwell, where they die, I would die, their portion shall be my portion, their God shall be my God for ever and ever." In this, too, we have fellowship with the Father.

But you know, brethren, the word "fellowship" not only signifies concord of heart but it implies a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication. May the Holy Spirit grant that we may not say a word which is not strictly verified by our experience! but I hope we can say we have had converse with the Divine Father. We have not seen him at any time, nor have we beheld his shape. It has not been given to us, like Moses, to be put in the cleft of the rock, and to see the back parts, or the train of the invisible Jehovah; but yet we have spoken to him; we have said to him, "Abbe, Father;" we have saluted him in that title which came from our very heart, "Our Father, who art in heaven." We have had access to him in such a way that we cannot have been deceived. We have found him, and through the precious blood of Christ, we have come even unto his feet, we have ordered our cause before him, and we have filled our mouth with arguments, nor has the speaking been all on our side, for he has been pleased to shed abroad, by his Spirit, his love in our hearts. While we have felt the spirit of adoption, he, on the other hand, has showed to us the lovingkindness of a tender Father. We have felt, though no sound was heard; we have known, though no angelic messenger gave us witness, that his Spirit did "bear witness with our spirits that we were born of God." We were embraced of him—no more at a distance; we were "brought nigh by the blood of Christ." I trust, my brothers and sisters, you can each of you say—though you wish it could be more intense than it is—"I have in all these things had fellowship with the Father, for I have conversed with him, and he has spoken to me." You can join in the words of that hymn -

"If in my Father's love  
I share a filial part,  
Send down thy Spirit like a dove,  
To rest upon my heart."

Furthermore, and to conclude upon this point of fellowship with the Father, we can, I think, refer ourselves to the All-wise One, and we can

say we have had fellowship with God in this respect, that the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness. That which has been the delight of his Holy Being has been a delight to us. "And what is that?" say you. Why, brethren, doth not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy, and in lovingkindness, and has not that been our delight too? I am sure our greatest miseries here have been our sins. We do not murmur at our afflictions, if we could but get rid of those sins which bind us down and hamper us when we would mount towards heaven. Holiness is our pleasure, purity is our delight, and if we could but be perfect even as he is perfect, and freed from sin, even as God our Father, is freed from everything like iniquity, then we should be in heaven, for this is our happiness; the same happiness which God finds in purity and righteousness, we find in it too.

And if it be the happiness of the Father to have communion with the persons of the Trinity—if the Father delights in his Son, even so do we delight in him, and such delight, that if we told it to the stranger, he would not believe us, and if we spoke it in the wordling's ear, he would think us mad. Jesu, thou art the sun of our soul; thou art to us the river of which we drink, the bread of which we eat, the air we breathe; thou art the basis of our life and thou art the summit of it, thou art the prop, the mainstay, the pillar, the beauty, the joy of our being! If we have but thee, we can ask nothing besides, for thou art all in all, and if we have thee not, we are wretched and undone. So, then we have fellowship with the Father, because that which is his happiness is most certainly our happiness.

And so, also, that which is the Father's employment is our employment. I speak not of you all, He knows whom he hath chosen. We cannot join with the Father in upholding all worlds, we cannot send forth floods of light at the rising of the sun, we cannot feed the cattle on a thousand hills, nor can we give food and life to all creatures that have breath. But there is something which we can do which he does. He doeth good to all his creatures, and we can do good also. He beareth witness to his Son Jesus, and we can bear witness too. "The Father worketh hitherto" that his Son may be glorified, and we work too. O thou Eternal Worker! it is thine to save souls, and we are co-workers with thee. We are his husbandry, we

are his building, he scatters the seed of truth, we scatter it too, his words speak comfort, and our words comfort the weary too, when God the Spirit is with us. We hope we can say, "For us to live is Christ," and is not this what God lives for too? We desire nothing so much as to glorify him, and this is the Father's will, as well as Jesus Christ's prayer, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Do you not see, brethren, we stand on the same scaffold with the eternal God? When we lift our hand, he lifts up his eternal arm, when we speak, he speaks too, and speaks the same thing; when we purpose Christ's glory, he purposes that glory too, when we long to bring home the wandering sheep, and to recall the prodigal sons, he longs to do the same. So that in that respect we can say, "Truly we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

2. And now I must turn with some brevity to announce also, and to affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters we are like little children that have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained, O brethren, though I say we have fellowship with the Father, yet how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! This fellowship is like the river in Ezekiel, at the first it is up to the ancles, and afterwards it is up to the knees, and then up to the loins, and then it becomes a river to swim in. There be, I fear, few of us who have waded where there is a river to swim in, but, blessed be God, though it be only up to the ancles, yet we have fellowship, and if we have but a little of it, that little is the seed of more, and the certain pledge of greater joys to come. Well, now we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say, for our hearts are united to him, —we cannot speak of this, but I think we can weep about it, -

"Jesus, we love thy charming name,  
'Tis music to our ears."

We may sometimes have to sing -

"Tis a point I long to know  
Oft it causeth anxious thought;  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I his, or am I not?"

But I think we can come back after all and answer, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without thee, it is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in thee. If I did not love thee, should I have such longings after thee? Should I have such mournings and such sorrowings when thou art gone? Would it be so dark without thee if I still were blind, and would it be so bright with thee if I did not see a glimmering of thy light and some rays of thy beauties? Ye men and brethren, Satan may say what he will, and our sense may seem to contradict the statements, but still our soul followeth hard after him. He is to us all our salvation and all our desire. We have, then, fellowship with Christ, since his heart is set in us, and our heart is knit to him.

Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with him in his sufferings. We have not yet "resisted unto blood striving against sin," but we have carried his cross and we have suffered his reproach. There have been some who could say -

"Jesus, I my cross have taken  
All to leave and follow thee."

And others of us, whose path has been somewhat smoother, have nevertheless felt the cross within us—for the new spirit within us has had to contend with all that once we loved, there have been wars and fightings, and a perpetual conflict, not only from without, but what is far more severe, from within also. Yet if it should cause more sorrow we still would follow him, for we count it as our riches that we may bear the reproach of Christ as he bore reproach for us. I trust, my brothers and sisters you that profess to be his followers do not blush to own his name. I hope you do not turn your backs in the day of battle. If you do, you may question whether your fellowship is with the Son Jesus Christ, but if you can welcome shame and hail reproach because he remembers you, then in this you have been conformed unto his death, and have been made partakers of his sufferings. I have sometimes thought it were worth all the bitterness if we might drink of his cup and be baptised with his baptism. We can have no Gethsemane with all its bloody sweat, yet we have had

our Gethsemanes too, we cannot die on Calvary, but I hope we have been crucified with him and the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world; we cannot go into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, yet we have been buried with him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life; and I hope, inasmuch as he has risen and ascended up on high, though our bodies are still here, yet we have set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth; and as he has been raised up and made to sit together with his Father, I hope we know the meaning of that passage. "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And as he is to come and reign, I hope we know also something of that, for he hath made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. From the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the millennium, there should be in the Christian's experience a blessed fellowship. We ought to know Christ in his obscurity and littleness—the babe Christ being in our hearts. We ought to know him in his wilderness temptations—ourselves being tempted in all points. We ought to know him in his blasphemies and slanders—ourselves being accounted by man to be as Beelzebub, and as the offscouring of all things, we must know him in his passion, in his agony, and in his death, and then, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," we may know him in his triumphs, in his ascension upon high, in his session at the right hand of God, and in his coming to judge the quick and the dead, for we, too, shall judge angels through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have, I hope, in some humble measure in these respects, fellowship with the Son Jesus Christ.

But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when he was on the earth are in us now. Oh! we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And when we could not do all we would, when there seemed to be some insuperable obstacle in the path of our usefulness, we have nevertheless said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me." And when at any time we have been wearied in the Master's service, we have yet found such good cheer therein, that we could say with him, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And at

times, in the thoughts of serving God and even of suffering for him we have said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" For we have desired with desire to eat that Passover, that we, too, might say of our humble work, "It is finished," and commend our spirit into the eternal hand. Oh! have you never wept with Christ as he did over poor Jerusalem? Did London's vices never bring the tears into your eyes? Did you never weep over hard-hearted souls, perhaps in your own family? Have you never cried as he did, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not?" Oh! I hope, without egotism, without saying more than we have really felt, we have thirsted and panted to bring others up out of their degradation and their fall, till we have felt that if we might be offered ourselves, if by our sacrifice souls might be saved, we would be willing to have it said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." In this, then, we have had fellowship with Christ.

And yet, further, as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh! ye daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? Tell ye of that happy day when we went forth to meet king Solomon, and crowned him "with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals; and in the day of the gladness of his heart," when he took us up into his chariot, the bottom whereof was of silver and the sides thereof lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and we rode in covenant safety and in royal pomp with him. When the king came into his palace and he said, "Let the fatlings be killed, eat; yea, eat abundantly and drink abundantly, O beloved!" and we ate of all his sweet wines and of all his luscious fruits which he had laid up in store for his beloved till we said, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love, his left hand is under my head, and his right arm doth embrace me." Brethren, we have leaped right out of the body to embrace him, at least so we have thought, from excess of joy, and that, too, when there was nothing in the world to give us content, when our prospects were blighted, when our health has failed us, when the sun of this world was quenched, then He came forth, even He who is all in all, and lifted the light of his countenance upon us.

You have had, I hope, some few of these in-flowings of love, when you



have eaten angels' food, when you have forgotten the dry bread and mouldy crusts that you had in the wallet of your experience, and did eat the new corn of the kingdom, and did drink the new wine with your blessed and divine Master; you no longer traveled in rumbling chariots, but your soul was like the swiftly-speeding chariots of Amminadib; you flew after your beloved in transport so divine, that tongue can never tell, and lips can never describe the sacred rapture. Yes, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

We have but a few minutes remaining for the second head, which might very well demand an entire discourse.

II. There was, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE, LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. This affectionate desire was that others might have fellowship with us. Having found the honey, we cannot eat it alone, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the new-born nature to send us out crying, "So, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." We would that others had fellowship with us in all respects except our sins; for we can say with the apostle, "I would to God that ye were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds!" But these bonds of sin we would not wish that any should bear. Brethren, we would that you had fellowship with us in the peace we feel with God our Father, in the access which we have to his throne, in the confidence which we have in the truth of his promise, in the overflowing joys we experience when he manifests himself to us! We would that you had our hopes, that you could look forward to death and the grave with the same delight as we can, expecting to be transformed into his image, and to see him as he is! We wish you had our faith, only more of it—that you might have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! We wish that you had fellowship with us in prevailing prayer, that you knew how to cast your burdens upon the Lord—that you understood how to bring every blessing from on high, by pleading the merits of the Savior! We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely and of good repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, divine, and everlasting you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us!

And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort, and what is that? It is to tell to others what he has seen and what he has heard. Now, I shall try to use that means this morning, for I think, perhaps, the illustration of fact may be better than any illustration of words. Do I not address many here who never had any fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Perhaps you hardly know what it means, and when you hear what it means, you attach no importance to it. It is nothing to you to talk with God; you never dream of such a thing as speaking to Christ, and Christ speaking to you. Ah! if you knew its sweetness, you would never, never be content till you had it, you would thirst with such a thirst, that you would never cease, but thirst till you drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. Well now, soul, that thou mayest have fellowship with us in these things, let me tell thee what I have heard, and known, and seen, for this is what the text tells me to speak of—I have known and seen that Christ is one who is ready to forgive thee—able to forgive thee. Oh! shall I never forget when I first went to him, laden with iniquity, and black with sin, bowed down by five years of conviction, which had rendered my fears despair, and my doubts had gathered till they seemed impenetrable to the light! I went to him, and I thought he would reject me; I thought him to be hard, and unwilling to forgive. But I only looked on him, only looked at him,—one glimpse of a tearful eye at a crucified Savior, and that moment without a pause the burden rolled away; the guilt was gone, peace of mind took the place of despair, and I could sing, "I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven!" I had many sins, but He took them all away. Some of those sins were deeply aggravated. I would not tell them in a human ear, but they are gone, in one instant too, not because of any merit, but gone freely and graciously of his own abundant mercy, according to the riches of his lovingkindness in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now what we have seen and heard we do testify, that ye also may have fellowship with us, for "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Still he is willing to receive you, he is able to forgive you. Laden with guilt and full of woe, hie thee to that full relief! Make no tarrying! "Linger not in all the plain!" Let not thy heavy heart tempt thee to refrain thyself from him! He stands with open arms, ready to pardon, with open heart, willing to receive. Nay, he runs, methinks I see him, though thou art yet far off, he runs and meets thee,

he falls upon thy neck, he kisseth thee, he saith, "Take off his rags, clothe him in the best robe; put shoes on his feet and a ring upon his hand, and let us eat and be merry, for the dead is alive and the lost is found."

But I testify yet again, soul, that after thou hast once believed in Christ, and received thy pardon, thou wilt find him to be willing to keep thy soul from sin. I thought that even if Christ forgave me, it would be impossible for me to break off evil habits and the lusts of the flesh. And I have known many scores of men who were swearers, and they said they should never be able to rinse their mouths of their oaths. They were drunkards too, and they said that drink would get the upper hand of them yet, but we have seen and we have testified that when we believe in Christ, he changes the heart, he renews the nature, makes us hate the things we loved before, and love the things we once despised. We have seen it, and we testify it. O drunkard, he can make thee sober! unchaste man, he can make thee virtuous! There is no lust which his arm cannot subdue, no mighty sin which he cannot drive out, he shall make thee run in the way of his commandments with delight, thou shalt neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left.

"But" saith another, "if he did uphold for awhile I should never be able to hold on." What I have seen and heard, that I do declare unto thee. Blessed be his name, I am yet young in grace but he has been faithful to me. The child believed, and the child now testifies that God is faithful, and has not once forsaken nor left him, but preserved him. I half wish this morning that grey hairs were on my head that I might give force to this testimony of "what I have seen and heard." I remember well, when declaring that God was a faithful God, my good old grandfather, who was sitting behind me in the pulpit, came forward and said, "My grandson can tell you that, but I can bear witness to it. I have passed my three score years and ten, but still He has been faithful and true."

"E'en down to old age, all his people shall prove  
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne."

We testify this to you, that you may have fellowship with us, for "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

I have this much to say, and if I should never preach again, and if this might be the last discourse I should ever deliver in this world, I would wish to make this the final testimony. There is that joy in religion that I never dreamed of. He is a good Master whom I have served, that is a blessed faith which He has bestowed upon me, and yields such blessed hope, that

"I would not change my bless'd estate  
For all the world calls good or great."

And if I had to die like a dog, and there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ; yea, more joy in one glimpse of his face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what he has been till now, he will be to the end; and where he hath begun a good work, he will carry it on. Yes, sinners, Christ's cross is a hope that we can die by,—which can take us down to the grave without a fear, which can make us short in the midst of the swelling waters of Jordan, can make us transported with delight even when we are bowed down with physical pain or nervous distress. There is that in Christ, I say, which can make us triumph over the gloomiest terrors of grim death, and make us rejoice in the darkest of tempests which can blacken the grave. Trust ye, trust ye in the Lord, for our testimony, and that of all his people, is, that he is worthy to be trusted. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

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## Final Perseverance

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. - Hebrews 6:4-6

There are some spots in Europe which have been the scenes of frequent warfare, as for instance, the kingdom of Belgium, which might be called the battle field of Europe. War has raged over the whole of Europe, but in some unhappy spots, battle after battle has been fought. So there is scarce a passage of Scripture which has not been disputed between the enemies of truth and the upholders of it; but this passage with one or two others has been the special subject of attack. This is one of the texts which have been trodden under the feet of controversy, and there are opinions upon it as adverse as the poles, some asserting that it means one thing, and some declaring that it means another. We think that some of them approach somewhat near the truth; but others of them desperately err from the mind of the Spirit. We come to this passage ourselves with the intention to read it with the simplicity of a child, and whatever we find therein to state it, and if it may not seem to agree with something we have hitherto held, we are prepared to cast away every doctrine of our own, rather than one passage of Scripture.

Looking at the scope of the whole passage, it appears to us that the Apostle wished to push the disciples on. There is a tendency in the human mind to stop short of the heavenly mark. As soon as ever we have attained to the first principles of religion, have passed through baptism, and understand the resurrection of the dead, there is a tendency in us to sit still; to say, "I have passed from death unto life; here I may take my stand and rest;" whereas, the Christian life was intended not to be a sitting still, but a race, a perpetual motion. The Apostle, therefore, endeavors to urge the disciples forward, and make them run with

diligence the heavenly race, looking unto Jesus. He tells them that it is not enough to have on a certain day, passed through a glorious change -- to have experienced at a certain time, a wonderful operation of the Spirit; but he teaches them it is absolutely necessary that they should have the Spirit all their lives -- that they should, as long as they live, be progressing in the truth of God. In order to make them persevere, if possible, he shows them that if they do not, they must, most certainly be lost; for there is no other salvation but that which God has already bestowed on them, and if that does not keep them, carry them forward, and present them spotless before God, there cannot be any other. For it is impossible, he says, if ye be once enlightened, and then fall away, that ye should ever be renewed again unto repentance.

We shall, this morning, answer one or two questions. The first question will be, Who are the people here spoken of; Are they true Christians or not? Secondly, What is meant by falling away? And thirdly, What is intended, when it is asserted, that it is impossible to renew them to repentance?

I. First, then, we answer the question, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE HERE SPOKEN OF? If you read Dr. Gill, Dr. Owen, and almost all the eminent Calvinistic writers they all of them assert that these persons are not Christians. They say, that enough is said here to represent a man; he is a Christian externally, but not enough to give the portrait of a true believer. Now, it strikes me they would not have said this if they had not had some doctrine to uphold; for a child reading this passage, would say, that the persons intended by it must be Christians. If the Holy Spirit intended to describe Christians, I do not see that he could have used more explicit terms than there are here. How can a man be said to be enlightened, and to taste of the heavenly gift, and to be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, without being a child of God? With all deference to these learned doctors, and I admire and love them all, I humbly conceive that they allowed their judgements to be a little warped when they said that; and I think I shall be able to show that none but true believers are here described.

First, they are spoken of as having been once enlightened. This refers to the enlightening influence of God's Spirit, poured into the soul at the time

of conviction, when man is enlightened with regard to his spiritual state, shown how evil and bitter a thing it is to sin against God, made to feel how utterly powerless he is to rise from the grave of his corruption, and is further enlightened to see, that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified," and to behold Christ on the cross, as the sinner's only hope. The first work of grace is to enlighten the soul. By nature we are entirely dark; the Spirit, like a lamp, sheds light into the dark heart, revealing its corruption, displaying its sad state of destitution, and, in due time, revealing also Jesus Christ, so that in his light we may see light. I cannot consider a man truly enlightened unless he is a child of God. Does not the term indicate a person taught of God? It is not the whole of Christian experience, but is it not a part?

Having enlightened us, as the text says, the next thing that God grants to us is a taste of the heavenly gift, by which we understand, the heavenly gift of salvation, including the pardon of sin, justification by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, regeneration by the Holy Ghost, and all those gifts and graces in which the earlier dawn of spiritual life convey salvation. All true believers have tasted of the heavenly gift. It is not enough for a man to be enlightened, the light may glare upon his eyeballs, and yet he may die; he must taste as well as see that the Lord is good. It is not enough to see that I am corrupt; I must taste that Christ is able to remove my corruption. It is not enough for me to know that He is the only Savior; I must taste of his flesh and of his blood, and; have a vital union with him. We do think that when a man has been enlightened and has had an experience of grace, he is a Christian; and whatever those great divines might hold, we cannot think that the Holy Spirit would describe an unregenerate man as having been enlightened, and as having tasted of the heavenly gift. No, my brethren, if I have tasted of the heavenly gift, then that heavenly gift is mine. If I have had ever so short an experience of my Savior's love, I am one of his, if he has brought me into the green pastures, and made me taste of the still waters and the tender grass, I need not fear as to whether I am really a child of God.

Then the Apostle gives a further description, a higher state of grace: sanctification by participation of the Holy Ghost. It is a peculiar privilege to believers, after their first tasting of the heavenly gift, to be made

partakers of the Holy Ghost. He is an indwelling Spirit; he dwells in the hearts, and souls, and minds of men, he makes this mortal flesh his home; he makes our soul his palace, and there he rests, and we do assert (and we think, on the authority of Scripture), that no man can be a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and yet be unregenerate. Where the Holy Ghost dwells there must be life, and if I have participation with the Holy Ghost, and fellowship with him, then I may rest assured that my salvation has been purchased by the blood of the Savior. Thou need'st not fear, beloved; if thou hast the Holy Ghost, thou hast that which ensures thy salvation; if thou, by an inward communion, canst participate in his Spirit, and if by a perpetual indwelling the Holy Ghost rests in thee, thou art not only a Christian, but thou hast arrived at some maturity in and by grace. Thou hast gone beyond mere enlightenment: thou hast passed from the bare taste-thou hast attained to a positive feast, and a partaking of the Holy Ghost.

Lest there should be any mistake, however, about the persons being children of God, the Apostle goes to a further stage of grace. They "have tasted the good word of God." Now, I will venture to say there are some good Christian people here who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have never "tasted the good word of God." I mean by that, that they are really converted, have tasted the heavenly gift, but have not grown so strong in grace as to know the sweetness, the richness, and the fatness of the very word that saves them. They have been saved by the word; but they have not come yet to realize, and love, and feed upon the word as many others have. It is one thing for God to work a work of grace in the soul, it is quite another thing for God to show us that work; it is one thing for the word to work in us-it is another thing for us really and habitually to relish, and taste, and rejoice in that word. Some of my hearers are true Christians, but they have not got to that stage wherein they can love election, and suck it down as a sweet morsel, wherein they can take the great doctrines of grace, and feed upon them. But these people had. They had tasted the good word of God, as well as received the good gift: they had attained to such a state, that they had loved the word, had tasted, and feasted upon it. It was the man of their right hand, they had counted it sweeter than honey- ay, sweeter than the droppings of the honeycomb. They had "tasted the good word of God." I say again, if these people be not



believers-who are?

And they had gone further still. They had attained the summit of piety. They had received "the powers of the world to come." Not miraculous gifts, which are denied us in these days, but all those powers with which the Holy Ghost endows a Christian. And what are they? Why, there is the power of faith, which commands even the heavens themselves to rain, and they rain, or stops the bottles of heaven, that they rain not. There is the power of prayer, which puts a ladder between earth and heaven, and bids angels walk up and down, to convey our wants to God, and bring down blessings from above. There is the power with which God girds his servant when he speaks by inspiration, which enables him to instruct others, and lead them to Jesus; and whatever other power there may be—the power of holding communion with God, or the power of patient waiting for the Son of Man—they were possessed by these individuals. They were not simply children, but they were men; they were not merely alive, but they were entitled with power; they were men, whose muscles were firmly set, whose bones were strong; they had become giants in grace, and had received not only the light, but the power also of the world to come. These, we say whatever may be the meaning of the text, must have been, beyond a doubt, none other than true and real Christians.

II. And now we answer the second question, WHAT IS MEANT BY FALLING AWAY? We must remind our friends, that there is a vast distinction between falling away and falling. It is nowhere said in Scripture, that if a man fall he cannot be renewed; on the contrary "the righteous falleth seven times, but he riseth up again;" and how ever many times the child of God doth fall, the Lord still holdeth the righteous, yea, when our bones are broken, he bindeth up our bones again, and setteth us once more upon a rock. He saith, "Return, ye backsliding children of men; for I am married unto you," and if the Christian do backslide ever so far, still Almighty mercy cries, "Return, return, return, and seek an injured Father's heart." He still calls his children back again. Falling is not falling away. Let me explain the difference; for a man who falls may behave just like a man who falls away, and yet there is a great distinction between the two. I can use no better illustration than the distinction between fainting and dying. There lies a young creature; she can scarcely

breathe; she cannot herself, lift up her hand, and if lifted up by any one else, it falls. She is cold and stiff, she is faint, but not dead. There is another one, just as cold and stiff as she is, but there is this difference-she is dead. The Christian may faint, and may fall down in a faint too, and some may pick him up and say he is dead; but he is not. If he fall, God will lift him up again, but if he fall away, God himself cannot save him. For it is impossible, if the righteous fall away, "to renew them again unto repentance."

Moreover, to fall away is not to commit sin, under a temporary surprise and temptation. Abraham goes to Egypt, he is afraid that his wife will be taken away from him, and he says, "She is my sister." That was a sin under a temporary surprise-a sin, of which, by-and-bye he repented, and God forgave him Now that is falling; but it is not falling away. Even Noah might commit a sin, which has degraded his memory even till now, and shall disgrace it to the latest time; but, doubtless, Noah repented, and was saved by sovereign grace. Noah fell but Noah did not fall away. A Christian may go astray once, and speedily return again; and though it is a sad, and woeful, and evil thing to be surprised into a sin, yet there is a great difference between this and the sin which would be occasioned by a total falling away from grace.

Nor can a man who commits a sin, which is not exactly a surprise, be said to fall away. I believe that some Christian men - (God forbid that we should say much of it!-let us cover the nakedness of our brother with a cloak,) but I do believe that there are some Christians, who, for a period of time, have wandered into sin, and yet have not positively fallen away. There is that black case of David-a case which has puzzled thousands. Certainly for some months, David lived without making a public confession of his sin, but, doubtless, he had achings of heart, for grace had not ceased its work: there was a spark among the ashes that Nathan stirred up, which showed that David was not dead, or else the match which the prophet applied would not have caught light so readily. And so, beloved, you may have wandered into sin for a time, and gone far from God; and yet you are not the character here described, concerning whom it is said, that it is impossible you should be saved; but, wanderer though you be, you are your father's son still, and mercy cries, "Repent, repent;

return unto your first husband, for then it was better with you than it is now. Return, O wanderer, return."

Again, falling away is not even a giving up of profession. Some will say, "Now there is So-and-so, he used to make a profession of Christianity, and now he denies it, and what is worse, he dares to curse and swear, and says that he never knew Christ at all. Surely he must be fallen away." My friend, he has fallen, fallen fearfully, and fallen woefully; but I remember a case in Scripture of a man who denied his Lord and Master before his own face! You remember his name; he is an old friend of yours-our friend Simon Peter! he denied him with oaths and curses and said, "I say unto thee that I know not the man." And yet Jesus looked on Simon. He had fallen, but he had not fallen away; for, only two or three days after that, there was Peter at the tomb of his Master running there to meet his Lord, to be one of the first to find him risen. Beloved, you may even have denied Christ by open profession, and yet if you repent there is mercy for you. Christ has not cast you away, you shall repent yet. You have not fallen away. If you had, I might not preach to you; for it is impossible for those who have fallen away to be renewed again unto repentance.

But some one says, "What is falling away?" Well, there never has been a case of it yet, and therefore I cannot describe it from observation; but I will tell you what I suppose it is. To fall away, would be for the Holy Spirit entirely to go out of a man-for his grace entirely to cease; not to lie dormant, but to cease to be-for God who has begun a good work, to leave off doing it entirely-to take his hand completely and entirely away, and say, "there, man! I have half saved thee; now I will damn thee." That is what falling away is. It is not to sin temporally. A child may sin against his father, and still be alive; but falling away is like cutting the child's head off clean. Not falling merely, for then our Father could pick us up but being dashed down a precipice, where we are lost for ever. Falling away would involve God's grace changing its living nature, God's immutability becoming variable, God's faithfulness becoming changeable, and God, himself being undeified: for all these things falling away would necessitate.

III. But if a child of God could fall away, and grace could cease in a man's

heart-now comes the third question-Paul says, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO BE RENEWED. What did the Apostle mean? One eminent commentator says, he meant that it would be very hard. It would be very hard, indeed, for a man who fell away, to be saved. But we reply, "My dear friend, it does not say anything about its being very hard; it says it is impossible, and we like to read our Bible just as a child would read it." It says it is impossible, and we say that it would be utterly impossible, if such a case as is supposed were to happen; impossible for man, and also impossible for God; for God hath purposed that he never will grant a second salvation to save those whom the first salvation hath failed to deliver. Methinks, however, I hear some one say, "It seems to me that it is possible for some such to fall away," because it says, "It is impossible, if they shall fall away, to renew them again into repentance." Well, my friend, I will grant you your theory for a moment. You are a good Christian this morning; let us apply it to yourself, and see how you will like it. You have believed in Christ, and committed your soul to God, and you think, that in some unlucky hour you may fall entirely away. Mark you, if you come to me and tell me that you have fallen away, how would you like me to say to you, "My friend, you are as much damned as the devil in hell! for it is impossible to renew you to repentance?" "Oh! no sir," you would say, "I will repent again and join the Church." That is just the Arminian theory all over; but it is not in God's Scripture. If you once fall away, you are as damned as any man who suffereth in the gulf for ever. And yet we have heard a man talk about people being converted three, four, and five times, and regenerated over and over again. I remember a good man (I suppose he was) pointing to a man who was walking along the street, and saying, "that man has been born again three times, to my certain knowledge." I could mention the name of the individual, but I retrain from doing so. "And believe he will fall again," said he, "he is so much addicted to drinking, that I do not believe the grace of God will do anything for him, unless he becomes a teetotaller." Now, such men cannot read the Bible, because in case their members do positively fall away, here it is stated as a positive fact, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. But I ask my Arminian friend, does he not believe that as long as there is life there is hope? "Yes," he says:

While the lamp holds out to burn,

The vilest sinner may return."

Well, that is not very consistent, to say this in the very next breath to that with which you tell us that there are some people who fall away, and consequently fall into such a condition, that they cannot be saved. I want to know how you make these two things fit each other, I want you to make these two doctrines agree, and until some enterprising individual will bring the north pole, and set it on the top of the south, I cannot tell how you will accomplish it. The fact is you are quite right in saying, "While there is life there is hope;" but you are wrong in saying that any individual ever did fall into such a condition, that it was impossible for him to be saved.

We come now to do two things: first to prove the doctrine, that if a Christian fall away, he cannot be saved, and, secondly, to improve the doctrine, or to show its use.

I. Then I am going to prove the doctrine, that if a Christian fall away-not fall, for you understand how I have explained that; but if a Christian cease to be a child of God, and if grace die out in his heart-he is then beyond the possibility of salvation, and it is impossible for him ever to be renewed. Let me show you why. First, it is utterly impossible, if you consider the work which has already broken down. When men have built bridges across streams, if they have been built of the strongest material and in the most excellent manner, and yet the foundation has been found so bad that none will stand, what do they say? Why, "We have already tried the best which engineering or architecture has taught us, the best has already failed; we know nothing that can exceed what has been tried; and we do therefore feel that there remains no possibility of ever bridging that stream, or ever running a line of railroad across this bog or this morass, for we have already tried what is acknowledged to be the best scheme." As the apostle says, "These people have been once enlightened; they have had once the influence of the Holy Spirit revealing to them their sin: what now remains to be tried. They have been once convicted -- is there anything superior to conviction? Does the Bible promised that the poor sinner shall have anything over and above the conviction of his sin to make him sensible of it? Is there anything more powerful than the sword

of the Spirit? That has not pierced the man's heart; is there anything else which will do it? Here is a man who has been under the hammer of God's law; but that has not broken his heart; can you find anything stronger? The lamp of God's spirit has already lit up the caverns of his soul: if that be not sufficient, where will you borrow another? Ask the sun, has he a lamp more bright than the illumination of the Spirit! Ask the stars, have they a light more brilliant than the light of the Holy Ghost? Creation answers no. If that fails, then there is nothing else. These people, moreover had tasted the heavenly gift; and though they had been pardoned and justified, yet pardon through Christ and justification were not enough (on this supposition) to save them. How else can they be saved? God has cast them away; after he has failed in saving them by these, what else can deliver them? Already they have tasted of the heavenly gift: is there a greater mercy for them? Is there a brighter dress than the robe of Christ's righteousness? Is there a more efficacious bath than that "fountain filled with blood?" No. All the earth echoes, "No." If the one has failed, what else does there remain?

These persons, too, have been partakers of the Holy Ghost, if that fail, what more can we give them? If, my hearer, the Holy Ghost dwells in your soul, and that Holy Ghost does not sanctify you and keep you to the end, what else can be tried? Ask the blasphemer whether he knows a being, or dares to suppose a being superior to the Holy Spirit! Is there a being greater than Omnipotence? Is there a might greater than that which dwells in the believer's new-born heart? And if already the Holy Spirit hath failed, O, heavens! tell us where we can find aught that can excel his might? If that be ineffectual, what next is to be essayed? These people, who, had "tasted the good Word of Life," they had loved the doctrines of grace, those doctrines had entered into their souls, and they had fed upon them. What new doctrines shall be preached to them? Prophet of ages! where wilt thou find another system of divinity? Who shall we have? Shall we raise up Moses from the tomb? shall we fetch up all the ancient seers, and bid them prophecy? If, then, there is only one doctrine that is true, and if these people have fallen away after receiving that, how can they be saved?

Again, these people, according to the text, have had "the powers of the

world to come." They have had power to conquer sin -- power in faith, power in prayer, power of communion: With what greater power shall they be endowed? This has already failed; what next can be done? O ye angels! answer, what next! What other means remain? What else can avail, if already the great things of salvation have been defeated? What else shall now be attempted? He had been once saved; but yet it is supposed that he is lost. How, then, can he now be saved? Is there a supplementary salvation? is there something that shall overtop Christ, and be a Christ where Jesus is defeated. And then the apostle says, that the greatness of their sin which they would incur, if they did fall away, would put them beyond the bounds of mercy. Christ died, and by his death he made an atonement for his own murderers; he made an atonement for those sins which crucified him once, but do we read that Christ will ever die for those who crucify him twice? But the Apostle tells us that if believers do fall away, they will "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Where, then, would be an atonement for that? He has died for me, What! though the sins of all the world were on my shoulders, still they only crucified him once and that one crucifixion has taken all those sins away; but if I crucified him again where would I find pardon? Could heavens, could earth, could Christ himself with bowels full of love, point me to another Christ; show to me a second Calvary; give me a second Gethsemane? Ah! no! the very guilt itself would-put us beyond the pale of hope, if we were to fall away?

Again beloved, think what it would necessitate to save such a man. Christ has died for him once, yet he has fallen away and is lost; the Spirit has regenerated him once, and that regenerating work has been of no use. God has given him a new heart (I am only speaking, of course, on the supposition of the Apostle), he has put his law in that heart, yet he has departed from him, contrary to the promise that he should not, he has made him "like a shining light," but he did not "shine more and more unto the perfect day," he shone only unto blackness. What next? There must be a second incarnation, a second Calvary, a second Holy Ghost, a second regeneration, a second justification, although the first was finished and complete- in fact, I know not what. It would necessitate the upsetting of the whole kingdom of nature and grace, and it would, indeed, be a world turned upside down, it after the gracious Savior failed, he were

to attempt the work again.

If you read the 7th verse, you will see that the Apostle calls nature in to his assistance. He says, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end it is to be burned." Look! there is a field; the rain comes on it, and it brings forth good fruit. Well, then, there is God's blessing on it. But there is according to your supposition, another field, on which the same rain descends, which the same dew moistens; it has been ploughed and harrowed, as well as the other, and the husbandman has exercised all his craft upon it, and yet it is not fertile. Well, if the rain of heaven did not fertilise it, what next? Already all the arts of agriculture have been tried, every implement had been worn out on its surface, and yet it has been of no avail. What next? There remains nothing but that it shall be burnt and cursed-given up like the desert of Sahara, and resigned to destruction. So, my hearer, could it be possible that grace could work in thee, and then not affect thy salvation- that the influence of Divine grace could come down, like rain from heaven, and yet return unto God void, there could not be any hope for thee, for thou wouldst be "nigh unto cursing," and thine end would be "to be burned."

There is one idea which has occurred to us. It has struck us as a singular thing, that our friends should hold that men can be converted, made into new creatures, then fall away and be converted again. I am an old creature by nature; God creates me into a new thing, he makes me a new creature. I cannot go back into an old creature, for I cannot be uncreated. But yet, supposing that new creatureship of mine is not good enough to carry me to heaven. What is to come after that? Must there be something above a new creature-a new new creature. Really, my friends, we have got into the country of Dreamland; but we were forced to follow our opponents into that region of absurdity, for we do not know how else to deal with them.

And one thought more. There is nothing in Scripture which teaches us that there is any salvation, save the one salvation of Jesus Christ-nothing



that tells us of any other power, super-excellent and surpassing the power of the Holy Spirit. These things have already been tried on the man, and yet, according to the supposition, they have failed, for he has fallen away. Now, God has never revealed a supplementary salvation for men on whom one salvation has had no effect and until we are pointed to one scripture which declares this, we will still maintain that the doctrine of the text is this: that if grace be ineffectual, if grace does not keep a man then there is nothing left but that he must be damned. And what is that but to say, only going a little round about, that grace will do it? So that these words instead of militating against the Calvinistic doctrine of final perseverance, form one of the finest proofs of it that could be afforded.

And now, lastly, we come to improve this doctrine. If Christians can fall away, and cease to be Christians, they cannot be renewed again to repentance. "But," says one, "You say they cannot fall away." What is the use of putting this "if" in, like a bugbear to frighten children, or like a ghost that can have no existence? My learned friend, "Who art thou that replest against God?" If God has put it in, he has put it in for wise reasons and for excellent purposes. Let me show you why. First, O Christian, it is put in to keep thee from falling away. God preserves his children from falling away; but he keeps them by the use of means; and one of these is, the terrors of the law, showing them what would happen if they were to fall away. There is a deep precipice: what is the best way to keep any one from going down there? Why, to tell him that if he did he would inevitably be dashed to pieces. In some old castle there is a deep cellar, where there is a vast amount of fixed air and gas, which would kill anybody who went down. What does the guide say? "If you go down you will never come up alive." Who thinks of going down? The very fact of the guide telling us what the consequences would be, keeps us from it. Our friend puts away from us a cup of arsenic, he does not want us to drink it, but he says, "If you drink it, it will kill you." Does he suppose for a moment that we should drink it. No; he tells us the consequence, and he is sure we will not do it. So God says, "My child, if you fall over this precipice you will be dashed to pieces." What does the child do? He says, "Father, keep me; hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." It leads the believer to greater dependence on God, to a holy fear and caution, because he knows that if he were to fall away he could not be renewed,

and he stands far away from that great gulf, because he knows that if he were to fall into it there would be no salvation for him. It is calculated to excite fear, and this holy fear keeps the Christian from falling. If I thought as the Arminian thinks, that I might fall away, and then return again, I should pretty often fall away, for sinful flesh and blood would think it very nice to fall away, and be a sinner, and go and see the play at the theater, or get drunk, and then come back to the Church, and be received again as a dear brother who had fallen away for a little while. No doubt the minister would say, "Our brother Charles is a little unstable at times." A little unstable! He does not know anything about grace; for grace engenders a holy caution, because we feel that if we were not preserved by Divine power we should perish. We tell our friend to put oil in his lamp, that it may continue to burn! Does that imply that it will be allowed to go out? No, God will give him oil to pour into the lamp continually. Like John Bunyan's figure: there was a fire, and he saw a man pouring water upon it. "Now," says the Preacher, "don't you see that fire would go out, that water is calculated to put it out, and if it does, it will never be lighted again;" but God does not permit that! for there is a man behind the wall who is pouring oil on the fire; and we have cause for gratitude in the fact, that if the oil were not put in by a heavenly hand, we should inevitably be driven to destruction. Take care, then Christian, for this is a caution.

2. It is to excite our gratitude. Suppose you say to your little boy, "Don't you know Tommy, if I were not to give you your dinner and your supper you would die? There is nobody else to give Tommy dinner and supper." What then? The child does not think that you are not going to give him his dinner and supper, he knows you will, and he is grateful to you for them. The chemist tells us, that if there were no oxygen mixed with the air, animals would die. Do you suppose that there will be no oxygen, and therefore we shall die? No, he only teaches you the great wisdom of God, in having mixed the gases in their proper proportions. Says one of the old astronomers, "There is great wisdom in God, that he has put the sun exactly at a right distance-not so far away that we should be frozen to death, and not so near that we should be scorched." He says, "If the sun were a million miles nearer to us we should be scorched to death." Does the man suppose that the sun will be a million miles nearer, and,

therefore, we shall be scorched to death? He says "If the sun were a million miles farther off we should be frozen to death." Does he mean that the sun will be a million miles farther off, and therefore we shall be frozen to death? Not at all. Yet it is quite a rational way of speaking to show us how grateful we should be to God. So says the Apostle. Christian! if thou shouldst fall away, thou couldst never be renewed unto repentance, then, that he keeps thee.

"See a stone that hangs in air, see a spark in ocean live:  
Kept alive with death so near; I to God the glory give."

There is a cup of sin which would damn thy soul, O Christian. Oh! what grace is that which holds thy arm, and will not let thee drink it? There thou art, at this hour, like the bird-catcher of St. Kilda, thou art being drawn to heaven by a single rope; if that hand which holds thee let thee go, if that rope which grasps thee do but break, thou art dashed on the rocks of damnation. Lift up thine heart to God, then, and bless him that his arm is not wearied, and is never shortened that it cannot save. Lord Kenmure, when he was dying, said to Rutherford. "Man! my name is written on Christ's hand, and I see it! that is bold talk, man, but I see it!" Then, if that be the case, his hand must be severed from his body before my name can be taken from him; and if it be engraved on his heart, his heart must be rent out before they can rend my name out.

Hold on, then, and trust believer! thou hast "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, which entereth within the veil; the winds are bellowing, the tempests howling; should the cable slip, or thine anchor break, thou art lost. See those rocks, on which myriads are driving, and thou art wrecked there if grace leave thee; see those depths, in which the skeletons of sailors sleep, and thou art there, if that anchor fail thee. It would be impossible to moor thee again, if once that anchor broke, for other anchor there is none, other salvation there can be none, and if that one fail thee, it is impossible that thou ever shouldst be saved. Therefore thank God that thou hast an anchor that cannot fail, and then loudly sing-

"How can I sink with such a prop,  
As my eternal God

Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,  
And spreads the heavens abroad?"  
How can I die, when Jesus lives  
Who rose and left the dead?  
Pardon and grace my soul receives  
From my exalted head."

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## **Fire! Fire! Fire!**

When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. - Isaiah 43:2

Before we explain the metaphor of the text, it may be well for us to remark that we are not sufficiently grateful, I fear, for the preservation which God affords to us from fire. To be startled at the dead of night with the alarming cry, and to find one's self and children and goods in danger of being immediately consumed, must be no small trial. I have felt myself extreme gratitude to God that while both on the right hand and on the left the flames have raged, he has been pleased to spare to us this temple of our solemnities, this place where we delight to worship. And is it not meet that we should each and all render to him our hearty thanks for sparing our habitations preserving the roof under which we rest, enabling us to go out and to come in in perfect safety? Or, probably, I may be addressing some this morning who have had escaped from the very midst of the fires. Let such not only bless God for preservation in the past, but let them celebrate his goodness in plucking them as brands out of the burning. Let them be extremely grateful to God that while others this day are dying as a black heap of ashes who but yesterday were living men, we are still in the land of the dying unburned and unsinged. It was at least the trap of many of you, during the past week, and again last night, to witness a conflagration of awful grandeur, in which tongues of flame, mountains of fire, and pillars of smoke, made a spectacle to be gazed at with interest while it produced terrors and apprehensions that could awe the wildest mob into silence. With you and me it is a common mercy to be preserved day by day, and night by night from the devouring element. Yet when the dreadful catastrophe is within view—when those we know personally or by repute are sufferers—and when at the same time we look on with a sense of our own present security—then surely we ought to give more than a common expression of gratitude to God for mercies that at other times we are too apt to paste over unheeded as but the effects of a common Providence. Never was a truer sentence uttered than when one

said, "These mercies are not valued until they are lost, and these preservations are not esteemed until they are withdrawn." Let us thank God while we have the mercies, lest he be provoked by our ingratitude and take forth his rod and scourge us. Then, indeed, might we cry out under the smart, and wish and desire that we had our mercies back again. Thus much I could not in my conscience withhold at a time when there are judgments around us enough to make us tremble, and mercies enough in the little circles of home to make us exceedingly grateful. Let us now take the text in its real signification. Of course the walking through the fire here is put for the severest form of trouble: You have, in the commencement of the verse, trouble described as passing through the water. This represents the overwhelming influence of trial in which the soul is sometimes so covered that it becomes like a man sinking in the waves. "When thou goest through the rivers,"—those mountain torrents which with terrific force are often sufficient to carry a man away. This expresses the force of trouble, the power with which it sometimes lifts a man from the foothold of his stability, and carries him before it. "When thou passest through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." But going through the fire expresses not so much the overwhelming character and the upsetting power of trouble as the actual consuming and destructive power of trouble and temptation. The metaphor is more vivid, not to, say more terrific, than that which is employed in the first sentence, and yet vivid and awful though it be, it is certainly not too strong a figure to be used as the emblem of the tribulations, temptations and afflictions, through which the Church and people of God have been called to pass. We may apprise the richness of the promise in proportion to the astonishing character of the metaphor, and we ought to value the privilege which it confers in the precise ratio of the dreadful character of the danger against which it preserves us. "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

We shall talk of three things, this morning, as the Holy Ghost may enable us; first of all, a terrible pathway,—walking around the fire; secondly, an awful danger,—the danger of being burned and utterly consumed; and thirdly, a double insurance,—"Thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the fire kindle upon thee."

I. First, then, let us speak a little upon this TERRIBLE PATHWAY.

The sacramental host of God's elect has never had an easy road along which to journey. I see the fields on fire, the prairie is in a blaze, the very heavens are like a furnace, and the clouds seem rather to be made of fire than water. Across that prairie lies the pathway to heaven, beneath that blazing sky the whole Church of God must make its perpetual journey. It started at the first in fire, and its very glory at the last shall take place in the midst of the fiery passing away of all things. When first there was a Church of God on earth, in the person of Abel it was persecuted, Cain lifted up his cruel club to slay his brother; and when the children of Seth were the representatives of God's chosen, they were without doubt the subject of the jeer and gibe of the descendants of Cain. Noah, the preacher of righteousness endured during his one hundred and twenty years, the hardness of heart and carelessness of an unthinking world; he and his family, who were the remnant of the Church in the latter part of those days, were constantly exposed to the laughter and persecution of men. When God had destroyed the earth with water, and the whole race of man was contained within the ark, you would think that then, certainly, the Church within the ark would be secure from molestation. But no, we find him ready to detect the failings of his parents, and no doubt a ringleader of everything that was vile and vicious, just as we have reason to hope that some of his brethren adhered to the most true God. From that day forward, whether you read through the life of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, it still standeth true, "He that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the Spirit." Whether we refer you to the history of Israel by the side of the brick-kilns of Egypt, or to the host of God constantly beset by the marauders of the Amalekites, you find it still to be true that through much tribulation the people of God must wade their way to Canaan. And if you look further on in history, between David and Saul, between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, between the faithful followers of God after the captivity who would rebuild the temple, and Sanballat the Horonite; between the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes, there must always be preserved a deadly feud, to let it be seen that the world must hate God's people, and must harass them and seek to hunt them out, while they, on the other hand, must steadily pursue their onward march through the midst of billows of fire till they come at last to

their eternal rest. Find me the abode of the Church of God and I can smell the furnace not far off. Show me the follower of the God of Abraham and I shall soon find the host of enemies ready for the attack. Up till the days of the Saviour the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, not only from its friends who would take it, but from those enemies who would assault it. From the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zecharias the son of Barachias, the pathway of the Church hath been a blood-besprinkled time. Since that day, what tongue can tell the sufferings of the people of God? Since Christ became martyr as well as Redeemer, has there been a season in which God's people have not somewhere or other been made to feel that they are not of the world, and that the world does not love them because they are not of the world? In apostolic times, Stephen expires beneath a shower of stones, James is killed with a sword, certain others of the saints are vexed; believers are scattered abroad. The Roman lion takes up the fight, Herod delights in the gore of the Christians, and smears the confessors of that holy faith with pitch and sets them in his gardens that they might be literally, as they were spiritually, the lights of the world. Let the catacombs of Rome witness to their sorrowful lives and let the Capitol witness to their terrible deaths. Let the old dungeons, some of which still remain, testify to the places where they wore out their dreary lives, and let the blood-stained Campus Martius still show where they cheerfully surrendered those lives for Christ. Oh! if the lands could speak, if the Earth could vomit forth her blood what stories could still be told of the way they were slain. Some of them were tortured, others sawn asunder, some stoned, and others burnt to death; though of them the world was not worthy. All the Roman Emperors, with but few exceptions, were persecutors; and the Christian emperors were as bad as the Pagan, for the Christian emperors were not Christians, nor were they members, as I believe, of a Christian Church. The Christian Church, and especially that Church of which we are still members, which has never defiled its garments, but which, never having had any alliance with the Church of Rome, has never needed to be reformed,—that Church under its different names, Paulitians, Novations, Albigenses, Lollards, Wyckliffites, Anabaptists, Baptists, has always suffered. It matters not what state, what Church, may have been dominant, whether it has been Christian or anti-Christian, the pure Church of Christ has always been the victim of persecution, and though she has persecuted never, but has always



maintained inviolate, disunion from the state, and an utter hatred of all laws which would bind the conscience of man, yet has she been especially destitute, afflicted, tormented, and if she hath to-day a little breathing time, perhaps it is rather owing to the timidity which has made us keep back our sentiments, than to any charity towards ourselves. Find the Church of Christ wherever you will, and you shall find her scorned and despised of man. Find her in Scotland, and her Covenanters have to hide themselves in the midst of the mountain, and read the Word of God by the lightning flash, to escape from the dragoons of Claverhouse. Find her in England and where was she? Not in the cathedrals of her cities, but in the dungeons of her rural towns like Bedford with John Bunyan; not among the great and noble who were the persecutors, but among the poor and conscientious who were the persecuted. "If you want to find the drunkards and sinners of the worst dye," said one of our preachers at or before Cromwell's time, "you can find them in Church and state, but if you wish to find the men who are holy and who serve God, you must look into the felon's dungeons for them, for that is where they have been cast by the powers that be." Everywhere from the first day until now, it is not respectable to be a follower of Christ. If we follow Christ fully and faithfully before God, it is not equitable and praiseworthy before men. To take up his cross and to perform the ceremonies which he ordains, man hates. To adhere to truths which never were and never can be palatable to the carnal mind of man, is, and ever has been to excite animosity. The pathway of the Church, then, has been one of fire and flame. As it has been so with the Church, we may suspect there is some reason for it, and that reason has to be found in the great fact that the Church is in an enemy's country. She is not among her friends, she is a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth. She is a bird that has lost her place, and all the birds round about her are against her, because she is a speckled one and belongs not to the common flock. If we were of the world, the world would love its own, but "because," said Christ, "ye are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "We know," said he, "it hated me before it hated you." True Christians are aliens, foreigners, men that speak another speech, men who are actuated by different motives, men who live for different ends, who are governed by different maxima from the rest of the men of this world, therefore it is that their pathway must be one of trial and opposition. All things the

Christian teaches are so dead against the pleasures of the worldling and his gain, that it is no wonder he opposes us. Men hate the gospel because the gospel does not like them. That Church is never true to her Christ, nor true to herself which does not draw upon herself the hatred of ungodly men, by a faithful testimony against their sins.

It hath fared well with the Church when she hath been persecuted, and her pathway hath been through fire. Her feet are shod with iron and brass. She ought not to tread on paths strewn with flowers; it is her proper place to suffer. Christ redeemed the world with agonies, and the Church must teach the world by the example of her anguish. First of all, the blood of Christ was shed meritoriously, and afterwards the blood of his Church is shed testimonially, to will the world by suffering. When you hear of the massacre of Christians in Madagascar, weep for their death, but do not be utterly cast down. This is a good work. This is the way the Church grows. There is no loss in the army of Christ when the best preachers fall and the mightiest evangelists are put to death. They are not lost, the blood is well shed and gloriously well spent. It is buying victory. It is procuring crowns for Jesus Christ. It is after all accomplishing higher results by dying than could have been effected by doing. It is under the heaviest fire of artillery that the loyal, the brave, and the true do the most daring feats of prowess. When one hero falls, from his ashes other heroes arise. The post of danger is the post of honor, therefore fresh aspirants will be found ready to lead the brigade. Moreover, my friends, if the path of fire be always a path of terror, it is often a path of progress. Melancholy as it is to mark the ruins of a conflagration, while the dying embers smoulder, how often you must have observed more majestic edifices raised to replace the structures that have been consumed! Thus fearful disasters are made to stimulate industry and nourish enterprise.

No doubt the sufferings of the Church, and the fact that she has to pass through the fire, must be ascribed to the great truth that thus her God is glorified.

Brethren, you and I do not glorify God much; for we have very little to suffer. The blood red crown of martyrdom is such an object of ambition, or it should be, to the believer that he might almost regret that it is not in

his power to coin it. We! what do we suffer? Somebody slanders our character. What is that? Somebody abuses us in the newspaper, what is that? We are accused of one crime and another. What can it signify to a man who knows his conscience is right in the sight of God? What does he care if all the babbling tongues of all the liars in earth and hell should be let loose against him; he can bear all that and endure it quietly. It is nothing. When I read the stories of the Book of Martyrs, and note how our great reformers fought for Christ, and manfully won the victory, I blush for ourselves. Why, brethren, we live in such silken times that glory is scarce possible to us. We have much to do, but we have nothing to suffer. We cannot prove our love to Christ as they did. They indeed were a highly honored people who were permitted to glorify Christ even in the very fires. Look at it in this light, and the light afflictions you have to endure, will seem to be as nothing at all, when you think of the weight of glory which they shall bring to your Lord and to yourself. But as history confirms the statement that the Church of Christ must walk through the fire, so does the history of each individual Christian teach him that he must walk through the fire too.

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom. Think it no strange thing when the fiery trial shall happen to you. If you have the common afflictions of the world do not wonder. You must have them. The same thing happeneth both to the evil and to the good. You lose in business, you have reverses and disappointments, do not stagger at these in the way to heaven. You must have these, they are necessary to your spiritual health. Worse than that, you have strange temptations, you are placed in a position where you are constantly exposed to sin. It must be so. This too, is the pathway of God's people, you must have these fiery temptations, that you, being tried in the fire, may come forth as "gold seven times purified." You have mental anxieties. Neither let these seem a wonder to you. They fall to the lot of all the saints of the Most High. Moreover, you will have to endure the attacks of Satan, you must go through the valley of the shadow of death, and fight with Apollyon as Christian did, you are not to be exempted from the hardness of Christian

warfare. If you will mount the hill, you must climb; if you are to win the crown, you must win it by sheer might. Think not this a strange thing. And if in doing good you meet with difficulties, let not that stagger you. It is but right and natural. I tell you again, if there be any pathway in which there be not fire, tremble, but if your lot be hard, thank God for it. If your sufferings be great, bless the Lord for them, and if the difficulties in your pathway be many, surmount them by faith, but let them not cast you down. Be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, setting this constantly in your minds that he has not promised to keep you from trouble, but to preserve you in it. It is not written, "I will save thee from the fire," but "I will save thee in the fire," not "I will quench the coals," but "they shall not burn thee," not "I will put out the furnace," but "the flames shall not kindle upon thee." Write it down and expect it to come true, that in this world thou shalt have tribulation. Only follow thy glorious leader, be it through flood or flame.

II. We will now turn to our second point—there is AN AWFUL DANGER.

The promise of the text is based on a prophecy that follows it. As I glance my eye down the chapter, I see that it tells us how God taught his people by terrible things in the past; and how he hath terrible lessons to teach them in the future. If the judgment of Egypt, and of Ethiopia, and Seba, are behind us, we have startling destinies that rise up to view before us. There is a people to be gathered in, and we are to be the agents in gathering them. Fear not, saith the Lord, though thou walkest through the fire in fulfilling my mission. God speaks to the north, "Give up;" and to the south, "Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." But the manner of Egypt is repeated again. The monarch said, "I will not let them go." Jealousy is stirred. The fire burns: the coals thereof have a vehement flame. And they that come forth from the bondage of this world must walk through the fire, even as those that came forth from Egypt had to pass through water. The fire of prophecy is no poetic fiction, it is real fire. It will burn. If it doth not burn the believer, it is not for want of energy, it is because some supernatural restraint is laid on it, or some supernatural protection vouchsafed to the saint. My brethren, the Church has had very painful experience that persecution is a fire which does burn. How many ministers of Christ,

when the day of tribulation came, forsook their flocks and fled. When King Edward the Sixth was on the throne, there were many who professed to be Protestants and preached justification by faith. When Mary returned the vicar of Bray was but a specimen of a great class, his principles being to keep his living. When again Elizabeth was upon the throne, there were plenty who found it to be profitable to profess the reformed faith. But when acts of conformity were passed afterwards by which those who had hitherto used a Christian freedom in the Church of England, were driven out, there were some who said they did not love prelacy but hated it, while others who had heretofore professed the old Puritanical doctrines, finding that their livings were to be lost thereby, held fast to this world, and let the things of the next world shift for themselves. Too many have forsaken the Church as Demas forsook Paul. Their piety would not stand the fire, they could walk with Christ in silvery slippers, but they could not go barefoot; they had no objection whatever to accompany him to his throne, but they had some slight difficulties about going with him to his cross; they would not mind bearing the weight of his glory, but the weight of the cross of tribulation was much too great for their constitutions. Persecution is a fire which does burn.

Again: I see iniquity raging on every side. Its flames are fanned by every wind of fashion. And fresh victims are being constantly drawn in. It spreads to every class. Not the palace nor the hovel are safe. Not the lofty piles that are raised for merchandise, nor the graceful edifice that is constructed for worship. Iniquity, whose contagion is fearful as fire, spreads and preys upon all things that are homely and comely, things useful and things sacred are not exempt. We must walk through the fire. We who are God's witnesses must stand in its very midst, to pour the streams of living water upon the burning fuel, and if not able to quench it, at least we must strive to prevent its spread. There are young men whose youthful lusts, inflammable as they are, have not yet ignited. They are in imminent danger. "Fire! fire!" we may well cry. We may give the alarm this morning to you, young man who are in the midst of ribald companions. I may cry "fire!" to you who are compelled to live in a house where you are perpetual tempted to evil, I may cry, "fire!" to you who are marked each day, and have to bear the sneer of the ungodly—"fire!" to you who are losing your property and suffering in the flesh, for many

have perished thereby. Oh! may God grant you never may! I see today before my mind's eye the blackened skeletons of hundreds of fair professions. Multitudes—multitudes have perished in the valley of temptation who once, to all human judgment, had bid fair for heaven and made a show in the flesh! How many, too, have fallen under the attacks of Satan! This is a fire that does burn. Many a man has said, "I will be a pilgrim;" but he has met Apollyon on the road and he has turned back. Many a man has put on the harness, but he has given up the battle soon,—put his hand to the plough and looked back. There are more pillars of salt than one. If Lot's wife were a solitary specimen, it were well, but there have been tens of thousands who, like her, have looked back to the plains of Sodom, and like her, as they are in their spirit, have stood for ever what they were,—lost souls. We ought not to look upon our dangers with contempt. They are dangers, they are trials, we ought to look upon our temptations as fires. Oh, they are fires! If you think they are not fires you are mistaken. If you enter then, in your own strength, saying "Oh I could bear them," you will find that they are real fires, which, with forked tongues, shall lick up your blood, consume it in an instant, if you have not some better guard than your own creature power.

III. I will not tarry longer here, because I want to get to the pith and marrow of the promise. "Though thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Here is A DOUBLE INSURANCE.

Dr. Alexander, an eminent and most admirable American commentator says there appears to be some mistake in the translation here, because he thinks the two sentences are an anti-climax. "Thou shalt not be burned;" and then follows, "neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It strikes me, however, that in the second clause we have the higher gradation of a climax. "Thou shalt not be burned," to the destruction of thy life, nor even scorched to give thee the most superficial injury, for "the flames shall not kindle upon thee." Just as when the three holy children came out of the fiery furnace; it is said, "upon their bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them. "So the text seems to me to teach that the Christian Church under all its trials has not been consumed, but more

than that—it has not lost anything by its trials. The Lord's Church has never been destroyed yet by her persecutors and her trials. They have thought they crushed her, but she lives still. They had imagined that they had taken away her life, but she sprang up more vigorous than before. I suppose there is not a nation out of which Christ's Church has ever been utterly driven. Even Spain, which seemed at last to have accomplished it by the most persevering barbarities, finds still a few believers to be a thorn in the side of her bigotry; and as for our own denomination, in the very country, where by the most frightful massacres, it was believed that the sect of Anabaptists had been utterly extinguished, our good and esteemed brother Mr. Oncken has been the means of reviving it, so that throughout all Germany, and in parts of Denmark, and Prussia, and Poland, and even Russia itself, we have sprung up into a new, vigorous, and even wonderful existence. And in Sweden where, under Lutheran government, the most persecuting edicts had been passed against us, we have been astonished to find within ten years three hundred churches suddenly spring up, for the truth has in it a living seed which is not to be destroyed.

But I have said that the Church not only does not lose her existence, but she does not lose anything at all. The Church has never lost her numbers. Persecutions have winnowed her and driven away the chaff; but not one grain of wheat has been taken away from the heap. Nay, not even in visible fellowship has the Church been decreased by persecution. She is like Israel in Egypt; the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied. Was a bishop put to death to-day? Ten young men came the next morning before the Roman proctor and offered themselves to die, having that very night been baptised for the dead bishop, having made their confession of faith that they might occupy his position. "I fill up the vacancy in the Church, and then die as he did." Was a woman strangled or tortured publicly? Twenty women appeared the next day and craved to suffer as she suffered, that they might honor Christ. Did the Church of Rome in more modern times burn one of our glorious reformers—John Huss—yet did not Martin Luther come forward as if the ashes of Huss had begotten Luther? When Wycliffe had passed away, did not the very feet of Wycliffe being persecuted help to spread his doctrines, and were there not found hundreds of young men who in every market-town in

England read the Lollard's Scriptures and proclaimed the Lollard's faith? And so depend upon it, it shall ever be. Give a dog a bad name and you hang him, give a Christian a bad name and you honor him. Do but give to any Christian some ill name and before long a Christian denomination will take that name to itself, and it will become a title of honor. When George Fox was called "Quaker" it was a strange name, one to laugh at, but those men of God who followed him, called themselves Quakers too and so it lost its reproach. They called the followers of Whitfield and Wesley "Methodists," they took the title of Methodists and it became a respectful designation. When many of our Baptist forefathers, persecuted in England, went over to America to find shelter, they imagined that among the Puritans they would have a perfect rest, but Puritan liberty of conscience meant, "The right and liberty to think as they did, but no toleration to those who differed." The Puritans of New England as soon as ever a Baptist made his appearance amongst them, persecuted him with as little compunction as the Episcopalians had the Puritans. No sooner was there a Baptist, than he was hunted up and brought before his own Christian brethren. Mark you, he was brought up for fine, for imprisonment, confiscation and banishment before the very men who had themselves suffered persecution. And what was the effect of this? The effect has been that in America where we were persecuted, we are the largest body of Christians. Where the fire burnt the most furiously, there the good old Calvinistic doctrine was taught, and the Baptist became the more decidedly a Baptist than anywhere else, with the most purity and the least dross. Nor have we ever lost the firmness of our grip upon the fundamental doctrine, for which our forefathers stained the baptismal pool with blood, by all the trials and persecutions that have been laid upon us, and never shall we.

Upon the entire Church, at the last, there shall not be even the smell of fire. I see her come out of the furnace. I see her advance up the hill towards her final glory with her Lord and Master, and the angels look at her garments; they are not tattered. Nay, the fangs of her enemies have not been able to make a single rent therein. They draw near to her, they look upon her flowing ringlets, and they are not crisp with heat: they look upon her very feet, and though she has trodden the coals they are not blistered, and her eyes have not been dried up by the furiousness of the



seven times heated flame. She has been made more beautiful, more fair, more glorious, by the fires, but hurt she has not been, nor can she be. Turn, then, to the individual Christian, and remember, that the promise stands alike firm and fast with each believer. Christian, if you be truly a child of God, your trials cannot destroy you, and what is better still, you can lose nothing by them. You may seem to lose for to-day, but when the account comes to be settled, you shall not be found to be a farthing the loser by all the temptations of the world, of all the attacks of Satan which you have endured. Nay, more, you shall be wondrously the gainer. Your trials having worked patience and experience, shall make you rich. Your temptations have taught you your weakness, and shown you where your strength lieth, shall make you strong.

From your first trouble, till the last enemy shall be destroyed, you shall not lose a fraction, jot, or tittle, by anything or every thing which God in his providence, or the world in its fury, of Satan in his craftiness, shall ever be able to lay upon you. Upon you, not the smell of fire shall have passed. You shall not be burned, neither shall your hosen, nor your hats, but like the men that you read of in Daniel, you shall be wholly preserved intact from the flame.

I shall close now, having spoken the general truth by making some particular applications of this precious promise. There is a brother here who during the last three or four months has had wave upon wave of affliction: everything goes against him. He is an upright, honest, indefatigable merchant, yet, let him do what he will, his substance wastes away like snow before the sun. It appears that for every ship of his the wind blows the wrong way, and where others will by the venture he loses all.

"He sees each day new straights attend,  
And wonders when the scene shall end."

When I spoke of walking through the fire just now, he said, "Ah! that is what I have been doing, I have been walking through it these months, to God and my own soul alone is it known how hot the furnace is." Brother, will you take home my text this morning. Perhaps God sent you here not

for the sermon, but for the text. Perhaps you strolled here to-day, not being a regular attendant, on purpose that this text might comfort you. "When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." When your troubles are all over, you shall still be left, and what is more, "neither the flame shall kindle upon you." When the winding up time comes, you shall not be any the loser. While you think you have lost substance, you shall find when you read Scripture, that you only lose shadows. Your substance was always safe, being laid up in the keeping of Christ in Heaven. You shall discover in the issue, that these trials of yours were the best things that could happen to you. The day shall come when you will say with David, "I will sing of judgment and mercy." "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." Or perhaps there is some young woman here,—and the case I am about to paint is a very common one—alas, too common in this city. You love the Saviour my sister, but you are very poor, and you have to earn your living by that sorriest of all means. When the sun rises in the morning he sees you with that needle in your hand,

"Sewing at once with a double thread  
A shroud as well as a shirt."

and all day long you have scarcely time to rest for meals, and at eventime, when the fingers are worn and the eyes are heavy, you shall have need to refrain from sleep because the pittance is so small that you can scarcely live upon it. We know hundreds of that class who always constrain our pity, because they work go hard for so little wage. Peradventure your mother is dead, and your father does not care about you. He is a drunken sot, and you would be sorry to meet him perhaps in the street. You have no helper, no friends. You do not care to tell anybody, you would not like to take anything if charity should offer it to you; you feel it the hardest thing all is to be tempted as you are. There seems to you to be by the path open the road to plenty, and in some degree to delight. But you have said, "No, no," and you have loathed the temptation, and you have stood—and I have known how year after year some of you have fought with temptation, and struggled on, when sometimes you were well nigh starved; but you would not do this great wickedness against God.

My sister, I pray you take the encouragement of this text to strengthen you for the future battles. You have been going through the fires. But you are not consumed yet, and I bless God, upon your garments the smell of fire has not passed. Hold on my sister, hold on, through all the sorrow thou hast, and all the bitterness which is heavy enough to crush thy spirit; hold on, for thy Master sees thee. He will encourage and strengthen thee, and bring thee more than conqueror through it all in the end. I address, too, this morning, some youthful minds. Young men who love Christ, and as soon as they get home after attending the house of prayer, the taunting enquiry made by their fellow-workmen is—"You have been to some meeting-house, I dare say." How cruel sometimes worldly young men are to Christian young men! Cruel, for when there are a dozen worldlings and only one Christian they consider it to be honorable for the dozen to set upon one. Twelve big tall fellows will sometimes think it a fine game to pass from hand to hand some little lad of fifteen, and make sport and mockery of him. There is honor, it is said, among thieves, but there seems to be no honor at all among worldlings when they get a young Christian in this way. Well, young man, you have borne with it; you have said, "I will hold my tongue and won't say a word," "though your heart was hot within you, and while you were musing the fire burned." Remember what I have often said to you, the anvil does not get broken even if you keep on striking it, but it breaks all the hammers. Do you do the same. Only hold on, and these fires shall not consume you. If the fires should burn up your piety, it would only prove that your piety was not worth having. If you cannot stand a few jokes and jeers, why, you are not builded together in that habitation of God which he hath made fire-proof. Bear up and in the end you will find that this hard lot of yours, this severe discipline, did you a deal of good, and made you a better man than you ever would have been if you had been dandled on the lap of piety, and kept from the battle. In after years your high and eminent post of usefulness may be, perhaps, owing to the severe and harsh discipline to which you were put in your younger days. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. "Or, mayhap, I am speaking to some one who has met with opposition from his own ungodly relations. Remember how Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled? From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, two against three and three against two." Perhaps your father has threatened you, or what is

more bitter still, your husband has threatened to discard you. Now indeed you are walking through the fires. He rails at your godliness, makes a mock of everything you love, and does his best by cruelty to break your heart. My dear sister in Christ, you shall not be burned by the fire. If grace be in your heart the devil can't drive it out, much less your husband. If the Lord has called you by his grace, all the men on earth, and all the fiends in hell can reverse the calling, and you shall find in the end that you have not suffered any loss; the flame has not kindled upon you. You shall go through the fire and bless God for it. From a dying bed, or at least through the gates of Paradise you shall look back upon the dark path of the way and say it was well, it was well for me that I had to carry that cross, and that now I am permitted to wear this crown. Who is on the Lord's side this morning of this congregation? While Jehovah speaks on high in the thunder, let us speak on earth in tones of earnestness. Who is on the Lord's side among you? You that are not, be warned. "Tophet is ordained of old. He hath made it deep and large. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." You that are on his side, set up your banners to-day. He saith, "Fear not, I am with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." May the Lord bless the words we have spoken. Though hastily suggested to our minds, and weakly delivered to you, the Lord bless them for Christ's sake.

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## **The First And Great Commandment**

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. - Mark 12:30

Our saviour said, "This is the first and great commandment." It is "the

first" commandment—the first for antiquity, for this is older than even the ten commandments of the written law. Before God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal," this law was one of the commands of his universe; for this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal;" for such things to them were very probably impossible; but he did doubtless say to them, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him. This is "the first commandment," then, for antiquity. It was binding upon Adam in the garden; even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this; before there was a necessity for any other command this was written upon the very tablets of his heart—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

It is "the first commandment," again, not only for antiquity, but for dignity. This command, which deals with God the Almighty must ever take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but this with man and his Creator. Other commands of a ceremonial kind, when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend, but this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God, and brings his ire at once upon the sinner's head. He that stealeth committeth a gross offense, inasmuch as he hath also violated this command; but if it were possible for us to separate the two, and to suppose an offense of one command without an offence of this, then we must put the violation of this commandment in the first rank of offences. This is the king of commandments; this is the emperor of the law; it must take precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

Again, it is "the first commandment," for its justice. If men can not see the justice of that law which says, "Love thy neighbor," if there be some difficulty to understand how I can be bound to love the man that hurts and injures me, there can be no difficulty here. "Thou shalt love thy God" comes to us with so much Divine authority, and is so ratified by the dictates of nature and our own conscience, that, verily, this command must take the first place for the justice of its demand. It is "the first" of

commandments. Whichever law thou dost break, take care to keep this. If thou breakest the commandments of the ceremonial law, if thou dost violate the ritual of thy church, thine offence might be propitiated by the priest, but who can escape when this is his offence? This mandate standeth fast. Man's law thou mayest break, and bear the penalty; but if thou breakest this the penalty is too heavy for thy soul to endure; it will sink thee, man, it will sink thee like a mill-stone lower than the lowest hell. Take heed of this command above every other, to tremble at it and obey it, for it is "the first commandment."

But the Saviour said it was a "great commandment," and so also it is. It is "great," for it containeth in its bowels every other. When God said, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day;" when he said, "Thou shalt not bow down unto the idols nor worship them,"—when he said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," he did not instance particulars which are all contained in this general mandate. This is the sum and substance of the law; and indeed even the second commandment lies within the folds of the first "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," is actually to be found within the center of this command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" for the loving of God would necessarily produce the loving of our neighbor.

It is a great command, then, for its comprehensiveness, and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us. It demands all our mind, all our soul, all our heart, and all our strength. Who is he that can keep it, when there is no power of manhood which is exempt from its sway? And to him that violateth this law it shall be proven that it is a great command in the greatness of its condemning power, for it shall be like a great sword having two edges, wherewith God shall slay him. It shall be like a great thunderbolt from God, wherewith he shall cast down and utterly destroy the man that goeth on in his willful breaking thereof. Hear ye, then, O Gentiles, and O house of Israel, hear ye, then, this day, this first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

I shall divide my discourse thus—first, What saith this commandment unto us? secondly, What say we unto it?

I. And in discussing the first point, WHAT SAITH THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO US? we shall divide it thus. Here is, first, the duty—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" here is, secondly, the measure of the duty—"Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, mind, soul, strength;" here is, thirdly, the ground of the claim, enforcing the duty—because he is "thy God." God demandeth of us to obey, simply upon the ground that he is our God.

1. To begin, then. This command demands a duty. That duty is, that we should love God. How many men do break this? One class of men do break it willfully and grievously; for they hate God. There is the infidel, who gnashes his teeth against the Almighty; the atheist, who spits the venom of his blasphemy against the person of his Maker. You will find those who rail at the very being of a God, though in their consciences they know there is a God, yet with their lips will blasphemously deny his existence. These men say there is no God, because they wish there were none. The wish is father to the thought, and the thought demands great grossness of heart, and grievous hardness of spirit before they dare to express it in words; and even when they express it in words, it needeth much practice ere they can do it with a bold, unblushing countenance. How this command beareth hard on all them that hate, that despise, that blaspheme, that malign God, or that deny his being, or impugn his character. O sinner! God says thou shalt love him with all thy heart; and inasmuch as thou hatest him thou standest this day condemned to the sentence of the law.

Another class of men know there is a God, but they neglect him; they go through the world with indifference, "caring for none of these things." "Well," they say, "It does not signify to me whether there is a God or not." They have no particular care about him; they do not pay one half so much respect to his commands as they would to the proclamation of the Queen. They are very willing to reverence all powers that be, but he who ordained them is to be passed by and to be forgotten. They would not be bold enough and honest enough to come straight out, and despise God, and join the ranks of his open enemies, but they forget God; he is not in all their thoughts. They rise in the morning without a prayer, they rest at night without bending the knee, they go through the week's business and

they never acknowledge a God. Sometimes they talk about good luck and chance, strange deities of their own brain; but God, the over-ruling God of Providence, they never talk of, though sometimes they may mention his name in flippancy, and so increase their transgressions against him. O ye despisers and neglecters of God! this command speaks to you—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

But I hear one of these gentlemen reply, "Well, sir, I make no pretensions to religion, but still I believe I am quite as good as those that do; I am quite as upright, quite as moral and benevolent. True, I do not often darken the door of a church or chapel, I do not think it necessary, but I am a right good sort; there are many, many hypocrites in the church, and therefore I shall not think of being religious." Now, my dear friend, allow me just to say one word—what business is that of yours? Religion is a personal matter between you and your Maker. Your Maker says—"Thou shalt love me with all thine heart:" it is of no use for you to point your finger across the street, and point at a minister whose life is inconsistent, or at a deacon who is unholy, or to a member of the church who does not live up to his profession. You have just nothing to do with that. When your Maker speaks to you, he appeals to you personally; and if you should tell him, "My Lord, I will not love thee, because there are hypocrites," would not your own conscience convince you of the absurdity of your reasoning? Ought not your better judgment to whisper "Inasmuch, then, as so many are hypocrites, take heed that thou art not; and if there be so many pretenders who injure the Lord's cause by their lying pretensions, so much the more reason why thou shouldst have the real thing and help to make the church sound and honest." But no, the merchants of our cities, the tradesmen of our streets, our artisans and our workmen, the great mass of them, live in total forgetfulness of God. I do not believe that the heart of England is infidel. I do not believe that there is any vast extent of deism or atheism throughout England: the great fault of our time is the fault of indifference; people do not care whether the thing is right or not. What is it to them? They never take the trouble to search between the different professors of religion to see where the truth lies; they do not think to pay their reverence to God with all their hearts. Oh, no; they forget what God demands, and so rob him of his due. To you, to you, great masses of the population, this law doth speak with iron tongue



—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

There are a class of men who are a great deal nobler than the herd of simpletons who allow the sublimities of the God-head to be concealed by their carking care for mere sensual good. There are some who do not forget that there is a God; no, they are astronomers, and they turn their eyes to heaven, and they view the stars, and they marvel at the majesty of the Creator. Or they dig into the bowels of the earth, and they are astonished at the magnificence of God's works of yore. Or they examine the animal, and marvel at the wisdom of God in the construction of its anatomy. They, whenever they think of God, think of him with the deepest awe, with the profoundest reverence. You never hear them curse or swear: you will find that their souls are possessed of a deep awe of the great Creator. But ah! my friends, this is not enough: this is not obedience to the command. God does not say thou shalt wonder at him, thou shalt have awe of him. He asks more than that; he says, "Thou shalt love me!" Oh! thou that seest the orbs of heaven floating in the far expanse, it is something to lift thine eye to heaven, and say -

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,  
Almighty, thine this universal frame.  
Thus wondrous fair; thyself, how wondrous then!  
Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these Heavens  
To us invisible, or dimly seen  
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare  
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

'Tis something thus to adore the great Creator, but 'tis not all he asks. Oh! if thou couldst add to this—"He that made these orbs, that leadeth them out by their hosts, is my Father, and my heart beats with affection towards him." Then wouldst thou be obedient, but not till then. God asks not thine admiration, but thine affection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart."

There are others, too, who delight to spend time in contemplation. They believe in Jesus, in the Father, in the Spirit; they believe that there is but one God, and that these three are one. It is their delight to turn over the

pages of revelation, as well as the pages of history. They contemplate God; he is to them a matter of curious study; they like to meditate upon him; the doctrines of his Word they could hear all day long. And they are very sound in the faith, extremely orthodox, and very knowing; they can fight about doctrines, they can dispute about the things of God with all their hearts; but, alas! their religion is like a dead fish, cold and stiff, and when you take it into your hand, you say there is no life in it; their souls were never stirred with it; their hearts were never thrown into it. They can contemplate, but they cannot love; they can meditate, but they cannot commune; they can think of God, but they can never throw up their souls to him, and clasp him in the arms of their affections. Ah, to you, cold-blooded thinkers—to you, this text speaks. Oh! thou that canst contemplate, but canst not love,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”

Another man starts up, and he says, “Well, this command does not bear on me; I attend my place of worship twice every Sunday; I have family prayer. I am very careful not to get up of a morning without saying a form of prayer; I sometimes read my Bible; I subscribe to many charities. Ah! my friend, and you may do all that, without loving God. Why, some of you go to your churches and chapels as if you were going to be horsewhipped. It is a dull and dreary thing to you. You dare not break the Sabbath, but you would, if you could. You know very well, that if it were not for a mere matter of fashion and custom, you would sooner by half be anywhere else, than in God's house. And as for prayer, why, it is no delight to you; you do it, because you think you ought to do it. Some indefinable sense of duty rests upon you; but you have no delight in it. You talk of God with great propriety, but you never talk of him with love. Your heart never bounds at the mention of his name; your eyes never glisten at the thought of his attributes; your soul never leapeth when you meditate on his works, for your heart is all untouched, and while you are honoring God with your lips, your heart is far from him, and you are still disobedient to this commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

And now, my hearers, do you understand this commandment? Do I not see many of you seeking to look for loop holes through which to escape? Do I not think I see some of you striving to make a breach in this divine

wall which girds us all. You say, "I never do anything against God." Nay, my friend, that is not it: it is not what thou dost not do—it is this, "Dost thou love him?" "Well, sir, but I never violate any of the proprieties of religion." No, that is not it, the command is, "Thou shalt love him." "Well, sir, but I do a great deal for God; I teach in a Sunday school, and so on." Ah! I know; but dost thou love him? It is the heart he wants, and he will not be content without it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." That is the law, and though no man can keep it since Adam's fall, yet the law is as much binding upon every son of Adam this day, as when God first of all pronounced it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

2. That brings us to the second point—the measure of this law. How much am I to love God? Where shall I fix the point? I am to love my neighbor as I love myself. Am I to love my God more than that? Yes, certainly. The measure is even greater. We are not bound to love ourselves with all our mind, and soul, and strength, and therefore we are not bound to love our neighbor so. The measure is a greater one. We are bound to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And, we deduce from that, first, that we are to love God supremely. Thou art to love thy wife, O husband. Thou canst not love her too much, except in one case, if thou shouldst love her before God, and prefer her pleasure to the pleasure of the Most High. Then wouldst thou be an idolater. Child! thou art to love thy parents; thou canst not love him too much who begat thee, nor her too much who brought thee forth; but remember, there is one law that doth override that. Thou art to love thy God more than thy father or thy mother. He demands thy first, and thy highest affection; thou art to love him "with all thy heart." We are allowed to love our relatives: we are taught to do so. He that doth not love his own family is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But we are not to love the dearest object of our hearts, so much as we love God. Ye may erect little thrones for those whom ye rightly love; but God's throne must be a glorious high throne; you may set them upon the steps, but God must sit on the very seat itself. He is to be enthroned, the royal One within your heart, the king of your affections. Say, say hearer, hast thou kept this commandment? I know, I have not; I must plead guilty before God; I must cast my self before him, and acknowledge my transgression. But,

nevertheless, there standeth the commandment—"Thou shalt love God with all thy heart"—that is, thou shalt love him supremely.

Note, again, that from the text we may deduce that a man is bound to love God heartily: that is plain enough, for it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Yes, there is to be in our love to God a heartiness. We are to throw our whole selves into the love that we give to him. Not the kind of love that some people give to their fellows; when they say, "Be ye warmed and filled," and nothing more. No: our heart is to have its whole being absorbed into God, so that God is the hearty object of its pursuit and its most mighty love. See how the word "all" is repeated again and again. The whole going forth of the being, the whole stirring up of the soul, is to be for God only. "With all thy heart."

Again: as we are to love God heartily, we are to love him with all our souls. Then we are to love him with all our life; for that is the meaning of it. If we are called to die for God, we are to prefer God before our own life. We shall never reach the fullness of this commandment, till we get as far as the martyrs, who rather than disobey God would be cast into the furnace, or devoured by wild beasts. We must be ready to give up house, home, liberty, friends, comfort, joy, and life, at the command of God, or else we have not carried out this commandment, "Thou shalt love him with all thy heart and with all thy life."

And, next we are to love God with all our mind. That is, the intellect is to love God. Now, many men believe in the existence of a God, but they do not love that belief. They know there is a God, but they greatly wish there were none. Some of you to-day would be very pleased, ye would set the bells a-ringing, if ye believed there were no God. Why, if there were no God, then you might live just as you liked; if there were no God, then you might run riot and have no fear of future consequences. It would be to you the greatest joy that could be, if you heard that the eternal God had ceased to be. But the Christian never wishes any such a thing as that. The thought that there is a God is the sunshine of his existence. His intellect bows before the Most High; not like a slave who bends his body because he must, but like the angel who prostrates himself because he loves to adore his Maker. His intellect is as fond of God as his imagination. "Oh!" he saith, "My God, I bless thee that thou art; for thou art my highest

treasure, my richest and my rarest delight. I love thee with all my intellect; I have neither thought, nor judgment, nor conviction, nor reason, which I do not lay at thy feet, and consecrate to thine honor.

And, once again, this love to God is to be characterized by activity; for we are to love Him with all our heart, heartily—with all our soul, that is, to the laying down of our life—with all our mind, that is mentally; and we are to love him with all our strength, that is, actively. I am to throw my whole soul into the worship and adoration of God. I am not to keep back a single hour, or a single farthing of my wealth, or a single talent that I have, or a single atom of strength, bodily or mental, from the worship of God. I am to love him with all my strength.

Now, what man ever kept this commandment? Surely, none; and no man ever can keep it. Hence, then, the necessity of a Saviour. O! that we might by this commandment be smitten to the earth, that our self-righteousness may be broken in pieces by this great hammer of "the first and great commandment!" But oh! my brethren, how may we wish that we could keep it! for, could we keep this command intact, unbroken, it would be a heaven below. The happiest of creatures are those that are the most holy, and that unreservedly love God.

3. And now, very briefly, I have just to state God's claim upon which he bases this commandment. "Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, strength." Why? First, because he is the Lord—that is, Jehovah; and secondly, because he is thy God.

Man, creature of a day, thou oughtest to love Jehovah for what he is. Behold, him whom thou canst not behold! Lift up thine eyes to the seventh heaven; see where in dreadful majesty, the brightness of his skirts makes the angels veil their faces, lest the light, too strong for even them, should smite them with eternal blindness. See ye him, who stretched the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and then did weave into their tapestry, with golden needle, stars that glitter in the darkness. Mark ye him who spread the earth, and created man upon it. And hear ye what he is. He is all-sufficient, eternal, self-existent, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient! Wilt thou not reverence him? He is good, he is loving, he is kind, he is gracious. See the bounties of his providence; behold the

plenitude of his grace! Wilt thou not love Jehovah, because he is Jehovah?

But thou art most of all bound to love him because he is thy God. He is thy God by creation. He made thee; thou didst not make thyself. God, the Almighty, though he might use instruments, was nevertheless the sole creator of man. Though he is pleased to bring us into the world by the agency of our progenitors, yet is he as much our Creator as he was the Creator of Adam, when he formed him of clay and made him man. Look at this marvelous body of thine: see how God hath put the bones together, so as to be of the greatest service and use to thee. See how he hath arranged thy nerves and blood vessels: mark the marvelous machinery which he has employed to keep thee in life! O thing of an hour! wilt thou not love him that made thee? Is it possible that thou canst think of him who formed thee in his hand, and molded thee by his will, and yet wilt thou not love him who hath fashioned thee?

Again, consider, he is thy God, for he preserves thee. Thy table is spread, but he spread it for thee. The air that thou dost breathe is a gift of his charity; the clothes that thou hast on thy back are gifts of his love; thy life depends on him. One wish of his infinite will would have brought thee to the grave, and given thy body to the worms; and at this moment, though thou art strong and hearty, thy life is absolutely dependent upon him. Thou mayest die where thou art, instantly: thou art out of hell only as the result of his goodness. Thou wouldst be at this hour sweltering in flames unquenchable, had not his sovereign love preserved thee. Traitor though thou mayest be to him, an enemy to his cross and cause, yet he is thy God, so far as this, for he made thee and he keeps thee alive. Surely, thou mayest wonder that he should keep thee alive, when thou refusest to love him. Man! thou wouldst not keep a horse that did not work for thee. Would you keep a servant in your house who insulted you? Would you spread bread upon his table, and find livery for his back, if instead of doing your will and good pleasure he would be his own master, and would run counter to you? Certainly you would not. And yet here is God feeding you, and you are rebelling against him. Swearer! the lip with which you cursed your Maker is sustained by him; the very lungs that you employ in blasphemy are inspired by him with the breath of life, else you

had ceased to be. O! strange that you should eat God's bread, and then lift up your heel against him; O! marvelous that ye should sit at the table of his providence and be clothed in the livery of his bounty, and yet that you should turn round and spit against high heaven, and lift the puny hand of your rebellion against the God that made you, and that preserves you in being. O, if instead of our God we had one like unto ourselves to deal with, my brethren, we should not have patience with our fellow-creatures for an hour. I marvel at God's long-suffering toward men. I see the foul-mouthed blasphemer curse his God. O God! how canst thou endure it? Why dost thou not smite him to the ground? If a gnat should torment me, should I not in one moment crush it? And what is man compared with his Maker? Not one half so great as an emmet compared with man. O! my brethren, we may well be astonished that God hath mercy upon us, after all our violations of this high command. But I stand here to-day his servant, and from myself and from you I claim for God, because he is God, because he is our God and our Creator—I claim the love of all hearts, I claim the obedience of all souls and of all minds, and the consecration of all our strength.

O people of God, I need not speak to you. You know that God is your God in a special sense; therefore you ought to love him with a special love.

II. This is what the commandment says to us. I shall be very short indeed upon the second head, which is, **WHAT HAVE WE TO SAY TO IT?**

What hast thou to say to this command, O man? Have I one here so profoundly brainless as to reply, "I intend to keep it, and I believe I can perfectly obey it, and I think I can get to heaven by obedience to it?" Man, thou art either a fool, or else willfully ignorant; for sure, if thou dost understand this commandment, thou wilt at once hang down thine hands, and say, "Obedience to that is quite impossible; thorough and perfect obedience to that no man can hope to reach to! Some of you think you will go to heaven by your good works, do you? This is the first stone that you are to step upon—I am sure it is too high for your reach. You might as well try to climb to heaven by the mountains of earth, and take the Himalayas to be your first step; for surely when you had stepped from the ground to the summit of Chimborazo you might even then despair of ever stepping to the height of this great commandment; for to obey this

must ever be an impossibility. But remember, you can not be saved by your works, if you can not obey this entirely, perfectly, constantly, for ever.

"Well," says one, "I dare say if I try and obey it as well as I can, that will do." No, sir, it will not. God demands that you perfectly obey this, and if you do not perfectly obey it he will condemn you. "Oh!" cries one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! that is the point to which I wish to bring you. Who, then can be saved by this law? Why, no one in the world. Salvation by the works of the law is proved to be a clean impossibility. None of you, therefore, will say you will try to obey it, and so hope to be saved. I hear the best Christian in the world groan out his thoughts—"O God," saith he, "I am guilty; and shouldst thou cast me into hell I dare not say otherwise. I have broken this command from my youth up, even since my conversion; I have violated it every day; I know that if thou shouldst lay justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, I must be swept away for ever. Lord, I renounce my trust in the law; for by it I know I can never see thy face and be accepted. But hark! I hear the Christian say another thing. "Oh!" saith he to the commandment, "Commandment I can not keep thee, but my Saviour kept thee, and what my Saviour did, he did for all them that believe; and now, O law, what Jesus did is mine. Hast thou any question to bring against me? Thou demandest that I should keep this commandment wholly: lo, my Saviour kept it wholly for me, and he is my substitute; what I can not do myself my Saviour has done for me; thou canst not reject the work of the substitute, for God accepted it in the day when he raised him from the dead. O law! shut thy mouth for ever; thou canst never condemn me; though I break thee a thousand times, I put my simple trust in Jesus only, his righteousness is mine, and with it I pay the debt and satisfy thy hungry mouth."

"Oh!" cries one, "I wish I could say that I could thus escape the wrath of the law! Oh that I knew that Christ did keep the law for me!" Stop, then, and I will tell you. Do you feel to-day that you are guilty, lost, and ruined? Do you with tears in your eyes confess that none but Jesus can do you good? Are you willing to give up all trusts, and cast yourself alone on him who died upon the cross? Can you look to Calvary, and see the bleeding sufferer, all crimson with streams of gore? Can you say



"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
Into thine arms I fall;  
Jesus, be thou my righteousness,  
My Saviour and my all!"

Canst say that? Then he kept the law for you, and the law can not condemn whom Christ has absolved. If Law comes to you and says, "I will damn you because you did not keep the law," tell him that he dares not touch a hair of your head, for though you did not keep it, Christ kept it for you, and Christ's righteousness is yours; tell him there is the money and though you did not coin it Christ did; and tell him, when you have paid him all he asks for, he dares not touch you; you must be free, for Christ has satisfied the law.

And after that—and here I conclude—O child of God, I know what thou wilt say; after thou hast seen the law satisfied by Jesus thou wilt fall on thy knees and say, "Lord, I thank thee that this law can not condemn me, for I believe in Jesus. But now, Lord, help me from this time forth for ever to keep it. Lord, give me a new heart, for this old heart never will love thee! Lord, give me a new life, for this old life is too vile. Lord, give me a new understanding; wash my mind with the clean water of the Spirit; come and dwell in my judgment, my memory, my thought; and then give me the new strength of thy spirit, and then will I love thee with all my new heart, with all my new life, with all my renewed mind, and with all my spiritual strength, from this time forth, even for evermore."

May the Lord convince you of sin, by the energy of his divine Spirit, and bless this simple sermon, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **The First Christmas Carol**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. -  
Luke 2:14

It is superstitious to worship angels; it is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin, and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly, if we did not give to holy angels a place in our heart's warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels, and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men, and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature - the impulse of love towards them. The one incident in angelic history, to which our text refers, is enough to weld our hearts to them for ever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from heaven to save their compeers when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of heaven, Christ did not stoop from his throne to die for them; but he left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that he took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when he took up the seed of Abraham; and though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angel's form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found him arrayed in the body of an infant. How free, too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. Methinks they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere men - men possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes; and think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings, and gladly sped from their bright seats above, to tell the shepherds on the plain by night, the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. And mark how well they told the story, and surely you will love them! Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a tale in which he hath no interest; nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feeleth no emotion himself; but with joy and gladness, such as angels only can know. They

sang the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Methinks they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love, and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others, good news to itself. Do you not love the angels? Ye will not bow before them, and there ye are right; but will ye not love them? Doth it not make one part of your anticipation of heaven, that in heaven you shall dwell with the holy angels, as well as with the spirits of the just made perfect? Oh, how sweet to think that these holy and lovely beings are our guardians every hour! They keep watch and ward about us, both in the burning noon-tide, and in the darkness of the night. They keep us in all our ways; they bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our feet against stones. They unceasingly minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation; both by day and night they are our watchers and our guardians, for know ye not, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him."

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think rather of this song, than of the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as Kitto excellently remarks, it was "well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become to an acute apprehension, almost oppressive by the pregnant fulness of their meaning" - "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." We shall, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in a fourfold manner. I shall just suggest some instructive thoughts arising from these words; then some emotional thoughts; then a few prophetic thoughts; and afterwards, one or two preceptive thoughts.

I. First then, in the words of our text. There are many INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS.

The angels sang something which men could understand - something which men ought to understand - something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built

upon this foundation. They sang of Christ, and the salvation which he came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this: they said, first, that it gave glory to God; secondly, that it gave peace to man; and, thirdly, that it was a token of God's good will towards the human race.

1. First, they said that this salvation gave glory to God. They had been present on many august occasions, and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah, and wheeled by his eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created. We doubt not, they had often chanted "Blessing and honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth on the throne," manifesting himself in the work of creation. I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their song received another note; they rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration. But this time, when they saw God stoop from his throne, and become a babe, hanging upon a woman's breast, they lifted their notes higher still; and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music, they gained the highest notes of the divine scale of praise, and they sung, "Glory to God in the highest," for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. Thus their highest praise they gave to him in the highest act of his godhead. If it be true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignity - if the apostle teaches us that there be "angels, and principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions," amongst these blest inhabitants of the upper world - I can suppose that when the intelligence was first communicated to those angels that are to be found upon the outskirts of the heavenly world, when they looked down from heaven and saw the newborn babe, they sent the news backward to the place whence the miracle first proceeded, singing

"Angels, from the realms of glory,  
Wing your downward flight to earth,

Ye who sing creation's story,  
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;  
Come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King."

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the presence angels, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God - those wheels with eyes - took up the strain, and, gathering up the song of all the inferior grades of angels, surmounted the divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chant of adoration, upon which the entire host shouted, "The highest angels praise thee." - "Glory to God in the highest." Ay, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificent, if not more hearty, when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man's redeemer - "Glory to God in the highest."

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels' song? Why this, that salvation is God's highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles to the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood flower that blossoms in the copse, although it live to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray; in every lamb that skips the mead. Do not the fishes in the sea praise him? From the tiny minnow to the huge Leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the water bless and praise his name? Do not all created things extol him? Is there aught beneath the sky, save man, that doth not glorify God? Do not the stars exalt him, when they write his name upon the azure of heaven in their golden letters? Do not the lightnings adore him when they flash his brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till thou hast exhausted thyself, thou canst not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle - Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in worlds on worlds rolling

their grandeur round the throne of the Most High. Pause Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo! what wisdom is here. God becomes man that God may be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. Lo! what power, for where is power so great as when it concealeth power? What power, that Godhead should unrobe itself and become man! Behold, what love is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a man. Behold ye, what faithfulness! How many promises are this day kept? How many solemn obligations are this hour discharged? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus; and your ignorance shall be the reason why you have not seen it so. The whole of God is glorified in Christ; and though some part of the name of God is written in the universe, it is here best read - in Him who was the Son of Man, and, yet, the Son of God.

But, let me say one word here before I go away from this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies him in the highest degree, and makes the highest creatures praise him, this one reflection may be added - then, that doctrine, which glorifies man in salvation cannot be the gospel. For salvation glorifies God. The angels were no Arminians, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest." They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ, and puts the crown upon the head of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature, and, which really gives the creature the praise, for what is it less than for a man to save himself, if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will? No, my brethren; they may be some preachers, that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man; but in their gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing, are those that put God first, God last, God midst, and God without end, in the salvation of his creatures, and put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of him that saves without a helper. "Glory to God in the highest," is the angels' song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. "Glory to God in the highest," was an old, old song; they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God: for they added this stanza - "on earth, peace." They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, but it

seemed a thing of course, and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there; for there was glory to God there. But, now, man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world; men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with man; Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin. There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made his appearance, the swaddling band with which he was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should be stopped between man's conscience and himself, man's conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blew - "Sheathe the sword, oh man, sheathe the sword, oh conscience, for God is now at peace with man, and man at peace with God." Do you not feel my brethren, that the gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found, but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain, and thou shalt never find it. Go, thou, that trustest in the law: go thou, to Sinai; look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair; for peace is nowhere to be found, but in him, of whom it is said, "This man shall be peace." And what a peace it is, beloved! It is peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the pardoner; this marvelous at-one-ment between the sinner and his judge, this was it that the angels sung when they said, "peace on earth."

3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, "Good will to man." Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much good will toward man, or else his works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who could risk his soul's peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them,

who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, he has good will toward man for he gave his Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and his subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives his only begotten and well beloved Son to die. Though the first note is God-like, and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. Some think of God as if he were a morose being who hated all mankind. Some picture him as if he were some abstract subsistence taking no interest in our affairs. Hark ye, God has "good will toward men." You know what good will means. Well, Swearer, you have cursed God; he has not fulfilled his curse on you; he has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards him. Infidel, you have sinned high and hard against the Most High; he has said no hard things against you, for he has good will towards men. Poor sinner, thou hast broken his laws; thou art half afraid to come to the throne of his mercy lest he should spurn thee; hear thou this, and be comforted - God has good will towards men, so good a will that he has said, and said it with an oath too, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live;" so good a will moreover that he has even condescended to say, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." And if you say, "Lord, how shall I know that thou hast this good will towards me," he points to yonder manger, and says, "Sinner, if I had not a good will towards thee, would I have parted with my Son? if I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up my Son to become one of that race that he might by so doing redeem them from death?" Ye that doubt the Master's love, look ye to that circle of angels; see their blaze of glory; hear their son, and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a shroud of harmony. He has good will to men; he is willing to pardon; he passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And mark thee, if Satan shall then add, "But though God hath good will, yet he cannot violate his justice, therefore his mercy may be ineffective, and you may die;" then listen to that first note of the song, "Glory to God in the highest," and reply to Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a penitent sinner, there is not only peace in the sinner's heart, but it brings



glory to every attribute of God, and so he can be just, and yet justify the sinner, and glorify himself.

I do not pretend to say that I have opened all the instructions contained in these three sentences, but I may perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for the week. I hope that all through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words, and knowing the unction of them. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

II. Next, I have to present to you some EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS. Friends, doth not this verse, this song of angels, stir your heart with happiness? When I read that, and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, "Then if the angels ushered in the gospel's great head with singing, ought I not to preach with singing? And ought not my hearers to live with singing? Ought not their hearts to be glad and their spirits to rejoice?" Well, thought I, there be some somber religionists who were born in a dark night in December that think a smile upon the face is wicked, and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. Ah! I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ; for angels sang about his birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they live, sing about it when they die, and sing about it when they live in heaven for ever. I do long to see in the midst of the church more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and unbelieving Christianity. Now, I doubt not its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough; God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it; but it is a sickly religion. Watts hit the mark when he said,

"Religion never was designed  
To make our pleasures less."

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasures, but it gives us many more, to make up for what it takes away; so it does not make them less. O ye that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeks; O ye that always say,

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,  
That yields us no supplies,"

Come ye hither and see the angels. Do they tell their story with groans, and sobs, and sighs? Ah, no; they shout aloud, "Glory to God in the highest." Now, imitate them, my dear brethren. If you are professors of religion, try always to have a cheerful carriage. Let others mourn; but

"Why should the children of a king  
Go mourning all their days?"

Anoint your head and wash your face; appear not unto men to fast. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say unto you rejoice. Specially this week be not ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Penance and whipping, and misery are no such very virtuous things, after all. The damned are miserable; let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Why not rather anticipate the joys of heaven, and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion then that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of joy and gladness.

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of confidence. I am not sure that I am right in calling that an emotion, but still in me it is so much akin to it, that I will venture to be wrong if I be so. Now, if when Christ came on this earth God had sent some black creature down from heaven, (if there be such creatures there) to tell us, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," and if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message, if I had been there and heard it, I should have scrupled to believe him, for I should have said, "You don't look like the messenger that God would send - stammering fellow as you are - with such glad news as this." But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it; they told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you, and should come to you with a solemn

countenance, and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, "Do you know so-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "Ah! I dare say," and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room, and exclaim, "I say, what do you think? You are a rich man; So-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it." Well, when these angels came from heaven they told the news just as if they believed it; and though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord's good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, "The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God's lips; they have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news." Now, poor soul, thou that art afraid lest God should destroy thee, and thou thinkest that God will never have mercy upon thee, look at the singing angels and doubt if thou darest. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, whilst he tells you that God has good will towards men; I know you won't believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his countenance; he is telling you good news with a grunt, and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night, and when you hear the angels singing out the gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas, that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's good will to men!

III. I must now bring before you the third point. There are some PROPHEMIC UTTERANCES contained in these words. The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." But I look around, and what see I in the wide, wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols; I mark the Romanist casting himself before the rotten rags of his relics, and the ugly figures of his images. I look about me, and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men; I see God forgotten; I see a worldly race pursuing mammon; I see a bloody race pursuing Moloch; I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, his name dishonored. And was this all the angels sang about? Is this all that made them sing "Glory to God in the highest?" Ah! no. There are brighter days

approaching. They sang, "Peace on earth." But I hear still the clarion of war; and the cannon's horrid roar: not yet have they turned the sword into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And whilst I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I to believe that this was all the angels expected? Ah! no, brethren; the angels' song is big with prophecy; it travaileth in birth with glories. A few more years, and he that lives them out shall see why angels sang; a few more years, and he that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Christ the Lord will come again, and when he cometh he shall cast the idols from their thrones; he shall dash down every fashion of heresy and every shape of idolatry; he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; he shall reign, when like a scroll, yon blue heavens have passed away. No strife shall vex Messiah's reign, no blood shall then be shed; they'll hang the useless helmet high, and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temple of Janus shall be shut for ever, and when cruel Mars shall be hooted from the earth. The day is coming when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, when the leopard shall lie down with the kid; when the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den and play with the asp. The hour approacheth; the first streaks of the sunlight have made glad the age in which we live. Lo, he comes, with trumpets and with clouds of glory; he shall come for whom we look with joyous expectation, whose coming shall be glory to his redeemed, and confusion to his enemies. Ah! brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. That echo was -

"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord  
God Omnipotent shall reign."

Ay, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fulness of the song,

"Hark! the song of jubilee  
Loud as mighty thunders' roar,  
Or the fulness of the sea,  
When it breaks upon the shore."

"Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigneth."

IV. Now, I have one more lesson for you, and I have done. That lesson is PRECEPTIVE. I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year, would keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk about keeping Christmas, mean by that the cutting of the bands of their religion for one day in the year, as if Christ were the Lord of misrule, as if the birth of Christ should be celebrated like the orgies of Bacchus. There are some very religious people, that on Christmas would never forget to go to church in the morning; they believe Christmas to be nearly as holy as Sunday, for they reverence the tradition of the elders. Yet their way of spending the rest of the day is very remarkable; for if they see their way straight up stairs to their bed at night, it must be by accident. They would not consider they had kept Christmas in a proper manner, if they did not verge on gluttony and drunkenness. There are many who think Christmas cannot possibly be kept, except there be a great shout of merriment and mirth in the house, and added to that the boisterousness of sin. Now, my brethren, although we, as successors of the Puritans, will not keep the day in any religious sense whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other day: believing that every day may be a Christmas for ought we know, and wishing to make every day Christmas, if we can, yet we must try to set an example to others how to behave on that day; and especially since the angels gave glory to God: let us do the same.

Once more the angels said, "Peace to men:" let us labor if we can to make peace next Christmas day. Now, old gentleman, you won't take your son in: he has offended you. Fetch him at Christmas. "Peace on earth;" you know: that is a Christmas Carol. Make peace in your family.

Now, brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother again. Go after him and say, "Oh, my dear fellow, let not this day's sun go down upon our wrath." Fetch him in, and give him your hand. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade, and you have said some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is the way to keep Christmas, peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if thou hast anything on thy conscience, anything that prevents thy having peace of mind, keep thy Christmas in thy chamber, praying to God to give thee peace; for it is peace on earth, mind, peace in thyself, peace

with thyself, peace with thy fellow men, peace with thy God. And do not think thou hast well celebrated that day till thou canst say, "O God,

'With the world, myself, and thee  
I ere I sleep at peace will be. "

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, good will towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman, and have servants. Well, try and set their chimneys on fire with a large piece of good, substantial beef for them. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will towards men. Try, if you can, to show them good will at this special season; and if you will do that, the poor will say with me, that indeed they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

Let each one of us go from this place determined, that if we are angry all the year round, this next week shall be an exception; that if we have snarled at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be kindly affectionate to others; and if we have lived all this year at enmity with God, I pray that by his Spirit he may this week give us peace with him; and then, indeed, my brother, it will be the merriest Christmas we ever had in all our lives. You are going home to your father and mother, young men; many of you are going from your shops to your homes. You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to thy friends, and tell them what the Lord hath done for thy soul, and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each of you tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the house of prayer; how, when you left home, you were a gay, wild blade, but have now come back to love your mother's God, and read your father's Bible. Oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies, and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest. I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish every one of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives.

"Now with angels round the throne,  
Cherubim and seraphim,  
And the church, which still is one,  
Let us swell the solemn hymn;  
Glory to the great I AM!  
Glory to the Victim Lamb.

Blessing, honour, glory, might,  
And dominion infinite,  
To the Father of our Lord,  
To the Spirit and the Word;  
As it was all worlds before,  
Is, and shall be evermore."

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## **The First Cry From The Cross**

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. -  
Luke 23:34

Our Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion; the executioners had just then driven the nails through his hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed, and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane, and by the scourgings and cruel mockings which he had endured all through the morning, from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present, could prevent him from continuing in prayer. The Lamb of God was silent to men, but he was not silent to God. Dumb as sheep before her shearers,

he had not a word to say in his own defense to man, but he continues in his heart crying unto his Father, and no pain and no weakness can silence his holy supplications. Beloved, what an example our Lord herein presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats; let no excess of suffering drive us away from the throne of grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it.

"Long as they live should Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live."

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit, and overwhelmings of heart, great God, help us still to pray, and never from the mercy-seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron rent his tender nerves, and blow after blow of the hammer jarred his whole frame with anguish; and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that he was so in the habit of prayer that he could not cease from it; he had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountain side, those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual ejaculations which he was wont to dart up to heaven, all these had formed in him a habit so powerful, that the severest torments could not stay its force. Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptised in the spirit of prayer; he lived in it, it lived in him, it had come to be an element of his nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, doth not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yieldeth it all the more abundantly because of the blows of the pestle, its fragrance being no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature, which the pounding in the mortar did not fetch from it, causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer enwrapped his very soul as with a garment, and his heart went forth in such array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty, let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigour of faith as to his Sonship. The extreme trial to which he now



submitted himself could not prevent his holding fast his Sonship. His prayer begins, "Father." It was not without meaning that he taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses, one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal; but the cry of Christ, when he is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of sonship. In Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, his bitterest cry commenced with, "My Father," asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from him; he pleaded with the Lord as his Father, even as he over and over again had called him on that dark and doleful night. Here, again, in this, the first of his seven expiring cries, it is "Father." O that the Spirit that makes us cry, "Abba, Father," may never cease his operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, "If thou be the Son of God;" or if the tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which crieth, "Abba, Father," repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live; but never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in his adoption.

More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord's prayer to his Father was not for himself. He continued on the cross to pray for himself, it is true, and his lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" shows the personality of his prayer; but the first of the seven great cries on the cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to himself. It is, "Father, forgive them." The petition is altogether for others, and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon himself, yet it is remote; and you will observe, he does not say, "I forgive them"—that is taken for granted—he seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to himself, it is the wrong which they were doing to the Father that is on his mind, the insult which they are paying to the Father, in the person of the Son; he thinks not of himself at all. The cry, "Father, forgive them," is altogether unselfish. He himself is, in the

prayer, as though he were not; so complete is his self-annihilation, that he loses sight of himself and his woes. My brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of man when he might have rigidly confined his prayer to himself, without any one cavilling thereat, surely it was when he was beginning his death throes. We could not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first, and even his last and all his prayers, were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus began his prayer by pleading for others. See ye not what a great heart is here revealed! What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how divine! Was there ever such a one before him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as his first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you also, my brethren. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Love your neighbours as yourselves, and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow him, treading in his steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Son of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendour; but amongst the bright colours which glorify his departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for his cruellest enemies. His enemies, did I say, there is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done him an ill deed years before, but for those who were there and then murdering him. Not in cold blood did the Saviour pray, after he had forgotten the injury, and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails; while yet the hammer was bestained with crimson gore, his blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I say, not that that prayer was confined to his immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yea, the whole human race in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder; but certainly the immediate persons, upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard, were those who there and then were committing the brutal act of fastening him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory. No other

had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham, and Moses, and the prophets had prayed for the wicked; but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet. It is true, that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, "Lay not this sin to their charge;" and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for his persecutors; but you know where they learnt this, let me ask you where did he learn it? Was not Jesus the divine original? He learnt it nowhere; it leaped up from his own Godlike nature. A compassion peculiar to himself dictated this originality of prayer; the inward royalty of his love suggested to him so memorable an intercession, which may serve us for a pattern, but of which no pattern had existed before. I feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord's cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore him; I worship him in heart for that prayer; if I knew nothing else of him but this one prayer, I must adore him, for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the deity of him who offered it, and fills my heart with reverent affection.

Thus I have introduced to you our Lord's first vocal prayer upon the cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God's Holy Spirit, make some use of it. First, we shall view it as illustrative of our Saviour's intercession; secondly, we shall regard the text as instructive to the church's work; thirdly, we shall consider it as suggestive to the unconverted.

I. First, my dear brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as **ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION.**

He prayed for his enemies then, he is praying for his enemies now; the past on the cross was an earnest of the present on the throne. He is in a higher place, and in a nobler condition, but his occupation is the same; he continues still before the eternal throne to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All his intercession is in a measure like the intercession on Calvary, and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of his intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of his intercession is this—it is most gracious. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve his prayer. They had done nothing which could

call forth from him a benediction as a reward for their endeavours in his service; on the contrary, they were most undeserving persons, who had conspired to put him to death. They had crucified him, crucified him wantonly and malignantly; they were even taking away his innocent life. His clients were persons who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Saviour's heart. They certainly never asked him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, thou dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, thou Son of God!" I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded, and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this also might have happened. Yet our Saviour prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a curse—persons who did not ask for the prayer, and even scoffed at it when they heard it. Even so in heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for guilty men, my hearers. There are none on earth that deserve his intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if any man be righteous, but "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of his compassionate intercessions, and while they even scoff at his gospel, his heart of love is entreating the favour of heaven on their behalf. See, then, beloved, if such be the truth, how sure you are to spend with God who earnestly ask the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Saviour to be your advocate? Will he refuse you? Stands it to reason that he can? He pleads for those that reject his pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold. Remember, my dear hearer, if there be nothing good in you, and if there be everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ's exercising the office of Intercessor for you. Even for you he will plead. Come, put your case into his hands; for you he will find pleas which you cannot

discover for yourselves, and he will put the case to God for you as for his murderers, "Father, forgive them."

A second quality of his intercession is this—its careful spirit. You notice in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Our Saviour did, as it were, look his enemies through and through to find something in them that he could urge in their favour; but he could not see nothing until his wisely affectionate eye lit upon their ignorance: "they know not what they do." How carefully he surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom he importuned! Just so it is with him in heaven. Christ is no careless advocate for his people. He knows your precise condition at this moment, and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing; more than that, he foresees the temptation which is awaiting you, and in his intercession he takes note of the future event which his prescient eye beholds. "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves. He understands every secret grief and groaning. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer, he will put the wording right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, he cannot, for as he knoweth what is the mind of God, so he knoweth what is your mind also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves, and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready framed, and petitions ready drawn up, and he can present them acceptable before the mercy-seat. His intercession, then, you will observe is very gracious, and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its earnestness. No one doubts who reads these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that they were heaven-piercing in their fervour. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty, and quick of understanding, to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life, and an argument for your being spared be asked of

you, I will warrant you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of his enemies, that he struck upon an argument for mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of: "They know not what they do." Why, sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy; and indeed, ignorance, if it be wilful, does not extenuate sin, and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the cross was a wilful ignorance. They might have known that he was the Lord of glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Esaias been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Saviour, with marvelous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea into a plea, and puts it thus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, how mighty are his pleas in heaven, then, in their earnestness! Do not suppose that he is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of his entreaties. No, my brethren, the heart of Christ still labours with the eternal God. He is no slumbering intercessor, but, for Zion's sake, he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, he doth not cease, nor will he, till her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of his intercession in heaven as to its continuance, perseverance, and perpetuity. As I remarked before, if our Saviour might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened him to the tree; when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to his divine person, he might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend! Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, believer, you have grieved his Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for you. You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my brother, and like the barren tree, you deserve to be cut down; but your want of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from his place. He interposes at this moment, crying, "Spare it yet another year." Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting his mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity, shall stay the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners. He lives, and while he lives he

pleads; and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an intercessor in heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realise the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like his prayer in heaven, because of its wisdom. He seeks the best thing, and that which his clients most need, "Father, forgive them." That was the great point in hand; they wanted most of all there and then forgiveness from God. He does not say, "Father, enlighten them, for they know not what they do," for mere enlightenment would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their hell; but he crieth, "Father, forgive;" and while he used his voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading too, and God heard, and doubtless did forgive. The first mercy which is needful to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the boon most wanted. It is so in heaven; he pleads wisely and prudently. Let him alone, he knows what to ask for at the divine hand. Go you to the mercy-seat, and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done so always put it thus, "O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it be not according to thy judgment; and if in aught that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I want, amend my pleading, for thou art infinitely wiser than I." Oh, is it sweet to have a friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King. I believed that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer now; I mean, that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of his people ever comes up imperfect; there is nothing left out, and there is nothing to be erased; and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through his infinite wisdom, and they come up before the mercy-seat moulded according to the mind of God himself, and he is sure to grant such prayers.

Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like to his universal intercession in the matter of its prevalence. Those for whom he prayed were many of them forgiven. Do you remember that he said to his disciples when he bade them preach, "beginning at Jerusalem," and on that day when Peter stood up with the eleven, and charged the people

with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Saviour, three thousand of these persons who were thus justly accused of his crucifixion became believers in him, and were baptised in his name. That was an answer to Jesus' prayer. The priests were at the bottom of the Lord's murder, they were the most guilty; but it is said, "a great company also of the priests believed." Here was another answer to the prayer. Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the gospel was soon preached to the Jews, and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles also. Was not this prayer, "Father, forgive them," like a stone cast into a lake, forming at first a narrow circle, and then a wider ring, and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priest, and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway; and to-day its circumference is wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession "Father, forgive them." It is certainly so with him in heaven, he never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, he yet won the day; with feet fastened to the wood, he was yet victorious; forsaken of God and despised of the people, he was yet triumphant in his pleas; how much more so now the tiara is about his brow, his hand grasp the universal sceptre, and his feet are shod with silver sandals, and he is crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords! If tears and cries out of weakness were omnipotent, even more mighty if possible must be that sacred authority which as the risen Priest he claims when he stands before the Father's throne to mention the covenant which the Father made with him. O ye trembling believers, trust him with your concerns! Come hither, ye guilty, and ask him to plead for you. O you that cannot pray, come, ask him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads, and disconsolate bosoms, come ye to him who into the golden censer will put his merits, and then place your prayers with them, so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of hosts, who will smell a sweet savour, and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved. We have now opened up more than enough sea-room for your meditations at home this afternoon, and, therefore we leave this first point. We have an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the cross of what his prayers always are in heaven.



## II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK.

As Christ was, so his church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister, not to be honoured, but to save others. His church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honour, or to seek any temporal aggrandisement and position; she is here unselfishly to live, and if need be, unselfishly to die for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the salvation of lost men. Brethren, Christ's prayer on the cross I told you was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember himself in it. Such ought to be the church's life-prayer, the church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but ever for the lost sons of men. Imagine you that churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops, and deans, and prebends, and curates, and I know not what? My brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim. The aim of the church is not to provide out-door relief for the younger sons of nobility; when they have not brains enough to win anyhow else their livelihood, they are stuck into family livings. Churches are not made that men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk, and so win daily bread from their admirers. Nay, there is another end and aim from this. These places are not built that you may sit here comfortably, and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums, and dens, and kennels of the city, is a church that has no reason to justify its longer existing. A church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood, a church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness, is a church that has no right to be. Not for thyself, O church, dost thou exist, any more than Christ existed for himself. His glory was that he laid aside his glory, and the glory of the church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity, and counts it to be her glory to gather together the outcast, and her highest honour to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed his blood. To rescue souls from hell and lead to God, to hope, to heaven, this is her heavenly occupation. O that the church would always feel this! Let her

have her bishops and her preachers, and let them be supported, and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the conversion of the wandering, the teaching of the ignorant, the help of the poor, the maintenance of the right, the putting down of the wrong, and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the prayer of Christ had a great spirituality of aim. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father, forgive them." And I believe the church will do well when she recollects that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with spiritual wickedness, and that what she has to dispense is not the law and order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the spiritual government by which hearts are conquered to Christ, and judgments are brought into subjection to his truth. I believe that the more the church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners, and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is, and what the blood of Christ is, and what the hell that must follow if sin be not washed out, and what the heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from sin, the more she keeps to this the better. Press forward as one man, my brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them; let temperance be maintained, let education be supported; let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and the effort to spare, but the first business of every Christian man and women is with the hearts and consciences of men as they stand before the everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your divine errand of mercy to undying souls. This is your one business. Tell to sinners that sin will damn them, that Christ alone can take away sin, and make this the one passion of your souls, "Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven, and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them."

Our Saviour's prayer teaches the church that while her spirit should be unselfish, and her aim should be spiritual, the range of her mission is to

be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked, what if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded his cross! He prayed for the ignorant. Doth he not say, "They know not what they do"? He prayed for his persecutors; the very persons who were most at enmity with him, lay nearest to his heart. Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words; your mission is not to the lite and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticise your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching; your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately, not to these I mean alone, though certainly to these as among the rest; but your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched. If no one else cares for these, the church always must, and if there be any who are first in her prayers it should be these who alas! are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him; he must think of those to whom the commonest phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue; he must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension; and if the ignorant may come not to hear him, he must use such means as best he may to induce them, nay, compel them to hear the good news. The gospel is meant also for those who persecute religion; it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of his foes. If there be any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and the most opposed to the gospel of Christ. "Father, forgive them; if thou dost pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive them."

So, too, the church should be earnest as Christ was; and if she be so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with, quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation.

She must be hopeful too, and surely no church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the church of this present age. If ignorance be a plea with God, look on the heathen at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name. Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do. If ignorance be some ground for hope, there is hope enough in

this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest truths of the gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Saviour's prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is the church's business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant, and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stay her hand from doing good. If the Lord be coming to-morrow, it is no reason why you Christian people should not subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort, and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls. If it be true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight, and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast, or if it be not true, I care not a fig, it makes no difference to my duty, and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when he will, while I labour for him I am ready for his appearing. The business of the church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her; if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations, she might well be afraid of her Lord's coming; but if she goes about her work, and with incessant toil searches out her Lord's precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom cometh.

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the lightening. I would fain excite every Christian here, and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ's church. My brethren, you must not live to yourselves; the accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread, all this you may do; but there must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christlike, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood. Begin to live for others, make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent, that through the good you do to men God may be glorified, and Christ may see in you his own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO

## THE UNCONVERTED.

Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant, and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew that, but you did not know the far-reaching guilt of sin. You have not been attending the house of prayer long, you have not read your Bible, you have not Christian parents. Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them;" they must be forgiven, even those that know not what they do, hence they are individually guilty; but still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The gospel is just this, trust Jesus Christ who died for the guilty, and you shall be saved. O may God help you to do so this very morning, and you will become new men and new women, a change will take place in you equal to a new birth; you will be new creatures in Christ Jesus.

But ah! My friends, there are some here for whom even Christ himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," for you have known what you did, and every sermon you hear, and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the gospel, adds to your responsibility, and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do. Ah! Sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ, and that you cannot have both. You know that there is sin and God, and that you cannot serve both. You know that there are the pleasure of evil and the pleasures of heaven, and that you cannot have both. Oh! In the light which God has given you, may his Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose. Decide to-day for God, for Christ, for heaven. The Lord decide you for his name's sake. Amen.

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## **First Forgiveness, Then Healing**

When he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee.  
- Luke 5:20

I have read to you the narrative of the healing of the man taken with the palsy; and many of you remember that, last Sabbath evening,\* I preached upon the Pharisees and the doctors of the law who were "sitting by." I tried to represent the position of many in our congregations who are just "sitting by." I preached to the outsiders of the congregation, on the divers reasons which led to this "sitting by." I must confess that I did not reckon on so large a blessing as I have already seen as the result of that sermon. When I came here on Monday afternoon, that being Whit-Monday, when everybody is supposed to take a holiday, I was surprised, on my arrival, at about three o'clock, by a friend running up to me, and saying, "We are glad you have come, sir, for there is a room full already. There is quite a nice number of friends who have come forward from the congregation, and who one after another have said, "We cannot be 'sitting by' any longer; we feel that we cannot remain among the sitters-by, but that we must come in and partake of the gospel feast, and join ourselves with the disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This blessed result of my sermon has set the bells of my heart ringing all the week, and I have felt deeply thankful to God for it. I said to myself that, as I had taken one arrow, which had sped so well, out of that quiver, I would take another. Having spoken to those who are "sitting by", I think I will now speak to those who are not sitting by, but who indeed are the principal persons in the congregation, namely, those who are sick and sorry, and who need the Saviour. For this palsied man, who was let down by ropes through the ceiling, was the most remarkable person in that

congregation. We may readily forget those Pharisees and learned legal gentlemen; but we can never forget this man to whom, as soon as ever they "let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus," the Saviour said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." I trust that, at this time, there are some present in this audience who are not sitting by, but who are already praying, "God be merciful to whose prayers are rising to heaven in accents like these, "Lord, help me!" "Lord, save, or I perish!" You are the principal persons in the congregation both to the preacher and to the preacher's Master. He cares more about you, and about what shall take place in you, than about any of the Pharisees or doctors of the law who may be sitting by. God is glorified in scattering his miracles of mercy where there is the greatest need of them. Our Lord Jesus, when the poor man was let down by his four friends through the ceiling, said to him at once, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Matthew puts our Saviour's words thus, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee;" while Mark's record is, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Well, Jesus may have uttered all of these words, and all the different versions of the story may be correct, for it is not every man's ear that catches the whole of every sentence that is spoken, and we may be glad that there are three Evangelists who have recorded what the Saviour said. There is no real difference in the sense, and the difference in the words may only show that Jesus said all three sentences.

I am going, on this occasion, to talk a little about this man, first, before his forgiveness; next, a little more about his forgiveness itself; and then a little about what followed after his forgiveness.

I. First, then, let us think of this man BEFORE HIS FORGIVENESS.

We are not told much about him. If I indulge in imagination a little, you will take it for what it is worth. This man, it seems to me, first, had faith which went out towards the Lord Jesus. Evidently, as I read the narrative, he had been suddenly paralyzed. This affliction usually comes upon a sudden; men who have been about their business, as active as usual, have been in a moment struck down with paralysis. This man appears to have been completely paralyzed, so as to have been unable to move; and, as he lay in that helpless state, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come to the

city, and he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was able to heal even him. It does not strike me that his friends would have brought him to Christ unless at his own request; the most rational explanation of the whole proceeding seems to me to be this, he believed in Jesus as able to heal him, and he continued to cry out earnestly, and to pray that he might somehow or other be taken into Christ's presence. He could not stir hand or foot, but he had friends, and he begged those friends to take him to Jesus.

Well now, there never was a soul yet that had faith in Christ but what Christ revealed himself more fully in the way of love to that soul. If thou knowest that thou canst not save thyself, if thou believest that Christ can save thee, and if thy one anxiety is to be laid at his feet, that he may look upon thee, and save thee, he will assuredly accept thee. "Him that cometh to me," saith he, "I will in no wise cast out." Whether he comes running, or walking, or creeping, or borne of four, so long as he doth come, Christ will accept him; and if his faith be but as a grain of mustard seed, our Lord Jesus will not let it die. If there be but a smouldering faith, he will not quench the smoking flax. Believest thou this? If thou dost, let it cheer thee and comfort thee. There is something that is well with thy soul already. It was better to be paralyzed and to have faith in Christ than to be walking upright like the Pharisees and lawyers who had no faith in him. The apparent wretchedness of thy condition is not the real wretchedness of it; it may even turn out to be the blessedness and the hopefulness of it. If thou believest in Jesus, I care not how far thou hast fallen, nor how great is thy inability; if thou believest in Jesus, thou art brought into contact with omnipotence, and that omnipotence will heal thee.

This man, I believe, further, thought that Christ could heal him, but he began to feel his great sinfulness. I am certain that he did, because Jesus never does forgive where there is no repentance. There was never yet the fiat, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," until first there was a consciousness of sin, and a confession of sin. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This man, lying there paralyzed, wept at the thought of his past life, his omissions and his commissions, his falling short and his transgressions,



and his heart was heavy within him. He seemed to say to his friends, "Get me somehow to the great Prophet; get me within sight of this wonderful Saviour. Oh, get me within touch of him, that I may be restored, that I may have this great load, which presses me down so sorely, taken off my heart! Worse to me even than the paralysis is this awful sense of sin. Take me, oh, take me into the presence of this Messiah, this Son of David, that he may have mercy upon me!" That I conceive to have been his condition before the word of pardon was spoken to him.

Next, being hopeful himself, he inspired those about him with hope. Of course, they would not have taken him to Christ if they had not had some sort of belief that possibly he might be healed. It is wonderful what sick people can do even when they can do nothing; how, when they seem to be utterly powerless, they find a strength in feebleness. Their very helplessness seems to be a plea where there is anything of generosity left in the heart of those who are near them. So this man pleaded, "I believe Jesus will heal me, I believe he will have mercy upon me; get me to him, do get me to him."

They resolved to do it if they could; and he was willing to be carried to Christ. Four stout stalwart men said, "Yes, we will get you to him somehow, though it is a difficult task, for the house is small, the room is crowded, and there is sure to be a press about the door." "But," said the poor man, "Oh! try to do it, for it is my only hope. If I could but get where Jesus could see me, he would look on me, and save me. Oh, get me to him, get me to him!" The palsied man would make no dispute about how it was to be done, so they carried him to the door of the house, and then they said to the people crowding around, "Make way for this poor palsied man," and he would say, "I pray you, friends and neighbours, make way;" but they could not; perhaps they, too, had their friends who wanted to be healed, or they themselves had an anxiety to hear the great Teacher, so they pushed and pressed to get as near him as they could. You see, those quibbling Pharisees and doctors of the law had got in first, and they blocked up the road. They are always in a poor sinner's way. What must be done? The poor man's bearers would have abandoned the task, I think, but he said, "No, do not give up trying to get me in; it is my only hope. Oh, get me to him! Get me near him!"

So, next, the man was willing to be lowered into the presence of Christ. There was no other way but to go up those stairs outside the house, and to take him to the top of the roof; and he, not fearing as many would have done, said, "Ay, break it up, and let me down." These four men, belonging to a fishing town, were adepts in the use of ropes, and they soon had their tackle ready, and they broke a way through the roof. As I told you in the reading, I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the law. It always delights me to think that those gentlemen would have dust on their heads for once; since they were there, they were bound to have a little of it. Of course, when these gentlemen come to a place of worship, one feels bound to be respectful to them; but if they come at an untimely hour, when there is any rough work going on, one does not feel any particular regret. If, when souls are being saved, these gentlemen should have their corns trodden upon, we do not even ask their pardon, or make any apology. Such a work as Christ had to do could not stand still for the sake of reverence to the learned doctors of the law; so the roof was broken up, and this man, though paralyzed, was not afraid to be let down. It is probable that there were no outcries from him when they began to let him down; I think, if it had been my case, I might have been afraid that one rope would go a little faster than the other. But no, the man keeps still in his paralysis and courage mingled, till down drops the pallet just before the Saviour.

There he lies upon his mattress, on the floor of the house, just before the Saviour's eyes, exactly where he wanted to be. Here I address myself to some who would give all that they have if they could but be brought under the eye of Jesus. The one thought of such a sufferer is, "Oh, that I could be near him! Oh, that I could be near him! Oh, that he would look on me, and cure my helplessness, and pardon my sin!" What a wonderful picture this scene would make! The crowd are obliged to make way, or else they will have to bear the man and his bed on their heads; so he is dropped down into their midst, and there he lies. The great Preacher has been preaching, and he stops. There is an interruption which is indeed no interruption to him. His discourse is but broken off for a minute, to be illustrated with engravings, that men may see, in after years, that what

they have heard is but the letter-press, and that the miracle which is now to be wrought shall be the engraving which shall convey the Teacher's wonderful meaning to all eyes. So the poor palsied man lies there before the Saviour.

Is that where you desire to lie, dear friend? In your deadly sorrow, and sin, and weakness, do you wish to lie at the Saviour's feet? That is where I want you to lie; and if you will to lie there, that is where you do lie. The Lord Jesus is in the midst of us to-night, and you can at once cast yourself down before him. Do so, tell him about your paralysis, tell him how sick you are, how sinful you are. Nay, you need not speak so that I can hear you; his ears will hear the whisper of your soul. Your heart-beats will be vocal to his heart, and he will note all you say or feel in your inmost soul. Just lie before Jesus; and as you lie there, what are you to do? This man did not speak a word; but, as I believe, he lay there repenting that ever he should have lived as he had done, mourning that he should have wasted his life and misspent his time. I think, too, that he lay there believing, looking at that wondrous Man, and believing that all power was in him, and that he had only to speak the word, and the sinner should be at once forgiven. So he lay there, in the presence of Jesus, hoping and expecting forgiveness and healing.

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE FORGIVENESS ITSELF.

This poor paralyzed man had not lain there long before the blessed Master broke the silence, and said to him, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." I think that the four men up on the roof, looking down to see what would happen to their friend, would hardly understand what that sentence meant. They had brought him to Jesus because he was paralyzed, but he had wanted to come first of all because he was a sinner. He did desire to have his paralysis cured; but secretly in his soul there was another matter which they might not have understood if he had tried to interpret it to them; it was his sin that was his heaviest burden; and the Saviour, the great Thought-reader knew all about that sin, so he did not first say to him, "Rise up and walk," but he began by saying, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Observe, that the pardon of sin came in a single sentence. He spake, and it was done. Jesus said "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee," and they were forgiven him. Christ's voice had such almighty power about it that it needed not to utter many words. There was no long lesson for the poor man to repeat, there was no intricate problem for him to work out in his mind. The Master said all that was required in that one sentence, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The burden of a sinner does not need two ticks of the clock for it to be removed; swifter than the lightning's hash is that verdict of absolution which comes from the eternal lips, when the sinner lies hoping, believing, repenting at the feet of Jesus. It was a single sentence which declared that the man was forgiven.

Next, remember that it was a sentence from One who was authorized to absolve. He was sent by the Father on purpose to forgive sin; and do not imagine that he has now lost his authorization to forgive; for "him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is appointed as High Priest on purpose that he may stand on God's behalf, and declare the remission of sin. What Jesus said was spoken with divine authority. It is vain for a priest to say to a sinner, "I absolve thee." What can he do in such a case? He, or any other man who does not call himself a Priest, may speak in his Master's name, and say to the penitent, "If thou dost sincerely repent, if thou truly believest, I know thou art absolved, and I comfort thee with the assurance of this absolution." So far, so good; but the Master alone can really give the absolution, it must come from him who has power upon earth to forgive sins.

Now, my hearer, hast thou never been forgiven? Art thou in thy pew, and yet lying at that dear Master's feet, and dost thou desire above all things that he should say to thee, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? And dost thou believe that he can say it, and wilt thou accept it from him as being by divine authority? If so, I think he says it to thee, for in his own Word he declares that they who believe in him are forgiven. He says to each one of those who are penitent, and believe in his grace, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Take thou the absolution, and go thy way. Do as Martin Luther did, in the days of his dark distress, when a brother-monk said to him, "Dost

thou not believe in the Creed, and dost thou not say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'? Now believe in the forgiveness of sins for thyself." Trust Christ's Word, and thou wilt be believing what is absolutely true. Trust it, take the comfort of it, and go thy way. It is thus that Jesus Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and by the revealed Word of God, says authoritatively to each penitent, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Further observe, that this sentence, although it was but one, and was so short, yet was wonderfully comprehensive: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Not one sin alone, nor many sins, but all thy sins are forgiven thee. When you go into particulars, you are apt to leave something out; hence, the declaration is made all-inclusive, there are no particulars given. "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Sins against the holy God? Sins against a righteous law? Sins against the gospel? Sins against the light of nature? Sins of this and sins of that kind? No, there is no enumeration. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Murder, adultery, theft, fornication, blasphemy? Yes, in a word, "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." At one sudden sweep of the divine wave of mercy they are all washed away. There is no such thing as a half-pardon of sin. I heard someone talking, the other day, about original sin being forgiven, and the other sins left; but sin is a whole, it goes or it stays altogether, it cannot be broken up into pieces, it is all there or it is not there at all, and it is not there if thou believest in Jesus. This blessed and comprehensive sentence sets free from every jot and taint and stain of guilt: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Observe, also, that this sentence contains no conditions: and the blessed gospel, speaking to every repenting and believing sinner, gives him absolute forgiveness. Behold, the tally is destroyed, the record of thy debt is nailed to the cross and as for thy sins, they are like the Egyptians when the Red Sea swallowed them up, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left, however great or many they may have been. If thou art now a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, he says to thee now by his Word, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." I pray the blessed Master by his Holy Spirit to make his Word come home to many here with power. Oh, that those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh,

did themselves speak to you! Oh, that those wounds of his, which are mouths that preach pardon to sinners, might speak to you, and say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." There is no mouth that speaketh pardon like that gash in his side, out of which his very heart speaks, as he says, "I have loved thee, and given myself to death for thee. Thy sins I have borne on the tree, and put them away once for all. Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Oh, that Jesus himself might thus speak effectually to many of you!

But note, that this sentence sufficed the receiver. When the Saviour afterwards raised this palsied man to health and strength, he did not do it to let the man himself know that his sins were forgiven. The man knew that already, and did not need any more evidence of it; but Jesus did it for another reason. To the scribes and Pharisees he said, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." Those unbelieving men had not evidence enough that Christ could forgive, but he to whom Christ spake wanted no further proof than the power of that voice in his own conscience; and if he shall speak to thee, my hearer, thou wilt not want any books about the evidences of Scripture, the proofs of inspiration, and so on; to thee, this indisputable miracle of pardoned sin shall stand for ever as a holy memorial of God's mighty grace. It shall be unto you for a sign, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, that God has pardoned you, and spoken peace to your soul; and this God shall be your God for ever and ever. To every soul that is in a similar case to that of the poor palsied man lying repenting and believing at the feet of Jesus, his Word gives the comfortable assurance, "Believe, and thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Believe it, and go thy way in peace.

III. Now I close by noticing, thirdly, what followed AFTER THIS MAN'S FORGIVENESS.

He was absolutely, irreversibly, eternally forgiven; for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never plays fast and loose with men; he never issues a pardon from his throne, and afterwards executes the pardoned sinner. His pardon covers all that may come afterwards as well as all that has gone before. But what happened to this man?

I believe that, first, there was an inward peace that stole over his soul. If you could have looked into the face of that palsied man, whilst still palsied, and lying there in that hammock, you would have seen a wonderful transformation. Did you ever see a face transfigured? If you are a soul-winner, you have often seen it. All human faces are not beautiful, some are absolutely repulsive; the countenances of some who have lived long in sin are dreadful to look upon. Yet I have noticed faces, that at first I could scarcely endure, when the persons have been gently led to the Saviour, and they have perceived the love of God to them, and have at last believed, and felt within their soul the kiss of peace, why, they have looked positively beautiful! I should have liked to have had them photographed, only it was too sacred a thing. Speak of physiognomies; the grace of God is such an eternal beautifier that the face, from which you would have turned away in disgust, and said, "There can be no good thing behind that countenance," is absolutely changed by the Lord's mighty working. I say not that a single feature may be altered; the person may be the same in feature, but, oh! what a marvellous difference there is in the expression of the whole contour of the countenance when free grace and dying love have cast their magic spell over the spirit, and the Holy Ghost has made the dead to live, and the person has been born again in Christ Jesus. Well, that change took place in this man's mind, I am sure it did, when Jesus said to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He was in no hurry to be raised from his palsied state; he does not appear to have said a word, and those scribes and Pharisees looked on with their malevolent countenances, but they did not frighten him; he lay quite still, and was in no haste even for the Master's next blessing. It would come in due time, he knew it would, and he was of good cheer, for had not Jesus said to him "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee"?

But next followed the Man's immediate cure. The Master said to him, "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." Our blessed Master was accustomed to preach the gospel in a way which I have heard some friends greatly question. They tell us that we ought not to bid men to believe and repent, because they cannot. There are two parties on opposite sides of this question; one says, "If you tell a man to believe and repent, that proves that he can," which I do not believe; and others say,

"If they cannot repent, you ought not to exhort them to do so," which also I do not believe. Though I know them to be as helpless as that poor palsied man, unable to lift hand or foot, yet in the Master's name we do say, as the Master was wont to say, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." "Oh!" says one, "I could not say that to an unregenerate man." Do not do it, brother, if you cannot do it; go home, and go to bed; what is the use of you for such work? The man who can speak miracles is the one who is wanted, and the man who can speak as his Master has bidden him speak. Surely, the faith does not lie in believing that the man can himself do what he is bidden to do; the faith lies in believing that Christ can do it, and therefore, speaking in Christ's name, we say to the sinner just as the Lord Jesus did to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand," and he does so. Look at Ezekiel speaking to the dry bones in the valley. Ezekiel, dost thou believe that these dry bones can live? "Not I," says he, "I know that they are dead." The Lord says to him, "Ezekiel, prophesy upon these dry bones!" How can he do it? It would be inconsistent with what he said just now. "I have nothing to do with that," says he, "I was sent by the Lord to do it, and I do it in the name of God." That which may seem perfectly inconsistent with your reason, is quite consistent when faith brings in the supernatural element with which God moves those to whom he gives the commission to preach the gospel in his name.

The Saviour said to this man, "Arise, take up thy couch, and go into thine house." Now observe his precise obedience. "Immediately he rose up before them all." The tendency of a paralyzed person is to be paralyzed in will. There are some persons, no doubt, who have ailments that can easily be cured if they believe they can be cured, because there is not much the matter with them after all; but this man was completely paralyzed, yet he so fully believed in Christ that up he rose, and stood before the Master. Then Jesus said, "Take up thy couch." I think I see him undo those four ropes, and quickly he shoulders his mattress. "Walk," says the Master, and he walks. "Go into thine house," says the Master. He might have stopped, and said, "No, Lord, do let me stay and hear the sermon out;" but no, not a word did he say about it, but off he went to his own house.

Oh, that all were as obedient to Christ as this man was, that, having the



simplicity of faith, they would render the fullest obedience! But thus it often is that the very chief of sinners, when pardon is given to them, have given to them at the same time a tender conscience, a willing mind, a yielding spirit. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," said the virgin mother to the servants at Cana of Galilee; and that is good advice for you. If Christ hath healed you, obey him, obey him at once, obey him exactly, obey him in everything, be it little, or be it great. If some say it is non-essential, remember that what is not essential to salvation may be essential to obedience. Do it if Jesus commanded it. Do it whether it appears to thee to be essential or not. That is not a question for thee to ask, that is a heartless, loveless question. He hath healed thee, do what he bids thee, as he bids thee, when he bids thee, and raise no question about it. Take up thy bed, and go into thy house, if so he bids thee. Or, if he puts it to thee, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," believe thou, and be thou baptized. Be thou obedient unto him who deserves to be obeyed.

Now, lastly, this man, it is said, "immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God." I think I hear what he said. "Glory!" he cried, "Glory be to God!" He felt so glad, so happy, that he took up his bed before them all, and as he walked along he glorified God; and would not you have done the same if you had been paralyzed, and had been restored as he had been? And will you not do so? If you have been sin-bound, and Christ has set you free, surely, you will take the earliest opportunity of telling others what Jesus has done for you, and you will seek to glorify his name. I did not wonder when a brother lately said to me, "I have been spending all the morning in the workshop telling the men that I have found the Saviour," and one, last Sunday, turned to his wife in this Tabernacle, and said, "I am saved!" She said to him, "Don't disturb the worship," but I almost wish he had done so. What a mercy it is to be saved! Salvation puts a new sun in our sky, and a new joy in our hearts. Believe on Jesus, and this salvation is yours. God grant that it may be, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

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## **The First Last, And The Last First**

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. - Matthew 19:30

So the last shall be first, and the first last. - Matthew 20:16

We must be saved if we would serve the Lord. We cannot serve God in an unsaved condition. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is vain for them to attempt service while they are still at enmity against God. The Lord wants not enemies to wait upon him, nor slaves to grace his throne. We must be saved first; and salvation is all of grace. "By grace are ye saved through faith." After we are saved, and as the result of salvation, we serve. Saved—we serve. He that is saved becomes a child of God, and then he renders a child-like service in his Father's house. That service is also all of grace. He serves not under the law of the old commandment, "This do, and thou shalt live" for he is not under the law, but under grace. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over him, but grace shall have dominion over him; and he shall seek to serve the Lord and please him all the days of his life. When we are saved, we must never forget that we are saved that we may serve; made free from sin, that we may become servants to God. David says, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." Because our bonds are loosed, we are under new bonds, bonds of love, which bind us to the service of the Most High.

Now, when we come thus to be servants, we must not forget that we are saved men and women; for if we begin to fancy that, while we serve, we are working to win life by our merits, we shall get upon legal ground; and a child of God on legal ground is going back, he is departing from his true standing before God. Still remember, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." But if you begin to forget your indebtedness to your Savior, not only for eternal life, but for everything you are, and have, and do, you will be like the Galatians, who began in the Spirit, but sought to be made perfect by the flesh. You will be like the young man, whose question we

have just read: "What lack I yet?" You will be like Peter, who puts in a sort of claim for reward: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" You will be like the men who had worked in the vineyard from early morning, and who murmured because the penny was given to those who had only worked for a single hour. Christ will not have his servants under bondage to a loyal spirit. Wherever he spies it out, he strikes it on the head; for both the service and the reward are all of grace. The service itself is given us of God, and God rewards the service which he himself has given. We might almost speak of this as an eccentricity of grace. God gives us good works, and then rewards us for the works which he himself has given. So all is of grace from first to last, and must never be viewed with a legal eye. Into this subject I want on this occasion to conduct you.

I dare say that you have heard sermons from this text, but probably not preached from it in its connection. I like to take the text as it stands, and get from it a bit of exposition for my own heart, which I may pass on to you; for, remember, although the text away from its connection may be true, yet it is not the truth which God there intended to teach us, and it becomes us to look about us to see what comes before the text, and what comes after, in order that we may catch the exact meaning of the Holy Ghost in giving the words.

I. I shall begin by dwelling upon this remark: **IN THE SERVICE OF OUR LORD FREE GRACE IS MANIFESTED.** It may not strike you as being upon the surface of the text, but it lies on the very surface of the whole connection: in the service of our Lord free grace is manifested. Think that over.

It must be so, in the first place, because, although it is rewarded, all our service is already due to God. Under the law we are bound to love the Lord with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. There can be nothing beyond that. All that we can do we are already bound to do, under the law. Works of supererogation must be impossible, since the law comprehends all holiness, and condemns every form of sin. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we have done no more than it was our duty to do. Hence,

brethren, if there be a service to which we are called, and for which a reward is promised, it must be a service of grace. It cannot be any other. Under the gospel, the same thing is true; all that we can do is already due. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." There is no faculty, there is no capacity, there is no possibility of your nature which is not redeemed, and which does not belong to Christ by virtue of the ransom price which he has paid for it. You will gladly and gratefully own the obligation to do all that lieth in you, for him who loved you, and bought you with his precious blood.

"Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow."

surely they are all due to my Lord already in repentance and gratitude. All the zeal of missionaries, all the patience of martyrs, all the faith of confessors, all the holiness of godly men, is Christ's by right, and therefore there can be no reward for them, seeing that they are his due already. If there be a service for which a reward is given to us, it is a service granted to us of grace, that we may receive grace thereby.

But, next, there is this reflection—all our service is in itself unacceptable. When all comes to all, it is still, in and of itself, a thing so mean and poor, so imperfect and defiled, that it could not claim any reward. Job was made to feel this in the day of his humiliation. He said "If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life." If it were possible for us to stand before God in any merit of our own, we feel so certain that we have come short of the glory of God, and that in many things we have offended, that we would tear off our righteousness from us, and throw it away as filthy rags, even the best of it. "I count all things but loss," saith Paul, "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith." If then we are so conscious of our failures, and shortcomings, and transgressions, and if we have to cry for mercy even on our holy things, and to confess sin in them, how can we suppose that any reward that may be given can be otherwise than of grace, seeing that the whole service itself must be of grace?

Think again. The ability to serve God is the gift of God's grace. I refer not only to mental ability; but to the capacity which men of substance have to help the cause of God by their generous gifts. It is God who gives the power to get wealth, as it is he who gives the brain to think, and the mouth to speak. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" If any here present are serving God with gifts and graces, I am sure that they must own that those were given to them. They did not win them themselves. Or, if some of them be acquirements, yet the power to acquire was given them of him from whom cometh every good gift and every perfect gift. Thus the ability to serve God is the gift of grace.

Beloved, the call to serve God in any special way is also of grace. If we are called to the ministry, remember how Paul puts it: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." If our kings put upon their coins "Dei gratia"—kings, by the grace of God—well, well, let them say so; but we can put it on our lives. "Sunday-school teachers, by the grace of God." "Street-preachers, by the grace of God." "Students in the College, by the grace of God." "Preachers of the gospel, by the grace of God." It is God who calls us to our several sacred employments. Our ordination, if it be an ordination at all, is from that great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who went up into a mountain, and called unto him whom he would, and made them to be his first messengers. Before he left them, he gave them that great commission which is still binding upon all his followers, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is of grace that we are put into any sphere of service; and what a grace it is to be permitted to do anything for him! His shoes' latches we are not worthy to unloose; his shoes we are not worthy to bear. Though it be a menial's work, it is a monarch's work to do anything for Christ. Blessed be his name, if he will let me be anywhere in his service, though it were but as a scullion in the kitchen! The kitchen is in the palace, and Christ's kitchen-maids are maids of honor. He that serveth God, reigneth. To serve him on earth is to be glorified. To serve him in heaven will be a part of our endless glory. Surely this, then, is by grace.

Still further, every opportunity of serving God is a gift of grace. I am sure that when I have been shut out from the pulpit by sickness, I have thought it a great grace from God to be permitted to creep into the pulpit once more. When one's hand has been unable to hold a pen, we count it a grace to be able to write again some loving words that may be blessed to men. I think that it is God's grace that puts in your way people to whom you may speak privately. It is God's grace that brings those children to the Sunday-school to you, that you may teach them. If we were wide awake, we should see, all day long, opportunities of usefulness, and we should be saying, "Blessed be God who puts me by providence where I can be of some little service to him, and bring forth some fruit to his praise!" It is all of grace; these providential openings, and the spirit and the power to avail ourselves of them, come as gifts from God.

Another thing I know: when you have the call to a work, and the opportunity, still it is a gift of grace to be in a right state of mind to do your Lord's service. Do you never feel sluggish and dull? Would you not always be so if his Spirit did not quicken you? Are you not sometimes frost-bitten, so that your soul seems like a great iceberg? Would the waters ever flow unless the Spirit came with melting power? Do you not thank God, dear brother, that you have had gracious occasions in which the Lord has made you like Naphtali, "a hind let loose"? When you have given forth goodly words, from whom has come the unction? whence the power? You have spoken: ah, that is a poor thing! But God has spoken through you: ah, that is a grand thing! Is not that wholly the work of grace? Every tear of sympathy that the preacher sheds when he is wooing men to Christ, every heart-throb and all the anguish of his soul when he would fain compel them to come in, the whole bearing and carriage of a grace-taught minister or teacher—all this is of grace, and unto God must be the glory of it. It is not under law that we are working; for law provides no strength, no tone, no savor. It is grace that makes us work; for it gives us the strength with which to work. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work." Thou givest him strength proportioned to his need, and the guidance necessary because of the difficulties of his task. Here is grace. Is it not so?

You will be sure to join with me in the next point without a single demur: success in holy service is wholly of the Lord. If we were so wicked as to attribute to ourselves the sowing, and to ourselves the watering, apart from grace, yet we dare not attribute to ourselves the increase. "I have planted," said Paul; "Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Would a single persuasion of ours prevail with man's hard heart if the Holy Spirit did not convince him of sin, and make him repent? Would the preaching of the gospel in our poor way ever enlighten a single eye if Jesus Christ were not seen in his own light? Could we comfort the broken-hearted, could we proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, if the Spirit of God were not upon us? Why, if we did make the proclamation, would it not fall flat to the ground apart from the work of God, who doeth all things through us and by us? We are laborers together with him. We lift our hand, and God lifts his. We speak, and he speaks. We would fain lay hold of men's hearts, and he does lay hold upon them. We would weep them to Christ, and he brings them weeping to Christ, and saves them to eternal life. Blessed be his name! After many years of prophesying in his name, dare any of us say that we have made the dry bones to live? After having long given the invitation, do we say that we have persuaded one to come to the wedding-feast apart from the Lord's divine working? Do we take any of the glory of a saved soul to ourselves? It were treason; it were blasphemy. We dare not commit such a sin. Our work, if it succeeds at all, if it is worth calling good work, is all of grace.

And if, my dear friends, any of you are called to suffer for Christ's sake, the honor of suffering is a special gift. If you have been reviled, if you have lost position, if you have suffered those moderate martyrdoms which are possible in a free country like this, then "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." But take no credit to yourself. You are elevated to the peerage of suffering: it is your King who brought you there. You have his gracious permission to pass through great tribulation: that were nothing to you, if you had not washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. You owe your patience, your courage, your steadfastness, all to the Spirit of God. You

had long since been carried away by the fear of man, which bringeth a snare; you had long since been a traitor to the truth, and to your Lord, if he had left you. It is your duty to be faithful. When you are faithful, it is not in yourself that you are so. He works all our works in us, and he must have the praise of them. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Work it out to the very full. Be thorough with it. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." God will reward you; but your steadfastness, your diligence, your patience, all these are the work of the grace of God, and you know it. If you, indeed, possess them, you ascribe them all to him.

Now, then, we have established this, I think, beyond all contradiction, among spiritual men—that in the service of the Lord free grace is magnified.

II. So we take another step, and we say, as our second head, HENCE THE LORD HAS HIS OWN WAY OF MEASURING WHAT WE DO. You see that in the case of these persons who had toiled in the vineyard; their master measured their work after his own fashion. He did not go by the regular pay-way of so much an hour; but, inasmuch as it was all of grace, this great householder made the reward to be after his own measure, a penny for one hour and a penny for twelve hours. He made the last equal to the first. So shall it be: "The last shall be first, and the first last." This is because we are dealing here, not with a legal paymaster, but with a God of grace, who measures our service, which itself is all of grace, by his own measurement, and not by ours.

He will reward every worker, but not as we judge. He will do no man any injustice, even in the omnipotence of his grace. He will be able to say to every worker, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." He will do no wrong to any one of his servants, whoever they may be; rest sure of that; but still he will reply, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" and he will reward his workers in his own royal yet gracious way.

So, then, he will not reward us as according to the time spent, or surface covered. Some may be Christians for thirty or forty years, and may never



be among the first. It is not the length of your service, good as that is, that will be God's gain. There may be some who shall come to Christ and go home to heaven in a single year, and yet shall bring great honor to their Master. It is not the length of time in which you are engaged in the lord's service. Neither is it the space that is apparently covered. Some seem to do a great deal, skimming over a wide surface but it is not so that the Master measures: neither by the hour, nor yet by the acre. That might be a loyal way of measurement, but his gracious way of measurement is not so.

And he will not measure out the reward according to our ability, whether it be mental ability, ability of substance, or ability of opportunity; for some of us might come in for a large share, and others might come in for a very little, if this were the rule. But this is not the way the Master measures. If to one man he gives the gift of speech, to another the great gift of diving deeply into the meaning of his word, and to another experience, and so on, yet the reward to the persons holding these various gifts will not be in proportion to the gifts they have, but after quite another rule.

The reward will not be according to the judgement of men. A brother has served God in his way, and his brethren think much of him, and appoint him to an office. He is a deacon, or an elder, or, peradventure, he becomes a pastor. It is a high reward to be allowed thus to increase our opportunities of usefulness; but we shall not at last be rewarded according to the height of office. That is not the standard in this kingdom where Christ rules.

Above all, no man shall be measured by his own judgment; else I know some friends who would have a very grand reward. They are free from sin; they are perfect, they say: their Master knows, if they do not, whether that is true or not. Another says, "I have done this, and I have done that." But it is not what you say that you have done, that will gauge your Master's reward to you. There are some that speak very loudly of what they have accomplished. I do not think that their brethren, for the most part, think the more of them for thinking so much of themselves. I believe that those who have lower opinions of their own capacity and usefulness

are much more honored in the presence of the saints of God. No, our self-judgment, our tall talk, our loud profession, and so forth, will not be the measure with which we shall be rewarded; else those who said, "We have borne the burden and heat of the day," would have had twopence, at least, if not threepence, or, perhaps, even a shilling, in proportion to those poor creatures, whom the master made equal to them, though they had only come in at the eleventh hour.

Our reward will not be according to the impression made among men. We may have made our mark upon our age, and neighborhood, and surroundings. Some men's names will go down to posterity; others have no fame at all. It will be found of some men that their lives are written and emblazoned everywhere. Others will live in the little circle of their family, but not beyond that narrow range. But God will not measure so. The godly housewife, with four or five children trained for God in her cottage, may be reckoned of God among the first; and the able speaker, in his pulpit, who has thousands hanging on his lips, may be reckoned of God among the last. God has his own ways of measuring up men's works.

But let me add that we shall not be rewarded even according to our success. To some men success is meted out in large measure; that success which really is not their own, but is the fruit of other men's labors. A man preaches the gospel with many tears for years, and sees little fruit. He dies: another man, of earnest spirit, follows him, and gathers in the old man's sheaves. The former man planted; the other man entered into his labors. To whom shall the reward be given? The success is not due to him who seems to have achieved it. You remember the old Romish legend, which contains a great truth. There was a brother who preached very mightily, and who had won many souls to Christ, and it was revealed to him one night, in a dream, that in heaven he would have no reward for all that he had done. He asked to whom the reward would go; and an angel told him that it would go to an old man who used to sit on the pulpit stairs, and pray for him. Well, it may be so, though it is more likely that both would share their Master's praise. We shall not be rewarded, however, simply according to our apparent success.

Neither shall we be put down as one of the last because of non-success.

God intends that some men shall never succeed, according to the rule of success that appertains among men; for he sent even his servant Isaiah to go and make the people's hearts hard, and their ears dull of hearing; and he sent Jeremiah to weep over a nation to whom his tears brought no repentance and no reformation. He may send you, like Noah, to preach for one hundred and twenty years, and never get a soul beside your own family into the ark. But if you are faithful, that is well pleasing in his sight. Here lies the good pleasure of God. I do not suppose that it will happen that you are to do all the ploughing and all the sowing, and there should never be an armful of sheaves for you in all your life; though, if it should be thus, and you shall have been at the last found faithful to the commission that your God has given to you, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward; but the reward is not measured out according to man's rule of success.

Let me tell you what I think is a rule with God. It is a many-branched kind of rule. Some men stand first because of their strong desire. Oh, they would have saved the people if they could; they would have persuaded men to be Christians if they could; they would have laid down their lives to do it. They preached their very hearts out in their desire for their hearers' salvation. Their souls ran over at their lips while they talked with men. God knows their desires, and he takes the will for the deed, and "so the last shall be first."

God also measures proportions. The brother never had more than one talent, but he did as much with it as some with ten; yet it did not seem to come to much in his eye. He was always mourning because he was so little. He thought that he was like one of those coral insects at the bottom of the sea, just making a little bit of coral which never came above the waves; but it was part of a great whole that would afterwards rise into a fairy island of the sea. Our Lord will measure, not according to what a man hath not, but according to what a man hath.

And here is one who has little to commend him except his spirit. He waits upon God. He is very gracious. He trembles at God's word. He speaks with his whole heart very reverently, very tenderly, desiring always to be silent if God would have him silent, and only to speak when God would

move him to speak. His delight is to do the Lord's will, and nothing but the Lord's will, and he is quite content to be nothing. Indeed, he cries for that—

"Oh to be nothing, nothing,  
Only to lie at his feet."

Now, God may put that man among the first; whereas the self-contained man, who does work for God sincerely, may, nevertheless, have to go into the back rank, and be among the last.

Here is one, again, who, whatever he does, does it with thoroughness. He does not attempt many things, but he does one thing. It is all that he can do, and he throws his whole soul into it, and works at it like some Eastern artist working at a cameo for a prince. All his life is put into that little bit of a thing; and, it may be, that our great King will count him first; while another who did much in a slovenly, slurring style, and was thought to have done a great deal, will have all his work rejected, for it is not up to the Prince's mark, and he will not adorn his palace therewith.

I think, dear friends, that God will measure our work very much by our thought of him in it. If we did it all to him; if we did it all for him; if he was always in our mind in the doing of it; and we did not think of our friends, nor of our own reputation, God would be more likely to honor us, for he will put those who think much of him among the first, and others among the last. "Them that honor me," saith the Lord, "I will honor."

And especially, again, if all that we do is baptized with love. Why, see that woman who brought her alabaster box, and broke it, and poured the precious ointment of spikenard upon Christ's head! She is put among the first, and Christ makes honorable mention of her wherever the gospel is preached. Some that did much have to go among the last; for they had not such love as she had.

Some work for God with great faith; and the Lord loves to see us working in faith. To do a great deal of work with a great deal of unbelief, is to do very little after all; for if a prayer that is unbelieving does not prosper,

preaching or teaching that is unbelieving is not likely to do so. Put faith into thy work, and, may be, thou wilt be among the first.

I am sure that God measures much of our work according to the prayer we expend over it. Oh, yes, it was a fine sermon! You could tell how the preacher had worked at it; you could see how he had polished up that phrase, and how he had cut that sentence into dice-pieces to make it tell; but you could also see that he had never prayed over it. A sermon that is prayed over is worth ten thousand that are merely prepared, or copied, or that spring out of a man's mind without being wrought by the Holy Spirit in his heart. Oh, to pray down the sermon, and then to pray up the sermon, and pray it all over, resting upon God alone!

God will often look upon our work in giving, not according to how much we give, but I think that the Lord's rule is to take notice of how much we have left. That woman who gave all her living, gave more than all the rich men gave, because she had nothing left. It was but two mites that make a farthing; but then it was all her living and so she goes into the front rank. My lord has given a thousand pounds, and we are very much obliged to him. He must go into the back rank, for all that; for he has so much left.

And then, it may be, that they will take the first place who did not get any reward for what they did. Our Lord tells us that when we are making a feast we should call in the blind, and the halt, and the lame. Why? "For," he says, "they cannot recompense thee." He speaks of the Pharisees again, and says, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." You will not be paid twice. If you have done something for Christ—for instance, defended the faith—and you are denounced for it, and traduced for it, very well, you have not had your pay for it. There remaineth the recompense for unrewarded services. It is a grand thing when, by the grace of God, you have something standing in God's book, not of law, but of grace. You helped a poor man, and he was not grateful. Oh, be so thankful that he was not grateful, because, if he had been grateful, you would have had your reward, may be! When those you relieve are very kind afterwards, and speak well of you, and do you some good service in return, it is very nice; of course it is. Well, but you are paid. But those who have done good and suffered for it; who, for the best thing that they did have had the

worst return; who have rendered kindness, and have only received unkindness as the result; it may be that the Lord will say of them, "These were last, but they shall be first;" whereas many that stood first in men's esteem, and in the gratitude they received, will have to go last.

III. Now, my time almost fails me, but you must bear with me on my third head; for here is the practical part of free grace in our service. Hence, **WE HAVE INSTRUCTIONS AT TO OUR SPIRIT AS WORKERS.** If the work is all of grace, and if God has a way of measuring up that work, which is not at all according to the law, but of his own grace; then there are two things to be observed. First, do not be proud; secondly, do not be discouraged.

Do not be proud, for many that are first shall be last. Suppose, my dear friend, that you really are first, and are doing a great deal for God, will you be proud? Why, you are only a greater debtor. You owe all the more to that grace, which has enabled you to be of some service in the kingdom of your Lord. Lie low at your Lord's feet, and be very humble.

Next, remember that though you may think that you are first, you may, even now, be among the last. Your assessment of your service may not be the diving assessment at all. You may think that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"; and, in God's repute, you may be "Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Your work may be like very big trusses of hay, and loads of straw, and stacks of stubble; and yet, when God comes to try it, it may be all burned down to a handful of ashes; whereas the friend, of whom you think so little, may only have built a small portion, but he has built it of gold, and silver, and precious stones.

Let us also recollect that, even if it is true that we are among the first, we may, if we get proud of it, find ourselves among the last. Oh, how some of God's greatest servants have been shrivelled up when they began to swell out with pride and vanity! God blessed them as long as they were feeble, and weak, and leaned upon his strength; but when they were strong, and relied on themselves, there came a dreadful failure.

There is one thing which is absolutely certain. If you are among the first, you will reckon yourself to be among the last. He that is best thinks himself worst. What a description Paul gives of himself in the seventh of Romans! "Oh," says one, "I heard a person say that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote that!" Let me tell you that he had been in the third heaven when he wrote that bit of deep experience. He had so much likeness to his Lord that he excelled every other man then living, except, perhaps, John; and if it had not been for his extraordinary holiness he would never have been able to pen those tremendous groanings wherein he says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The man who thinks that he is holy has never seen the holy God. If he had—if he had ever beheld him, he would say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The superlative perfection of the Lord God, and the absolutely perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ, are such that if a man has ever had communion with these, he shrinks into nothing in his own esteem. He that is really first is always the man who is willing to be accounted last. Paul, though he is not a whit behind any of the apostles, yet calls himself less than the least of all saints, and describes himself as having been the chief of sinners. Ah, beloved! a low idea of self is one of the labels with which God marks the best of his possessions; therefore, do not be proud.

In the next place, do not be discouraged. If you feel that you are last, God's measure is not yours. Though you may think that you are last, he may not think so at all. Though you say, "I am not worthy to be an apostle," yet he may think you worth putting into the apostleship. God's idea of your worthiness and your own may greatly differ; and his estimate is the true one.

Besides, suppose that you are last, yet "He giveth more grace." Christ has come, not only that we may have life, but that we may have it "more abundantly." Do not be content with what you have. Covet earnestly the best gifts." Covet still more the best graces. God is able to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Go in for great things. Hath not the Lord said, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I spoke to a man of God this morning, and I told him how God had graciously enabled me to draw near to him in prayer, and of the glorious way he had granted my requests. My friend said, "Yes, and he has made your mouth bigger than it used to be." Is it not so? The faculty of believing prayer grows by being used. The more you ask, the more you may ask; and the more you have asked, the more you will ask. The capacity to receive is increased by receiving. God grant that it may be so with us if we are last!

Remember, too, that if you really are among the least useful, yet a right spirit may compensate for your poverty, and make your little service very precious. If you cannot get a wide sphere, do not want it. A young minister said to an old one, "Ah, sir! I preach only to about one hundred people. I wish that I could get where I could gather a thousand." His friend answered, "Young man, a hundred people are quite enough for you to be accountable for; and if you faithfully discharge your duty to their souls, you have quite enough to do." Wish for a larger sphere if you are capable of filling it; but remember that the best preparation for greater usefulness is to be faithful in your present position.

My last word to God's children is this: what does it matter, after all, whether we are first or whether we are last? Do not let us dwell too much upon it, for we all share the honor given to each. When we are converted, we become members of Christ's living body; and as we grow in grace, and get the true spirit that permeates that body, we shall say, when any member of it is honored, "This is honor for us." If any brother shall be greatly honored of God, I feel honored in his honor. If God shall bless your brother, and make him ten times more useful than you are, then you see that he is blessing you—not only blessing him, but you. If my hand has something in it, my foot does not say, "Oh, I have not got it!" No, for if my hand has it, my foot has it; it belongs to the whole of my body. If my mouth alone eats, yet it does not eat for my mouth alone; but it eats for my brain, my hand, my backbone, for every part of me. So, when you get to feel your oneness with Christ, and your oneness with his people, your only thought will be, "Let God be glorified; let him be magnified. It does not matter whether I am first or last." You will stand up and say, "That brother, who was converted only a week or two ago, got his penny, and I



am glad of it." Here is another, who has done very poor work; but you will thank God that he has got his penny. He is one of the family. It all comes from the same hand, and it will all come home to the same house. We are something like men in a great shop, where there are different people serving. One young man has a counter where ladies come, and he serves them, and he takes a lot of money in the day; another counterman, at the back, sells goods that take a deal of trouble to dispose of, and upon which there is but a trifling profit. Does the master praise the men of the shop according to the quantity of money each takes? The one who is put in the back place, and sells poor goods, is just as diligent and just as worthy in his master's sight as the others. Suppose that they are all members of one family, when they meet at night, one will say, "I took so much." Another will say, "I took ten times as much as that;" but they are all glad, because it all goes into the firm; it is all a part of the same concern. Go then, dear brothers and sisters, and work away for Christ, and do not envy one another, but all be glad to be permitted, in this work of grace, to take any part or any portion for your Lord.

One thing more, and I have done. I have only been talking to God's people all this while, because you that are not saved cannot serve him. What a miserable position yours is! You are out of the pale of service. God will receive nothing of you till you come to Christ. The only way to bring: sacrifice is to bring it through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" much less shall you be accepted as servants there. I beseech you, by the thought of the grace of which I have been speaking, to rest not until you can say that Christ has saved you, made you a partaker of his grace, and sent you forth into his royal service. The Lord bless you! Amen.

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## **The First Sermon In The Tabernacle**

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. - Acts 5:42

I do not know whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my present position, and to feel my present feelings. If they can effect that, they will give me credit for meaning what I say, when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach. And, indeed, I think I shall scarcely attempt a sermon, but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bullion rather than coin; the block from the quarry, and not the statue from the chisel. It appears that the one subject upon which men preached in the apostolic age was Jesus Christ. The tendency of man, if left alone, is continually to go further and further from God, and the Church of God itself is no exception to the general rule. For the first few years, during and after the apostolic era, Christ Jesus was preached, but gradually the Church departed from the central point, and began rather to preach ceremonials and church offices than the person of their Lord. So has it been in these modern times: we also have fallen into the same error, at least to a degree, and have gone from preaching Christ to preaching doctrines about Christ, inferences which may be drawn from his life, or definitions which may be gathered from his discourses. We are not content to stand like angels in the sun; our fancies disturb our rest and must needs fly on the sunbeams, further and further from the glorious source of light. In the days of Paul it was not difficult at once, in one word, to give the sum and substance of the current theology. It was Christ Jesus. Had you asked anyone of those disciples what he believed, he would have replied, "I believe Christ." If you had requested him to show you his Body of Divinity, he would have pointed upward, reminding you that divinity never had but one body, the suffering and crucified human frame of Jesus Christ, who ascended up on high. To them, Christ was not a notion refined, but unsubstantial; not an historical personage who had left only the savour of his character behind, but whose person

was dead; to them he was not a set of ideas, not a creed, nor an incarnation of an abstract theory; but he was a person, one whom some of them had seen, whose hands they had handled, nay, one of whose flesh they had all been made to eat, and of whose blood they had spiritually been made to drink. Christ was substance to them, I fear he is too often but shadow to us. He was a reality to their minds; to us—though, perhaps, we would scarcely allow it in so many words—rather a myth than a man; rather a person who was, than he who was, and is, and is to come—the Almighty.

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant us grace to carry out that proposition, from which no Christian can dissent), I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there (pointing to the baptistery) substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ; but if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply: "It is Jesus Christ." My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way; but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel; who is in himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.

This afternoon I will try to describe the subject, Christ Jesus; then, secondly, to speak for a little while upon its comprehensiveness; then to enlarge upon sundry of its excellencies; and conclude by testing its power.

I. First, then, the SUBJECT.

They continued both to teach and preach Jesus Christ. To preach Jesus Christ aright we must preach him in his infinite and indisputable Godhead. We may be attacked by philosophers, who will either make him

no God at all, or one constituted temporarily and, I must add, absurdly a God for a season. We shall have at once upon us those who view Christ as a prophet, as a great man, as an admirable exemplar; we shall be assailed on all sides by those who choose rather to draw their divinity from their own addled brains than from the simplicity of Holy Writ; but what mattereth this? We must reiterate again and again the absolute and proper deity of Christ; for without this we are in the position of those described by the prophet:—"Their tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast" and soon will our enemies prevail against us, and the prey of a great spoil shall be taken. Take away the divinity of Christ from the gospel, and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest. Remove the Word who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, and the Jachin and Boaz of the temple are overturned. Without a divine Saviour, your gospel is a rope of sand; a bubble; a something less substantial than a dream. If Christ were not God, he was the basest of impostors. He was either one of two things, very God of very God, or else an arch-deceiver of the souls of men, for he made many of them believe he was God, and brought upon himself the consequences of what they called blasphemy; so that if he were not God, he was the greatest deceiver that ever lived. But God he is; and here, in this house, we must and will adore him. With the multitude of his redeemed we will sing:

"Jesus is worthy to receive,  
Honour and power divine,  
And blessings more, than we can give  
Be Lord for ever thine."

To preach Christ, however, we must also preach his true humanity. We must never make him to be less manlike because he was perfectly divine. I love that hymn of Hart which begins—

"A man there was—a real man,  
Who once on Calvary died."

"Real man!" I think we do not often realize that manhood of Christ; we do not see that he was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; feeling,

thinking, acting, suffering, doing, just like ourselves—one of our fellows, and only above us because he is "exalted with the oil of gladness above his fellows." We must have a human Christ, and we must have one of real flesh and blood too; not of shadows or filmy fancies. We must have one to whom we can talk, one with whom we can walk, one

"Who in his measure feels afresh  
What every member bears;"

who is so intimately connected with us in ties of blood, that he is as with us one, the head of the family, first-born among many brethren. I am never more glad than when I am preaching a personal Christ. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ, or an experimental Christ, as some good men make him to be according to the temper of their minds, I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We want a personal Christ. This has been a power to the Romish church—a power which they have used for ill, but always a power; they have had a personal Christ, but then it has either been a baby Christ in his mother's arms, or else a dead Christ upon the cross. They never reached the force of a real full-grown Christ, one who not only lived and suffered, but who died and rose again, and sits at the right hand of God, the Head of the Church, the one ruler of men. Oh! we must bring out more and more clearly each day the real personality of the Redeemer in his complex person. Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach him. If we are wrong in many points, if we be but right here, this will save our ministry from the flames; but if we be wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of him.

But, further, to preach Christ Jesus, it is absolutely necessary we should preach him as the only mediator between God and man. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of living saints for sinners, never for a moment denying that every man is bound to make supplication for all ranks and conditions of men, yet must we have it that the only mediator in the heavens, and the only direct intercessor with God, is the man Christ Jesus. Nay, we must not be content with making him the only mediator; we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by him. We must not only have him for the priest, but we must have him for

the altar, the victim, and the offerer too. We must learn in full the meaning of that precious text—"Christ is all." We must not see a part of the types here and a part there, but all gathered up in him, the one door of heaven, the one crimson way by which our souls approach to God. We must not allow that approaches can be made in human strength, by human learning, or by human effort; but in him and through him, and by him, and in dependence upon him, must all be done between God and man. We have no wings, my brethren, with which to fly to heaven; our journey thither must be on the rounds [rungs] of Jacob's ladder. We cannot approach God by anything we have, or know, or do. Christ crucified, and he alone, must lift us up to God.

And more, we must preach Christ in the solitariness of his redemption work. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of his righteousness to be stained by the patch-work of our filthy rags. We must not submit that the precious blood of his veins should be diluted by any offering of ours co-acting therewith, for our salvation. He hath, by one sacrifice, for ever put away sin. We shall never preach Christ unless we have a real atonement. There be certain people nowadays who are making the atonement, first a sort of compromise, and the next step is to make the atonement a display of what ought to have been, instead of the thing which should have been. Then, next, there are some who make it to be a mere picture, an exhibition, a shadow—a shadow, the substance of which they have not seen. And the day will come, and there are sundry traces of it here and there, in which in some churches the atonement shall be utterly denied, and yet men shall call themselves Christians, while they have broken themselves against the corner-stone of the entire system. I have no kith nor kin, nor friendship, nor Christian amity, with any man whatever who claims to be a Christian and yet denies the atonement. There is a limit to the charity of Christians, and there can be none whatever entertained to the man who is dishonest enough to occupy a Christian pulpit and to deny Christ. It is only in the Christian church that such a thing can be tolerated. I appeal to you. Was there ever known a Buddhist acknowledged in the temple of Buddha who denied the basis doctrine of the sect? Was there ever known a Mahomadan Imaum who was sanctioned in the mosque while he cried down the Prophet? It remains for Christian churches only to have in their midst men who can

bear the name of Christian, who can even venture to be Christian teachers, while they slander the Deity of him who is the Christian's God, and speak lightly of the efficacy of his blood who is the Christian's atonement. May this deadly cancer be cut out root and branch; and whatever tearing of the flesh there may be, better cut it out with a jagged knife than suffer to exist because no lancet is to be found to do it daintily. We must have, then, Christ in the efficacy of his precious blood as the only Redeemer of the souls of men, and as the only mediator, who, without assistance of ours, has brought us to God and made reconciliation through his blood.

Our ministry will scarcely be complete unless we preach Christ as the only lawgiver and Rabbi of the Church. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ at once of his proper position as the only teacher of the church. Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the decree of the church, or the vote of a synod, apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which he occupies in the Christian church, as the teacher in the great Christian school, as the Rabbi, and the only Rabbi, of our faith. God forbid that we should hold a single truth except on his authority. Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. You refer me to the writings of Doctor this and Doctor the other: what are these? The words of Christ, these are truth, and these are wisdom. You bring me authority from the practice of a church three or four centuries removed from the crucifixion as the proof of the existence of a certain ceremony and the righteousness of certain ecclesiastical offices. What is your proof worth? If Christ hath not specially ordained it, and if he hath not commanded his people to obey it, of what value is any rite whatever? We acknowledge Christ as ordaining all things for his church, and presenting that church with a finished code of laws, from which any deviation is a sin, and to which any addition is a high crime. Any church officer who is not ordained of Christ occupies an office which he ought to resign. Any person who practices a ceremony for which he has not scriptural authority should renounce it; and any man who preaches a doctrine for which he has not Christ as his certifier, should not demand for it the faith of men.

But I fear there are times coming when the minister will not be true to his duty unless he goes further, and preaches Christ as the sole King of the Church. There has been a disposition on the part of the state, especially with regard to the Free Church of Scotland, to exercise power and judgement over church decrees. No king, no queen that ever lived, or can live, has any authority whatever over the church of Christ. The church has none to govern and rule over her but her Lord and her King. The church can suffer, but she cannot yield; you may break her confessors alive upon the wheel, but she, in her uprightness, will neither bend nor bow. From the sentence of our church there is no appeal whatever on earth. To the court of heaven a man may appeal if the sentence of the church be wrong, but to Caesar never. Neither the best nor the worst of kings or queens may ever dare to put their finger upon the prerogative of Christ as the head of the church. Up, church of God! If once there be any laws of man passed to govern thee, up, dash them in pieces! Let us each catch up the war cry, and uplift the lion standard of the tribe of Judah; let us challenge the kings of the earth and say, "Who shall rouse him up?" The church is queen above all queens, and Christ her only King. None have jurisdiction or power in the church of Christ save Jesus Christ himself. If any of our acts violate the civil laws, we are men and citizens, and we acknowledge the right of a state to govern us as individuals. None of us wish to be less subjects of the realm because we are kings and priests unto God. But as members of Christian churches we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian church can never be reversed by the civil power, or by any state act, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged. We must have, as Christ's church, a full recognition of his imperial rights, and the day will come when the state will not only tolerate us as a mere society, but admit that as we profess to be the church of Christ, we have a right by that very fact to be self-governing, and never to be interfered with in any sense whatever, so far as our ecclesiastical affairs are concerned.

Christ must be preached, then, and exalted in all these respects, or else we have not preached a full Christ; but I go one step further. We have not yet mounted to the full height of our ministry unless we learn to preach Christ as the King of kings. He has an absolute right to the entire



dominion of this world. The Christian minister, as ordained of God to preach, has a perfect right in God's name to preach upon any subject touching the Lord's kingdom, and to rebuke and exhort even the greatest of men. Sometimes I have heard it said, when we have canvassed the acts of an emperor or senator, "These are politics;" but Christ is King of politics as well as theology. "Oh! but"—say they—"what have you to do with what the state does?" Why, just this: that Christ is the head of all states, and while the state has no authority over the church, yet Christ himself is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Oh, that the church would put her diadem upon her head, and take her right position! We are not slaves. The church of God is not a grovelling corporation bound for ever to sit upon a dunghill; never queen was so fair as she, and never robe so rich as the purple which she wears. Arise, O Church! arise, the earth is thine; claim it. Send out thy missionary, not as a petitioner to creep at the feet of princes, but as an ambassador for God to make peace between God and man. Send him out to claim the possession which belongs to thee, and which God has given to thee to be thine for ever and ever, by a right which kings may dispute, but which one day every one of them shall acknowledge.

The fact is, we must bring Christ himself back into camp once more. It is of little use having our true Jerusalem swords, and the shields, and the banners, and the trumpets, and the drums; we want the King himself in the midst of us. More and more of a personal Christ is the great lack of the time. I would not wish for less doctrine, less experience, or less practice, but more of all this put into Christ, and Christ preached as the sum and substance of it all.

II. But, secondly, I am now to speak, for a short time, upon the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT which the text announces.

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it be true, the absence and lack of a something essentially necessary for the church's success. Where is the preacher of Christ out of these? I propound this, that if a man be found a preacher of

Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental, and practical. The doctrinal preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful; God constitutes him a barrier against the innovations of the times: he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them, and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon. But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way, and there should be none others at all, what would be the effect? See it in our Baptist churches about one hundred and fifty years ago. They were all sound and sound asleep. Those doctrines had preached them into a lethargy, and had it not been for some few who started up and proposed the missions for the heathen, and who found but little sympathy at first, the church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be hard with any, but there are some brethren still whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal, and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness. They learn to contend not only earnestly for the faith, but savagely for it. Certainly we admire their earnestness, and we thank God for their soundness, but we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a somewhat else which might tone down their severity and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints than the division and discord which they labour to create.

Again, I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the experimental. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries this one is the most useful, he who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock, and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean, when all else is put aside to make room for experience? There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style; "Except thou be flayed alive by the law; except thou art daily feeling the utter rottenness of thine heart; except thou art a stranger to full assurance, and dost always doubt and fear; except thou abidest on the dunghill and dost scrape thyself with a potsherd, thou art no child of God." Who told you that? This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers, and the effect has been just this. Men have come to think the deformities of God's people to be their beauty. They are like certain courtiers of the reign of Richard III,

who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump too. And there be many who, because a minister preaches of doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear too; and then that which is both uncomfortable to themselves and dishonouring to God comes to be the very mark of God's people. This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string and on that alone; the tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savoury state, in which there is not a bit of manliness or might, or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption outswells communion, and the savour is not the perfume of the king's ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart.

Take also the practical preacher; who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent object, and is in his way an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under she practical preacher; sit under him all the year round and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, "the same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do." There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him, "Oh," says he, "I came here to find out what Christ could do for me, and I have only been told what I must do for myself" Now this it a great evil, and persons who sit under such a ministry become lean, starvelling things. I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers, who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger than upon the horse's back. Let them feed the people with food convenient for them, and they will be practical enough; but all practice and no promise, all exhortation and no sound doctrine, will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why just this: to show you that there is one minister who can preach all this, without the dangers of any one of the others, but with the excellencies of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world who preaches Christ. If he preaches Christ's person he must preach doctrine. If I preach Christ I must preach him as the covenant head of his people, and how far am I then from the doctrine of election? If I preach Christ I

must preach the efficacy of his blood, and how far am I removed then from the great doctrine of an effectual atonement? If I preach Christ I must preach the love of his heart, and how can I deny the final perseverance of the saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great Head and King, how far am I removed from divine Sovereignty? Must I not, if I preach Christ personally, preach his doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance rather, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ fully will never be lax in doctrine. And what better experience can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints, preach his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; for the true sufferings of the saints are in fellowship with him. If you would preach their joys, preach his resurrection, his ascension, and his advent; you are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ; for did not he say, "My joy shall be in them that their joy may be full"? And what better practice can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue he is the pattern; of the perfection of human character he is the very mirror; of everything that is holy and of good report, he is the abiding incarnation. He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher, who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ? Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ? I think that all the excellencies of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who can preach Christ every day in the week, while there will not be any of the evils connected with the other forms of preaching.

III. I shall now pass onto notice some of the surpassing excellencies of the subject

First, he will always have a blessed variety in his preaching. In Australia I have heard that the only change for the backwoodsmen is to have one day damper [unleavened cake baked in wood ashes), tea, and bread; the next day, bread, damper, and tea; and the next day, tea, bread, and damper. The only variety some ministers give, is one Sunday to have depravity,

election, and perseverance, and the next Sunday, election, perseverance, and depravity. There are many strings to the harp of the gospel. There are some brethren who are so rightly charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them, that they never meddle with any of the other strings; the cobwebs hang on the rest, while these five are pretty well worn out. It is always pretty much the same thing from the first of January to the last of December. Their organ has very few keys, and upon these they may make a very blessed variety, but I think not a very extensive one. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. He is all manner of precious perfume, myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. He is all sorts of music, he is everything that is sweet to the ear; he is all manner of fruits; there is not one dainty in him but many. This tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits. He is all manner of raiment; he is golden raiment for beauty, he is the warm raiment for comfort, he is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ, and he that hath Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where are no two rocks alike, and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner, and no two trees grow in precisely the same form. Any other subject you may preach upon till your hearers feel satiety; but with Christ for a subject, you may go on, and on, and on, till the sermon swells into the eternal song, and you begin to sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, that it suits all sorts of people. Are there rebels present? Preach Christ; it will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better, to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus. Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ. Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears. Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Land in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilised men, move off to another post and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France, the cross is adapted to all. We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am

sure Christ will suit them. If they are low, if they be true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit them. No Christians will reject such meat as this; only prepare it, and with a hot heart serve it up on the table, and they will be satisfied and feed to the full. So that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

IV. But more than this, I must add, and this will bring me to my last point, for my time flies—there is a power about this subject when it is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, which is not found in any other. My brethren, what power there is in this subject to promote the union of the people of God! There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. "I do not like him," says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him, and you will. There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue; he cannot bear Independency, or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. "Well," says one, "I like him a little better; but I do not suppose we shall get on very well." Stop! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there; he is a very strong Calvinist. "Humph," says one, "I shall not admire him." Stop, stop! Now, here are these three men; let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet there will be a magnificent quarrel. There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical; while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy. But, my dear brethren, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all, and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character. That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert. How he loved the doornails of the church! I think he would scarce have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman, to the very centre of the marrow of his bones; but what a Christian! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted, and mean to quote a hundred times more: "How sweetly doth my Master's sound," and so forth. I hear a knock at the door. "Who is that?" "Why, it is a very strong churchman." "Do not show him in; I am at prayer; I cannot pray with him." "Oh, but it is George Herbert!" "Oh, let him in, let him in! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Walk in, Mr. Herbert; we are right glad to see you; you are our dear companion; your hymns have made us glad."

But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus! He has written all Song of Solomon over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together, and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin; and I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in heaven, and are sitting side by side. Well, but then we mentioned another; who was that high Calvinist? He was the man who was called the Leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker. Now, I am sure, George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker, and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert, and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. "No, no," he would say, "your black prelacy I hate." But look at Hawker, there is a sweet spirit; he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ, and begins to write about his Lord at once "Precious Immanuel—precious Jesus." Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again, and again. I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night when he was about to go:—"Where are you going to?" "Oh!" said he, "I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George's in the Borough." "Oh, go and hear him," he said; "he is a right good man, worth hearing. But there is this difference between him and me; my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum; but Dr. Hawker's is all plum." And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ. He was constantly preaching of his Master; and even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way: "What sayest thou? Wilt thou go with this man, and be married and espoused unto him? It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness.

My dear friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed. I see before me this afternoon members of all Christian

denominations; but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the Church prove, and exhibit, and assert, and maintain her unity; but the less Christ is preached, and the more of Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, the more of strife and division, and the less of true Christian fellowship.

We will only mention the power of the preaching of Christ upon the heart of sinners. There is a person, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn:

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

"Ah," said he "does Jesus love my soul? Then how vile I have been to neglect him." There are scores whose conversion is distinctly and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the preaching of Christ. I think you will find the most fertile sermons have always been the most Christly sermons. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it oftener happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls, and as Christ is a root out of a dry ground, so this finds root for itself even in dry, hard, stony hearts. We ought to preach the law, we ought to thunder out the threatenings of God, but they must never be the main topic. Christ, Christ, Christ, if we would have men converted. Do you want to convince yonder careless one? Tell him the story of the cross. Under God it will arrest his attention and awaken his thoughts. Would you subdue the carnal affections of yonder profligate? Preach the love of Christ, and that new love shall uproot the old. Would you bind up yonder broken heart? Bring forth Christ, for in him there is a cordial for every fear. Christ is preached and we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice "for he is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." Judge not, my dear brethren, any man's ministry. The world has too often condemned the man whom God intended to honour. Say not of such an one "He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude." Say not of another that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high. Every man in his own order. If that man preach Christ, whether he be Paul, or Apollos, or



Cephas, we wish him God speed; for God will bless the Christ he preaches, and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry. I must even frankly admit the truth of many a criticism that has been uttered on my ministry, but I know it has been successful, and under God it has been, because I have sought to preach Christ. I say that without boasting or egotism, because if I had not done so I had no right so be a minister of Christ at all, and as I claim to be God's minister, I will and must declare it, whatever I have not preached, I have preached Christ, and into whatever mistakes I have fallen, I have sought to point to his cross, and say, "Behold the way to God." And if ye see others preaching Christ, be not you their foe. Pray for them; bear them in your arms before God; their errors may yet be outgrown, if they preach Christ; but if not, I care not what their excellency may be, the excellency shall die and expire like sparks that go out in darkness. They have not the fuel of the flame, for they have not Christ Jesus as the substance of their ministry.

May I entreat, in closing, your earnest prayer, each one of you, that in this house as well as in all the places of worship round about, Christ may evermore be preached, and I may add my own sincere desire that this place may become a hissing and the abode of dragons, and this pulpit be burned with fire, or ever any other gospel be preached here than that which we have received of the holy apostles of God; and of which Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone. Let me have your incessant prayers. May God speed every minister of Christ. But where there is so large a field of labour may I claim your earnest and constant intercessions, that where Christ is lifted up, men may be drawn to hear, and afterwards drawn to believe, that they may find Christ the Saviour of our souls. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "Repent and be converted, every one of you," said Peter. Yet again said Paul to the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God give us grace to believe, and unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **Five Fears**

Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. - Ecclesiastes 8:12.

I have heard it sometimes said by wicked men, when they would arraign the justice of the Most High, that it is unjust that God should condemn men for the use of the powers which he himself has given them. This most subtle evil has often grieved the hearts of those who are weak and ignorant, and have not seen its untruthfulness - for to speak plainly of it, it is a gross lie. God does not condemn men for the use of the powers he has given them; he condemns them for the misuse of those powers; not for employing them, but for employing them as they ought not to employ them; not for thinking, not for speaking, not for doing, but for thinking, speaking, and doing, contrary to his law God damneth no man for the use of the powers which he hath given him, let that be again repeated - but he doth condemn them for the abuse of those powers, and for their impudence in daring to turn those powers, which he hath given them, for his honor, against his service, and against his throne Now, my friends, there is no power which God hath given us, which may not be employed for God. I believe that David uttered a great truth, as well as a great exhortation to himself, when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name." There is nothing in man that God has not there, which may not be employed in God's service. Some may ask me whether anger can be brought in. I answer, yes. A good man may serve God by being angry against sin; and to be angry against sin is a high and holy thing. You may ask me, perhaps, whether ridicule can be employed. I answer, yes. I believe we may even rightly employ it in the preaching of God's word. I know this, I always intend to use it; and if by a laugh I can make men see the folly of an error better than in any other way, they shall laugh, and laugh here, too; for ridicule is to be used in God's service; and every power that God hath implanted in man - I will make no exception, - may be used for God's service, and for God's honor. What man hath gotten for himself by the fall, cannot be employed to serve God with, we cannot bring before God Adam's robbery, to be a sacrifice to the Almighty, nor can our own carnal and sinful passions honor the Most High, but there are natural powers which God hath conferred, and none of these are in themselves sinful. I would have them,

therefore, employed for the Master. Yea, even those powers with which it seems impossible to worship, such as the powers of assimilation, eating, and drinking, may be brought to honor God; for what says the Apostle? - "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Jesus Christ."

Now, you will notice that fear may be yoked into the service of God. True fear, not fearing, but believing, saves the soul; not doubt, but confidence, is the strength and the deliverance of the Christian. Still, fear, as being one of those powers which God hath given us, is not in itself sinful. Fear may be used for the most sinful purposes; at the same time it may be so ennobled by grace, and so used for the service of God, that it may become the very grandest part of man. In fact, Scripture has honored fear, for the whole of piety is comprehended in these words, "Fear God;" "the fear of the Lord;" "them that fear Him." These phrases are employed to express true piety, and the men who possess it. Fear, I have said, may ruin the soul, alas! it has ruined multitudes. O Fear, thou art the rock upon which many a ship hath been wrecked. Many a soul hath suffered spiritual destruction through thee, but then it hath been not the fear of God, but the fear of man. Many have rushed against the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, and defied God, in order to escape the wrath of feeble man. Many through fear of worldly loss have brought great guilt into their consciences; some through fear of ridicule and laughter have not had the boldness to follow the right, and so have gone astray and been ruined. Yea, and where fear doth not work utter destruction it is capable of doing much damage to the spirit. Fear hath paralysed the arm of the most gigantic Christian, stopped him in his race, and impeded him in his labors. Faith can do anything, but fear, sinful fear, can do just nothing at all, but even prevent faith from performing its labors. Fear hath made the Christian to sorrow, both by night and day, a cankering fear lest his wants should not be provided for, and his necessities supplied, has driven the Christian to unworthy thoughts; and distrustful, doubting fear hath made him dishonor God, and prevented his sucking the honey out of the promises. Fear hath kept many a child of God from doing his duty, from making a bold profession; hath brought bondage into his spirit. Fear misused, thou art the Christian's greatest curse, and thou art the sinner's ruin. Thou art a sly serpent, creeping amongst the thorns of sin, and

when thou art allowed to twist thyself around manhood, thou dost crush it in thy folds, and poison it with thy venom. Nothing can be worse than this sinful fear; it hath slaughtered its myriads and sent thousands to hell. But yet it may seem a paradox; fear, when rightly employed, is the very brightest state of Christianity, and is used to express all piety, comprehended in one emotion. "The fear of God" is the constant description which the Scripture gives of true religion.

And now, beloved, I shall want you this morning to have some little patience with me whilst I try to go after certain fearing souls whose fear is of the right kind, even a fear which gendereth salvation, but who through it are now suffering some degree of torment, and are wishing to be delivered from it. An old Puritan says, "Jesus Christ would shake hands with a man that had the palsy." I must try and do the same this morning. Some of you have the palsy of fear. I want to come after you and say unto you, "Fear not;" to bid you to be of good cheer, because God would comfort you. There are five different kinds of fear, that persons are laboring under which I would now endeavor to address.

I. There is, first, THE FEAR CAUSED BY AN AWAKENING CONSCIENCE. This is the lowest grade of godly fear; here all true piety takes its rise. By nature, the sinner does not dread the wrath of God; he thinks sin a little thing; he looks upon its pleasures, and forgets its penalty, he dares the Almighty to the war, and lifts his puny arm against the Eternal. No sooner, however, is he awakened by God's Spirit, than fear takes possession of his heart, the arrows of the Almighty drink up his spirit, the thunders of the law roll in his ears; he feels his life to be uncertain, and his body frail, He dreads death, because he knows that death would be to him the prelude of destruction; he dreads life, for life itself is intolerable, when the wrath of God is poured out into his soul. Many of you who are now before me have passed through that dreadful ordeal of suffering under a sense of the wrath of God. We, my brethren, shall never forget, to our dying day, that hour of desperate grief when first we discovered our lost estate. By the preaching of the Word, by the reading of the Scriptures, by prayer, or by some Providence, we were led to look within; we discovered the evil of our hearts, and we heard how terribly God would punish the transgressor. Do you not remember how

we started from our beds in the morning, having slept uneasily, and bowed our knees in prayer, and prayed until the hot sweat ran down our brow; but rose without a hope that we had been heard? Do you not recollect how, in our business, we were sometimes so absent in mind, that those who were round about us thought that we must have been bereaved of our wits? Do you not well recollect how the best dainties of our meals seemed to have the bitterness of wormwood in them, and the sweetest draughts were mingled with gall; how all day lone we sorrowed, and went to our bed at night with another prayer, still as full of agony and still as hopeless; and by night we could not sleep, but dreamed of the wrath to come, saw dreams more horrible than we had dreamed before; each night and day the wrath of God seemed to increase, and our pangs and agonies became more terrible? Oh, we shall never forget it; those of us who have passed through the same will never let that era be forgotten, for the time of its beginning was the time of our conversion, and the time of its end was the time of our salvation. Have I any here who are in this same state this morning? I am coming after you, and in coming after you I proclaim the words of my text, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Sinner, it shall be well with thee if thou art now made to fear the wrath of God on account of thy sin; if God the Spirit hath poured forth the vials of Almighty wrath into thy soul, so that thou art cast down and sore vexed. Think not thou shalt be destroyed; it shall be well with thee. Let me comfort thee now, whilst thou art suffering these things, remember that what thou sufferest is that which all God's people have had to suffer in a measure. Many poor hearts come to me when I am sitting to see the anxious ones, and at other times, and they tell me they are in such deep distress; surely never anyone felt as they feel. And when I begin to unfold to them the experience of all saints, and tell them how it is a well-trodden path which almost every traveler to heaven has had to tread, they stand astonished, and think it cannot be so. I tell thee sinner, that thy deepest woes have been felt by some one, even more keenly than thou feelest them now. Thou sayest, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing." Why, man, there have been some that have sunk far deeper than thou hast sunk. Thou art up to thy ancles; I have known some to have been up to the loins, and there have been some that have been covered over their very heads so that they could say, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." Your distresses are very

painful, but they are not singular, others have had to endure the same. Be comforted, it is not a desert island; others have been there too; and if they have passed through this, and won the crown, thou shalt pass through it, and inherit yet the glory of the believer on the breast of Christ.

But I will tell thee something else to comfort thee; I will put this question to thee - Wouldst thou wish to go back and become what thou once wast? Thy sins are now so painful, that thou canst scarce eat, or drink, or sleep. There was a time when thy sins never haunted thee, when thou couldst drink and may with Satan and with sin as merrily as anyone. Come, wouldst thou like to be as thou wast then? "No," I hear thee say, "no; my Master, my God, grieve me more, if so it pleaseth thee, but do not let me be hardened any more." Ask the poor strickened conscience, in the first agonies and throes of his grief, whether he would like to be a hardened sinner? "No," he says; and when he hears the blasphemers swear against God, the tear is in his eye; he says, "Lord, I thank thee for my miseries, if they deliver me from hardness of heart. I can extol thee for my agonies, if they save me from such dire presumption, such rebellion against thee." Well, then, be of good cheer, your condition, you see, is not the worst of all; there is a worse state yet. Oh, it thou hast come so far, hope thou in Christ, thou shalt come further yet. But the great consolation is this, Jesus Christ died for thee. If God the Holy Ghost hath shown thee that thou art dead in sin, and if he hath revealed to thee the desperate character of thine iniquity, and broken thee in pieces with penitence on account of thy guilt - hear me, I speak not now at hap-hazard, I speak with God's authority - Jesus Christ died for thee; yes, for thee, thou vilest of the vile. I am no general redemptionist, I believe Jesus Christ died for as many as will be saved; I do not believe he died in vain for any man alive. I have always believed that Christ was punished instead of men. Now, if he were punished in the stead of all men, I could see no justice in God punishing men again after having punished Christ for them. I hold and believe - and, I think, on Scriptural authority, that Jesus Christ died for all those who believe or will believe; and he was punished in the stead of all those who feel their need of a Saviour, and lay hold on him. The rest reject him, despise him, sin against God, and are punished for their sine. But those who are redeemed, having been blood-bought, shall not be lost. Christ's blood is too precious to have been shed for men who are damned.

It is too awful a thing to think of the Saviour standing in a sinner's stead, and then that sinner after all having to bear his own iniquities; I can never indulge a thought which appears to be so unrighteous to God, and so unsafe to men. All that the Saviour bought he shall have, all that his heavenly Father hath given him, he says, shall come unto him. Now here is something solid for thee, poor soul. I ask again, dost thou know and feel thyself to be lost and ruined? Then the Saviour bought thee, and will have thee; then he was punished for thee and thou never wilt be punished again; then he hung upon the cross for thee that thou mightest not perish. For thee there is no hell, so far as thou art concerned. The eternal lake is quenched; the dungeons of hell are broken open, their bars are cut in sunder. Thou art free; no damnation can ever seize thee, no devils can ever drag thee to the pit. Thou art redeemed, and thou art saved. "What!" sayest thou, "I redeemed! Why, sir, I am full of sin." It is the very reason why thou art redeemed. "But I feel myself to be the guiltiest of all the human race." Yes, and that is just the evidence that Christ died for thee. He says himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you have got abundance of good works, and think you can go to heaven by them, you will perish; but if you know your guilt, and confess it - it is not my affirmation, but the affirmation of the Scriptures - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," says the Apostle, "I am chief." Lay hold on that, poor soul: and then I repeat to thee the text, "Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." It shall be well with thee yet, and black though thou art, thou shalt one day sing among the bloodwashed ones in glory everlasting. That is the first stage of fearing God; we shall now proceed to another.

II. There are many who have believed, and are truly converted, who have a fear which I may call THE FEAR OF ANXIETY. They are afraid that they are not converted. They are converted, there is no doubt of it. Sometimes they know they are so themselves, but, for the most part, they are afraid. There are some people in the world who have a preponderance of fear in their characters it seems as if their mind, from its peculiar constitution, had a greater aptitude for the state of fear than for any other state. Why, even in temporal matters they are always fearing; and, when these poor souls get converted, they are always afraid that they are not so.

First, they will tell you they are afraid they never repented enough; the work in their hearts, they say, was not deep; it was just superficial surface-ploughing, and never entered into their souls. Then they are quite sure they never came to Christ aright, they think they came the wrong way. How that can be no one knows, for they could not come at all except the Father drew them; and the Father did not draw them the wrong way, Still they hold that they did not come aright; then if that idea is knocked on the head, they say they do not believe aright; but when that is got rid of, they say, if they were converted they would not be the subject of so much sin. They say they can trust Christ, but they are afraid they do not trust him aright; and they always do, what you may, come back to the old condition; they are always afraid. And now, what shall I say to these good souls? Why, I will say this, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Not only those who believe, but those who fear, have got a promise, I would to God that they had more faith; I would that they could lay hold on the Saviour, and had more assurance, and even attain unto a perfect confidence; but if they cannot shall I utter a word that would hurt them? God forbid; "Surely it shall be with even with them that fear God, with them that fear before him." There are some of these poor creatures who are the holiest and most heavenly minded people in all the world. I have seen men who, with poor, desponding spirits, have exhibited the most lovely graces. There has not been the blushing healthful beauty of the rose; but the lily hath its beauties, sickly though it seemeth, and these, though they be faint and weak, have eminently the graces of humility and meekness, of patience and endurance, and they practice more of meditation, more of self examination, more of repentance more of prayer, than any race of Christians alive. God forbid that I should vex their spirits: there are some of God's best children who always grow in the shade of fear, and can scarcely attain to so much as to say, "I know whom I have believed." Darkness suits them best, their eyes are weak, and much sunlight seems to blind them, they love the shadows; and though they thought they could sing, "I know my Saviour, I love him, and he loves me;" they go back again, and begin to groan in themselves, "Do I love the Lord; indeed, if it be so, why am I thus?"

Now, I am about to utter a great paradox - I believe that some of these



poor fearing people have got the greatest faith of anybody in the world; I have sometimes thought that great fear, great anxiety, must have great faith with it to keep the soul alive at all. See that man drowning, there - there is another in the water too, I see. He in the distance thinks he can swim: a plank is thrown to him; he believes himself to be in no danger of sinking. Well he clutches the plank very leisurely, and does not seem to grasp it firmly. But this poor creature here, he knows he cannot swim, he feels that he must soon sink Now put the means of escape near him, how desperately he clutches it; how he seems as if he would drive his fingers through the plank! He clutches it for life or death, that is his all, for he must perish if he is not saved by that. Now, in this case, he that fears the most believes the most; and I do think it is so sometimes with poor desponding spirits. They have the greatest fear of hell, and the greatest fear of themselves, and the greatest dread that they are not right. Oh, what a faith they must have, when they are enabled to throw themselves on Christ, and when they can but whisper to themselves "I think that he is mine" - "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear-before him."

But I want to comfort these poor souls a little. I do not think a minister does well in killing the lambs; for where would be the sheep next year if he should do so? But at the same time it is his business to make the lambs grow into sheep if he can. And you who are fearing, I would not say a word to hurt you, but I would say a word to comfort you if I could; I would remind you that you are not fit to judge of yourself. You have been just now examining yourself, and you came to the conclusion that you really are not a child of God. Now, you will not be offended with me, but I would not give one single farthing for your opinion of yourself. Why, I tell you, you have not any judgment. It is not long ago you were a base, presumptuous sinner, and then you thought yourself all right. I did not believe you then. Well, then you began to reform yourself. You practiced many good works, and thought, surely you were mending your pace to heaven then. Then I knew you were wrong. Now you are becoming a true believer in Christ, but you are very fearful, and you say you are not safe. I know you are; you are not fit to judge. I should not like to see you elevated to the bench; you would scarcely know how to deal with other men, for you would not know how to deal with yourself; and who is he

that can deal with himself? We sometimes think ourselves proud, and we are never more humble than when we feel that we are proud. At other times, we think ourselves to be wonderfully humble, and we are never more proud than then. We sometimes say within ourselves, "Now I think I am overcoming my corruptions;" that is just the time when they are about to attack us most severely. At another time we are crying, "Surely I shall be cut off," that is just the period when sin is being routed, because we are hating it the most and crying out the most against it. We are not qualified to fudge ourselves, our poor scales are so out of order, that they will never tell the truth. Now, then, just give up your own judgment, except thus far. Can you say that you "are a poor sinner and nothing at all, and that Jesus Christ is your all in all?" Then be comforted. You have no right to be anxious; you have no reason to be so. You could not say that if you had not been converted. You must have been quickened by grace, or else you would not be anxious at all; and you must have faith, or else you would not be able even to lay hold of Christ so much as to know your own nothingness and his all sufficiency. Poor soul! be comforted.

But shall I tell thee one thing? Dost thou know the greatest of God's people are often in the same condition as thou art now? "No, no," says the fearful soul, "I do not believe that, I believe that when persons are converted they never have any fear," and they look at the minister, and they say, "Oh, but if I could be but like that minister; I know he never has doubts and fears. Oh, if I could be like old deacon So-and-so - such a holy man how he prays! Oh, if I could feel like Mr. So-and-so, who calls to visit me, and talks to me so sweetly. They never doubt." Ah, that is because you do not know. Those whom you think to be the strongest, and are so in public, have their times of the greatest weakness, when they can scarcely know their own names in spiritual things. If one may speak for the rest, those of us who enjoy the greatest portions of assurance have times when we would give all the world to know ourselves to be possessors of grace; when we would be ready to sacrifice our lives if we might but have the shadow of a hope that we were in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, little one, if the giants go there, what wonder if the dwarfs must? What if God's favourite and chosen ones, what if his valiant men, the body guard of Christ, those men whose swords are on their thighs, and who stand up for the truth and are its champions - if they sometimes are weak, what

wonder if thou shouldst be weak? What if the heirs of salvation and the soldiers of the cross sometimes feel their knees feeble and their hands hang down and their hearts faint, what wonder if thou, who art less than the least of all saints shouldst sometimes be in trouble too? Oh, be of good cheer; fear will never kill anybody. "Doubts and fears," said an old preacher, once, "are like the toothache nothing more painful, but never fatal." They will often grieve us, but they will never kill us, they distress us much but they will never burn the soul. Fears even do good at times. Let me not however, praise them too much. I heard a preacher say, the other day, that fear was a good housekeeper. I said, "So I have heard, but I do not believe it. She never will keep a cupboard full; she is a good doorkeeper; she can keep beggars and thieves away; she is a good housedog to guard us and protect us in the night, and warn us of dangers, lest we fall into them." The fear of anxiety then, is a good fear. Take this promise - "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."

III. And now, my brethren, in the next place there is A FEAR WHICH WORKS CAUTION. When we get a little further advanced in the Christian life, our present state is not so much a matter of anxiety as our future state. We believe that we shall never totally fall from grace. We hold it as a cardinal doctrine of our religion that by no means will God ever leave his people or suffer them to perish. But we often think within ourselves, I am afraid lest I should bring dishonor on the cause of Christ; I am afraid lest, in some moment of temptation, I shall be left to go astray; I am afraid lest I should lose that hallowed peace and that delightful joy which it has been my privilege to enjoy, and shall yet go back into the world. God grant I may not prove to be a hypocrite, after all! Now, I have hundreds of persons just now in this place, who are feeling like this, and I will tell you one ill effect of this fear. These persons say, "I dare not join the church, because I am afraid I shall fall." A friend mentions to them that they hold it to be their duty, if they have believed, to make a profession of their faith in baptism. They say, "Well, I believe it to be my duty to partake of the two institutions of our Saviour; I ought to be buried with him in baptism unto death; I ought also, I know, to hold fellowship with him in the Lord's supper, but I dare not join the church; for suppose I should bring dishonor upon the cause, suppose I should

disgrace the church, what a sad thing it would be!" That fear is good, in itself. But do you think that you would not bring disgrace on Christ's cause as it is? You are always at the place of worship; you are never away. You were always looked upon as being one of the church, though you have not made a profession. Now, if you were to sin, would it not dishonor the church even now? You know your relatives and friends esteem you to be a Christian. You would scarce dishonor the church more if you were actually to join it; for you really are united with it. If you would be consistent, you must never go to the chapel any more. Just stop away; give up your seat; turn right down irreligious, and then you cannot dishonor the church. Do one or the other, but never think you will be saving Christ's church by dishonoring God, as you really are doing now. And then I will ask you this question, Where do you think a man is safest - in the paths of obedience, or in the paths of disobedience? Now you know you are disobedient; you are quite sure of that. Do you think you are safer where your wayward will leads you, or where God's Spirit points the way? And remember this, if you cannot trust God to keep you standing, you must have a poor faith indeed. If you cannot just risk that and be united with the church, and hope that Christ will keep you, then I fear you will have some terrible fall. If you do not join the church, you will bring far more disgrace upon it by being outside it, than you would have done if you had been united with it and had been kept. Ah, friends, I believe that union with the Christian church is often a means under God, of preserving men from sin; for then they think there is a bond upon them, and a sacred claim, and many of them are more careful what they do. And I trust there would be the same check upon you.

But now, I daresay that the poor creature who has been uttering this, thinks I am about to condemn her; and the poor man who has been talking so thinks I would cut him off and say he is no child of God. God forbid! My text belongs to him. You are afraid you will fall into sin - "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." If you should tell me you were not afraid of falling, I would not have you in the church for the world; you would be no Christian. All Christians, when they are in a right state, are afraid of falling into sin. Holy fear is the proper condition of a child of God. Even the most confident will not go into presumption. He that knows his love to the

Saviour, and his Saviour's love to him, is yet afraid lest he should dishonor him. If there be a man who has an assurance of such a kind, as to put fear out of the question, so that he is never afraid of sinning, I will tell him he has a satanic assurance, an assurance which came from Satan and not from God for the more assured we are of our own conversion, the more careful we shall be lest we should offend God, and the more fearful lest by word or look, or deed, we should grieve God's Holy Spirit. I love your fear, and love you too for it, you are my brother and sister in Jesus, if you can truly say that you fear lest you should sin. Seek then, my friends, to grow in this fear of caution, obtain more and more of it; and whilst thou dost not distrust the Saviour, learn to distrust thyself more and more every day.

IV. I shall not detain you many more minutes; I have only to notice in the next place the fear which I may call THE FEAR OF JEALOUSY. Strong love will usually promote jealousy. "Love is as strong as death;" then comes the next, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." We cannot love strongly without feeling some jealousy - I mean, not jealousy against the object of our love; for, "perfect love casteth out fear" - but jealousy against ourselves. "Oh what jealousy," says the Apostle, addressing the Corinthians, "what revenge," did grace work in you when you were first converted. The true believer, when he gets his Saviour in full possession, and in blissful communion, is so jealous lest any rival should intrude in his heart; he is afraid lest his dearest friend should get more of his heart than the Saviour has. He is afraid of his wealth; he trembles at his health, at his fame, at everything that is dear to him, lest it should engross his heart. Oh, how often does he pray, "My Lord, let me not be of a divided spirit; cast down each idol - self-will, self-righteousness." And I tell you the more he loves, the more he will fear lest he should provoke his Saviour by bringing a rival into his heart, and setting up an Antichrist in his spirit; so that fear just goes in proportion to love; and the bright love is congenial, and must walk side by side with the deepest jealousy and the profoundest fear. Seek, my brethren to know the meaning of communion, and you must know, then, the meaning of fear; for fear and communion must, to a great degree go together.

V. And now I will conclude by just mentioning that fear which is felt

WHEN WE HAVE HAD DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS. Did you never, in the silence of the night, look up and view the stars, feeding, like sheep, on the azure pastures of the sky? Have you never thought of those great worlds, far, far away, divided from us by almost illimitable leagues of space? Did you never, whilst musing on the starry heavens, lose yourself in thoughts of God; and have you never felt, at such a time, that you could say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." Have you never seen the craggy hills lift their summits to the skies? Have you never marked the tempests sailing o'er them, and seen the thunder-cloud burst upon the mountain, and heard the heavens shake beneath the tramp of the Most High, and seen the skies all glaring red with fire, when God hath sent his thunder-bolts abroad; and have you not trembled that God was there, and in other and happier seasons have you not in your chamber been so wrapt in devotion, have you not so manifestly known the presence of God that you were filled with trembling? Fear took hold upon you and made all your bones to shake, not because you dreaded God, but because you then saw some of his greatness. It is said of Moses, that when he saw the burning bush he feared to look upon God. God is so great a Being, that the rightly constituted mind must always fear when it approaches into his presence. The Eastern subject, when he came before his king, regarded him as a being so infinitely superior to himself, that even in the vestibule he began to shake, and as he neared the throne he began to totter and his cheek was blanched with fear. Like Esther, he would faint when he came before the king, so glorious was his majesty. And if it be so with earthly monarchs, how fearful must it be to come into the presence chamber of the King of kings, and to feel one's self near him! Why, I believe that even in heaven we shall have this kind of fear. Certainly the angels have it. They dare not look on God. They veil their faces with their wings, and whilst they cry aloud, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts yet they dare not view him. The very sight of him might destroy them, and they tremble at his presence. Now this kind of fear, if you have ever felt it, if it has been produced in your heart by contemplation of God, is a high and hallowed thing, and to you this promise is addressed - "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."

And now, might I go round again this morning - I cannot do it personally,

yet by my voice - to the poor trembling soul who is overcome with sin. Poor man, where art thou? Hath the devil got hold of thee, and have thy sins covered thee up, so that thou canst not see the face of the sun, and behold the light of mercy? Listen to me; you may never hope till you have left off hoping in yourself. You have never any right to believe, till you have nothing to believe in yourself. Until you have lost all, you have no right to take anything. But now, if you have lost all your own good works and righteousness, if you feel that there is no reason why you should be saved, that is the very reason why you should be. My Master bids me tell the naked to come to his heavenly wardrobe, and take his royal garment for their clothing. He bids me tell the hungry to haste away to his heavenly granaries, and feed upon the old corn of the kingdom to their very full. He bids me tell the thirsty that the river of life is broad and deep, and flows freely to all those who thirst after it. Now, sinner, if thou art sick of sin, and grieved at heart where thou standest, follow me in spirit in these words: "O Lord, I know my guilt, and I confess my misery. If thou dampest me to all eternity, thou wilt be just; but, O Lord, have mercy upon me, according to thy promise, which thou hast made in Christ Jesus, unto those who confess their faults." If that came from your heart, go out of that door, and sing all the way home, for you are a pardoned sinner. You shall never see death - the second death, the death of the soul. Go home to your chamber! let your heart burst itself in tears of thankfulness. Go, and there prostrate yourself, and bless God that he has enabled you to see that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner good. And then, "go your way; eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your head lack no oil, and your face no ointment; for God hath accepted you; and you have a right to be happy. Live cheerfully and joyfully all the days of your life, hereafter and for ever."

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## **Following Christ**

And Ittai answered the king, and said, as the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. - 2 Samuel 15:21

Some men have a very remarkable power of creating and sustaining friendship in others. David was a man brimming over with affection—a man, notwithstanding all his rough soldier-life, of an exceedingly tender heart—a man, I was about to say—the word was on my tongue—a man of vast humanity. I mean, there was a great deal of manhood about him. He was all that other men are, had suffered their sorrows, and had tasted their joys, and, there fore, I suppose it was that he had a large power of attraction about him, and brought others to himself.

But there is one Man more than man, whose attracting influence is greater than that of all men put together. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we see gentleness, meekness, and tenderest affection, and we see the most hearty sympathy with everything that belongs to manhood. Such a vast heart has the Master, such boundless, disinterested affection, such human sympathy; so near is he to every one of us in his life, and in his experiences, that he attracts the sons of men to himself, and when he is lifted up he draws men unto him, and afterwards, by the cords of his love, he draws them unto himself. It is in the hope that some here may feel the sweet attractions of Christ that I have selected this text, anxiously praying that some here may so give themselves to Christ s never to leave him: and that others who have already done may be confirmed in their solemn resolution that, in whatsoever place their Master, the Son of David, the King, shall be, there also will they be as his servants, whether in life or in death.

Now this resolution, if any here have formed it, and I know many have—this resolution that surely in what place the Lord Jesus shall be, whether in death or in life, even there will we, his servants, be, in the first place, is:  
—

I. A GOOD RESOLUTION—one which can be supported by abundant reasons.



Let me say, in opening out this assertion, that Jesus deserves of all who have really tasted of his grace such faithful service, such unswerving following in all cases and under all circumstances. Who else has ever done for us what Jesus has? Our mother brought us forth, but he has given to us a second birth. Our mother candled us upon her knee, but he has borne us all the days of old, and even to hoar hairs will he carry his people. We have had many kindnesses from friends, but never such love as Jesus showed when, we being his enemies, he yet redeemed us with his most precious blood. Think of these three words, and try to measure what they mean—Gethsemane—Gabbatha—Golgotha. Let those three words awaken your adoring memories. Gethsemane—with its garden and bloody sweat for you. Gabbatha—with its scourging, its mocking, its shame and spitting for you. Golgotha—with its cross and the five flowing wounds, and all the bitterness of the divine wrath, and the torment of death itself, for you. Men have been known to give away their lives cheerfully for some great military leader whose genius has commanded their admiration, but they were fools to throw their lives away, after all, for these men had done but little or nothing for them to make them their servants and slaves. But this Man, my brethren, if we had a thousand lives, and were to give them all, yet would deserve more of us, for he hath redeemed us from going down into the pit, saved us from flames that never shall be quenched, and from a pit that is darkness itself. By the eternal woe from which the blood of Christ hath uplifted us, let us, who believe that we have been redeemed from hell, consecrate ourselves for ever to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. His cross is despised; let us be despised with it, for he bore shame for us. His truth is counted a lie; let us be willing to be regarded as liars, for he had reproach cast on him. Sometimes to defend his cause has required the loss of all things; be it ours. if needs be, to lose all things for him who gave up all—and what an all that was!—the bliss of heaven, and a life itself for us, that he might redeem our souls. The deserts of Jesus are such that it would need an angel's tongue to tell them out, even though it were but in brief catalogue. Look at him in what he is himself as his Father's darling. Look at his character; was there ever such another? Survey the beauties of his person—were there ever such charms commingled before? Think of his life, and of his death, and of what he is doing still before the throne, and surely you will feel that it is but right

and just that, with Jesus, You should enter into the ship and, with him, sail the ocean over, be it rough or be it smooth.

Moreover, brethren, to keep close to Jesus Christ is right. It is in itself to keep close to integrity, for the Lord Jesus never stepped out of the right path. He never asks any of his followers to do anything which be a breach of the right, or which will make them turn aside from uprightness. If we could put our feet down exactly where his feet went down, even though we had to walk up to Calvary itself, it would be our duty so to do, for his path was perfect rectitude, and in him was no sin. We challenge heaven, with its omniscience, to detect a flaw in him. We challenge hell, with its malice, to discover in him an aught that is amiss. Lovers of the right and of the true, ask grace that you may be as he was. You cannot be more eminent for virtue than he. You cannot serve your God better. You cannot do better than keep close to every step that he has taken, and, whether in life or in death, to follow him. It is right, then, because he deserves it; it is right, again because in itself it is according to the eternal rules of equity.

And, my brethren, there is another argument why we should cleave to Jesus, and it is this—wherefore should we leave him? Can anybody suggest a reason why the lover of Christ should turn from him? Polyearch was asked that he should curse Christ, and he replied, "Wherefore should I curse him?" The assembly in the amphitheatre could give no answer to that; all hell could never give a reply to that. What hath he done, what hath he done that we should leave him? What can he have done, and what is there that the world can offer that would ever repay us for leaving him? Could we so false, so traitorous prove as to turn away from Christ, what should we gain? A little pleasure, gone in a moment, like thorns that crackle beneath the pot. What should we lose, my brethren? We should lose the joy of life; we should lose our support in tribulation; we should lose our hope in death; we should lose heaven, to inherit nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever. I cannot conceive a bribe heavy enough to weigh against him; I cannot imagine an honour bright enough to compare with him. I cannot conceive a disgrace that can be black enough to compare with the disgrace of deserting him. The silver mine of Demas is a poor reward for selling his Master. All the wealth of India, could it be poured into one's lap, were but a mockery of a soul that damned itself by

casting away its confidence in Christ. To whom should we go, Master; to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. To leave Christ would be the meanest thing of which any could be capable. I suppose the devil himself, with all that he has ever done, has never been able to compass a wickedness that would equal the wickedness, if it were possible, of a truly gracious soul deliberately deserting Jesus for the world, for such a soul knows the hollowness of this world's joys; such a soul knows something of the sweetness of Jesus; such a spirit has been with him, and has learned of him, has had the enlightenments of his grace, has learned the faithfulness of his promise and the love of his heart. Oh! could such a thing be, could the Lord's grace so utterly leave a believer that he should turn out an apostate after all, there is need to dig another hell, as much lower than hell as hell is lower than the earth; there is need to kindle yet more furious flames; seven times hotter might the furnace be heated for such an apostate. Glory be to God, it shall not be.

"Grace will complete what grace begins,  
To save from sorrows and from sins  
The work which wisdom undertakes,  
Eternal mercy never forsakes."

But I speak thus to let you see how reasonable how abundantly necessary it is that we should cling close to Christ in life and death, and that where he is there we should be. There is no need to reason further, as the time is brief, and so let us notice now, in the second place, that:—

II. THIS RESOLUTION, THOUGH GOOD IN ITSELF, SHOULD BE MADE WITH GREAT DELIBERATION, SINCE IT WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE TRIED.

Ah! young brother, you to—day can sing, as others did:—

"'Tis done, the great transactions done";

and you sang and felt a joy in singing that last verse:—

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,

That vow renewed shall daily hear  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear"

but do you know your weakness? If there were no temptation from without, you are fickle enough in yourself. Ah! we might sooner trust the wind or rely upon the glassy waves of the ocean than trust our own frail resolutions. We are changeable, we are false; our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Let him that putteth on his harness take care not to boast as him that putteth it off. There are dangers ahead and many trials. All is not gold that glitters. Firm resolutions are not always kept; yea, let me add they are never kept if they are made, in your own strength; they will go most surely, and you that promised to stand fast will soon turn aside.

But, in addition to our own fickleness, we must expect many things to try this resolution. There will be, with some of you, the jeers and sneers of those you work with. They will call you ill names. Perhaps they have began it already. Well, but you do not know what they can invent. The Christian soldier has a gauntlet to run. The Christian worker in many a large factory has to endure a lifelong martyrdom. Men will invent all sorts of gibes and jeers against a believer in Christ, and it is fine sport to pelt a Christian. Can ye cleave to your Lord, then? Oh! if you cannot, you do not know him, for he is worth ten thousand times ten thousand sneers, and you should count it a joy to be permitted to bear a scoff for him. Now are you in your measure partakers with the noble host of martyrs. You cannot in these softer days earn the ruby crown of martyrdom, but you have, at least, the trial of cruel mockings. Bear up manfully, and meet their mockery with your holy bravery and patient endurance.

And you will have, probably, a worse trial than that, and that is to see those who professed to go with you, as you thought, turn aside. Oh! to young Christians, this is very staggering. Those of us who are older feel this to be a very peculiar cross in church life, to be associated with those who are cold-hearted and dead while they profess to be Christians, who, after all, ere long betray their hypocrisy; but to young people it seems often almost staggering. If such a man is not a good man, who can be? Is

there anything at all in religion if such a man, after all, should turn out to be a deceiver? Oh! but, dear brethren, if you love Christ, you will not turn aside because some of his friends have forsaken him, for a true friend sticks closer then. Like this good man Ittai, that we are speaking of, you will say, "I never thrust myself on David before; I kept in the background, but now that this rascally Ahithopel has left him, I will go now and offer him my kind and affectionate greetings." It ought always to make you who love Christ become bolder when these villains turn aside, for now you should say that it behaves every honest man to play the man and come to his friend. If these turn tail, then should the true-hearted lead the van for Christ and for his truth, and if it should even come to pass that a standard-bearer should desert his flag, spring forward, young man, and grasp it in the stead of him, but never because of that turn aside from your Lord.

Alas! brethren, you may expect, perhaps, to have sterner trials than these. If you resolve to cling to Jesus Christ with constancy, you must expect to have many trials. God loves to try his people that he may get glory out of their trials, and I am sorry to say I have known some who in the depths of poverty, when it has suddenly come upon them like an armed man, have felt as if religion itself could not support them, and they have actually given up their profession. It is poor Christianity that cannot bear the loss of all things. Now you may be poor yet, and you may be sore sick, but may you have such faith as that you may be able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It is no gold if it will not stand the fire, and it is no grace if it will not bear affliction.

You may expect to have great depression of spirit within. Some of us know what this is very, very frequently. There are times when the joy of religion is gone, and our soul is in the dark, and yet is feeling after God, blessed be his name; but this is the pinch, to believe in an angry Christ, to hold to his hand and never let him go, though that hand should seem to pull itself away; to lodge with Christ when he gives you no supper; to go and sleep in Christ's bed when he has not made it, but left it hard for you; to say, "With my desire have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit will I seek thee early." May you have faith like that faith, that will not, under any difficulties, turn aside from Christ.

Thus you see, then, that this resolution will be a tried one, and between here and heaven God knows what trials will befall us. But again:—

### III. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE CARRIED OUT.

What I have said might tempt you to declare that you would not try it, but it may be carried out. There are thousands, tens of thousands upon earth who have been with Jesus wherever he has been throughout the whole of their lives, and will be with him in death, and after death; and there are millions—there they stand—wearing their white robes and waving their palms. Listen; you may almost hear their song. These are they that overcame; they endured unto the end; they came through great tribulation, and washed their robes in the Lamb's blood, and, therefore, are they before the throne of God. What was done, in them may be done in you.

But how was it, then, that they held on and kept close to their Lord? Answer—it was not in their own strength; it was the Holy Spirit, who day by day preserved them, led them in knowledge and true holiness, purged them from sin, and at last made them to enter upon the heritage of the perfect. There was not a single moment in which they persevered apart from the Spirit's strength. Poor human nature at its best must start aside like a broken bow. 'Tis only grace that holds a single Christian, and well and truly do we sing in that hymn:—

"'Tis grace that's kept me till this day,  
And will not let me go."

Now, subject to the power of the Holy Spirit, the way to accomplish our resolve to be with Christ as his servants for ever, is, first of all, to be much in prayer. If you cannot persevere with God, you are not likely to persevere in contest with man. More prayer, beloved, many of you want. As your temptations grow, let your prayers become more intense and full of fire, and conquer hell by assaulting heaven. You shall prevail against all temptations if you can prevail with God.

Remember, too, that joined to that prayer there must be much holy fear. "Happy is the man," says Solomon, "that feareth always"—not the fear that is distrustful and suspicious of God, but the fear that is distrustful and more than suspicious of self; the fear that is conscious of inward weakness and depravity, that dares not into temptation go, but asks to have its eyes turned aside from beholding vanity, lest the look should lead to the desire, and the desire should engender the act.

With holy fear there must be much careful walking. He that would persevere to heaven must not hope to go there pell-mell helter-skelter, heedless, careless, thoughtless as to his daily life. There must be self-examination, self-inspection, watchfulness incessantly. An arrow may pierce thee between any joint of thy armour unless thou hold the shield of faith to catch its barbed shaft, and quench its barbarous flame. God grant thee grace to walk carefully and humbly with thy God.

To persevere in grace we must seek to use all the means of grace that can assist us—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; not neglecting either private or public prayer; using what grace we have if we expect to get more; doing what we can for God, as we expect him to do all for us; in fine, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. If these things be in you and abound, they shall be the means of preserving you, and you shall be among the happy number that shall sing, " Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joys unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." And now, fourthly and lastly:

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#### IV. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN AN EMPHATIC SENSE.

Understand me, for here it is that I wish to appeal to believers in Christ. This man Ittai said, " Surely in what place that my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there also will thy servant be." You can follow Christ in a general way in the activities of Christian life, and so on, but there is a peculiar way of following him. You can get, by God's grace,

very near your Master, and by still greater grace you can keep near to him, and keep near to him all your lives. I have never been able to hope for perfection in the flesh, but I believe that even Christian ought to strain after even perfection itself. I am afraid we have fixed the standard of what a Christian may be a deal too low; of what a Christian should be it would not be possible to fix the standard too high. It is not needful for a Christian to be sometimes with Christ, and sometimes to lose fellowship. It is not necessary for a Christian to be full of doubts and fears. I met an elderly Christian some years ago who is now in heaven, whose word certainly I could never dare to have doubted, who told me that by the space of forty years he had never had a doubt of his own acceptance in the Beloved, and though he had had many troubles and trials, he did not know that his communion with Christ had once been interrupted. I marvelled at him, but I marvelled a great deal more at myself that I had not tried to get into the same place. Why not? If you are straitened, it certainly is not in your God; you are straitened in your own bowels. He never gave you legitimate cause to doubt him, nor did he ever give you a reasonable excuse for forsaking fellowship with him. Let us, oh! let us aim at keeping as near to Jesus as John did, and not, like Peter, follow afar off. Let it be the great prayer of our lives:

"Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without thee I cannot live."

Let us ask that our communion may be kept up in business hours as well as in the private closet, that we may walk with Christ on the Exchange and in the street, as well as in the Tabernacle, or in the public engagements of worship. Why need we leave him, Certainly he will not leave us. Oh! that we may cling to him closely, cling to him and hold him fast. I like the saying of a dying negro boy, who was asked why he felt so happy in the thought of going to heaven. and he said, "I want to go to heaven principally because Jesus is there." "Well," said they, "but do you always want to be with Jesus, then, and with nobody else?" "Yes," said he, "I only care to be where Jesus is. "But suppose Jesus were to leave heaven?" Said he, "I would go with him." "But suppose Jesus went to hell, what then?" "Ah!" said the boy, "but there could not be any hell where Jesus was; I would go with Jesus wherever he might go." Oh! that we had



that kind of spirit, and that desire ever more, not to be self-seeking, nor world-seeking, nor getting our joy out of common pleasures, nor hunting after comfort where it cannot be found in these low-land joys; but let us seek to be on the wing with our Master, up aloft, dwelling in the land of communion. where Jesus lets out his very heart to his people, and reveals himself to them as he cloth not unto the world. The Lord give to this church many of those favoured men and women, whose communion shall be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Oh! it is the happiest, holiest, safest, richest. most useful kind of life. God grant it to you.

But oh! dear friends, there are some here to whom all this talk is nothing for they have never taken up the cross of King Jesus at all. Do you know it is very seldom I come into this pulpit, very seldom indeed, without my seeing here and there that mournful colour which indicates that another person has departed this life? We are so numerous that there are two or three deaths every week, and sometimes five or six, and as I happen to know when each one is taken away I am continually reminded of the mortality of my congregation—never twice alike—never under any circumstances—always some here that will never be here again or were not here before; always some here who are just on the brink of the grave. Now I speak to you to-night who may, though you know it not, be on the brink of the grave, and I shall ask you to put to yourselves this question, How will it fare with you when you pass into the spirit-world, and stand before your God, when you are not reckoned as a friend of Christ, but have to take your stand among his enemies? You would not wish to take that place even to-night. You are halting between two opinions; but, my dear friend, that halting of yours must come to an end very soon, or otherwise death will decide it, and where death finds you judgment will leave you, and hell will continue you. Oh! I pray you lay hold on eternal life, and this night cast in your lot with Christ. Oh! he is the brightest leader ever soldier had. He is the fairest Prince under whom anyone could serve. His cause is such as will ennoble you. To fight under his banner makes each private soldier into a prince, ennobles each one into a king. Before thou canst serve him, remember thou must be washed by him. There is a fountain filled with blood; if thou cost trust him, that blood will make thee white as snow. If thou cost trust him now, his Holy Spirit will give thee grace to enlist in his army, and to continue a faithful

soldier until thou shalt lay down thy battle with thy life, and cease at once to fight and live, and enter into the victory for ever and ever. By the horror of Christ's defeated foes. among whom I would not have you numbered; by the glory of Christ's victorious friends, among whom I would fain see you muster, look unto Christ and live to-night, and may he help you to do so. Amen.

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## **For The Candid And Thoughtful**

And when Jesus saw ["saw him," so it should be] that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. - Mark 12:34

This man began with Christ as a foe, and he ended as a friend. It does not quite appear from Mark, but it is plainly stated by Matthew, that the scribe asked a question of the Savior "tempting him." He was, therefore, an enemy. Put the mildest sense you like on the word "tempt" and it will retain the idea of an unfriendly testing; yet nothing could be more hearty in the end than the verdict with which he commended our Lord's answer, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth." Our Lord Jesus Christ has an almighty power over men's minds; he possesses irresistible charms by which he turns adversaries into advocates. He has a secret key which fits the wards of human hearts, and he can open that which seems to be the most securely closed against him. "Never man spake like this man," for in his voice, even in his humiliation, there were traces of the eternal fiat which of old spake the primeval midnight into noon.

It strikes me that this scribe was half-hearted in the work of tempting our Lord, even at the first. I should imagine him to have been a very superior man amongst his fellows, a man of greater light and discernment than the rest, and of greater ability in statement and discussion. Possibly for this

cause his brother scribes selected him, and put him forward to ask the testing questions. Now, it will sometimes happen that a man is thrust forward by others to do what he would never have thought of doing of his own accord, and quite unwillingly he acts as the mouthpiece of a set of people whom he half despises. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a ready reader of human hearts, and he very soon discovers whether what a man does is being done of himself or whether he is acted upon by a power behind. He discerns the difference between the malicious adversary and the less guilty victim of circumstances. These words of mine may be reaching persons who have opposed a religious movement, or fought against a gracious truth, not because they themselves would have done so if they had been left alone, but others have egged them on and made use of them, and thus they have been drawn or driven into a false position. The people whom they have been accustomed to lead have led them: it is too often the fate of leaders. The circle of which they have been the center and the head has imprisoned its own apparent master, and made him captive, so that he fights against that which in his heart he half suspects to be right. If, even now, he could be set free from his surroundings he would side with the right. Friend, my blessed Master can read your heart, and understand the pressure under which you are acting. I pray that as he reads your inmost soul he may see what of good there remaineth among the evil, and deliver you out of the false and dangerous position into which you have drifted. Jesus can set you right, my friend—can take you away from the entanglements of your surroundings, sever you from those who are making a tool of you, but who are at the same time sinking you down to their own level: can bring you to be his own friend, and lift you up to his own standard, so that you too shall be the champion of everything that is good and true, and shall go forward with him as your Master, bearing his cross, and looking to wear his crown.

Although the scribe in the narrative before us appeared first under the aspect of an antagonist, and tried to tempt our Lord, yet before long the great Teacher had put him into such a mental condition that he said of him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." At this time I shall first notice the commendation which is here expressed; and then, in the second place, I shall dwell for a little while upon the question which is here suggested—suggested, I think, by no idle curiosity, but very naturally

suggested: Did this man, who was so near to the kingdom, actually enter it, or did he not?

I. May the Holy Spirit instruct and impress us while, first, we consider the COMMENDATION EXPRESSED:—"THOU art not far from the kingdom of God." I am not going to use this text after the usual fashion. It has been made the heading of a catalogue of characters who are supposed to be not far from the kingdom of God. It is a very proper thing to address hopeful persons, and to give descriptions of conditions about which there is much that is cheering, and yet much to create anxiety; but the text itself does not deal with many cases, but with one whom Jesus judged to be not far from the kingdom of God, of whom it gives us such information that we see why he was thus spoken of. It speaks of one particular individual: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God"; and it tells us that Jesus said this because he saw that he answered discreetly. We may infer without fear of mistake that any man who would answer as this man answered is not far from the kingdom of God. Let us read his answer: "Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

With care let us investigate this reply, and see how far it might be our own language. The first point in which our Savior saw that the scribe was not far from the kingdom of God was this, that he possessed candour, and possessed so much of it that he rose superior to party considerations. He was a scribe, and naturally he took the side of the scribes and pharisees, but still he was not so much a scribe and pharisee that he would follow them against the truth. He kept himself open to conviction, and as soon as the Savior had given a fitting answer to the question, he did not, as other pharisees would have done, sneer at him, and continue still to pick fresh holes in his coat, but, like a candid man, he said, "Well, master, thou hast answered rightly"; and thus he did, as it were, separate himself from the unjust and bigoted party for whom he had been the temporary spokesman. He did not avow himself to be a disciple of Christ, yet he gave the great Teacher his due, and said of him what he felt bound to say, namely, that he had answered rightly. Now, my brethren, there is always

some hope of a man who is candid, and there is more hope still of one who, being placed by circumstances amongst the bigoted and prejudiced, nevertheless breaks away from bondage, keeps a conscience, preserves his eye from total blindness, is willing to see light if light is to be had, and is anxious to know the truth if the truth can be brought before him. It gives me great delight to meet with such persons, even though they confess that they are of a sceptical turn of mind, when it is clear that they are ready to yield to evidence, and are not mere cavillers. Time is wasted upon men who have made up their minds, or who have no minds to make up, but enquirers are worth trouble, and those who will admit right and truth when they see it are among the most hopeful of hearers. We do not wish people to open their mouths and shut their eyes and swallow everything that we may like to give them, yet the mouth ought to be open, or at least willing to be opened, as well as the eye, or our service at the gospel feast will be a weary task. When hearers are willing to receive the truth as well as to examine what they hear, they are in a good state. They will not only "prove all things," which a great many will do, but they are ready also to "hold fast that which is good," which some will not do: among such persons was the scribe.

I will suppose that I am addressing one who has been brought up under a system which makes little of Christ. Perhaps your form of religion makes much of the priest, and of sacraments, but it does not say much of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are faiths which make more of human things than of our divine Savior, the blessed Redeemer of sinners, and it may be that you profess one of these. Or you may have hitherto lived under a religion which makes much of your good works, and doings, and feelings, and so on. It may be that the Lord will enable you to rise superior to the influence of creeds, of education, and of association, and to say, "I only wish to know God's way of salvation. My desire is to be guided by what the Lord has revealed. I am prepared to accept whatever is plainly taught in the Word of God, even should it reverse all my former beliefs, and deprive me of my most cherished consolations. With sincere heart I ask enlightenment from the divine Spirit." Now, when we meet with a man of that kind, and see him hearing the gospel, we may say of him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." These are the kind of people who feel the force of truth, and are converted to the faith of Jesus,

these straightforward people, these hearty lovers of that which is good. The Savior called some men, "honest and good ground," and they were such even before the seed of the word fell upon them. Of course, even this natural openness and sincerity of character is God's gift, but assuredly these are the people upon whom the heavenly work takes most effect. Your tricksters, shufflers, players, make-believes, and men without principle or heart, are seldom converted. I speak from wide observation. I have seen scores of blustering blasphemers, who were downright in their profanity, brought to Jesus' feet, but I do not remember seeing a deceitful person brought there. Your deeply lying character—I will not say that it is beyond the power of grace to save him, but I will say this, it is the rarest thing under heaven for a man who has long been a liar ever to be converted. I will say nothing in the praise of human nature, nor give any reason for the absolutely free election of grace, but still I notice that for the most part there is a sort of honest openness and freedom from trickery about those whom the Lord calls to himself. I notice that characteristic in the first fishermen apostles, who were no doubt ignorant and weak, but they were as transparent as glass, and as free from guile as Nathanael. Even in their follies, and their sins, and their blunders they were always open-hearted, and so, in general, are those upon whom the Lord looks with an eye of love. Tricksters come in like Judas, but they go out again, for they are not of us. They experience no change from their association with godliness, or from their knowledge of truth, but would pick the purse of Christ himself, and sell their Redeemer for pieces of silver. Far otherwise is it with a man of candid and thorough spirit, for he is glad to receive the gospel, and it soon displays its gracious power in him. We may say of the candid man as Christ did of this scribe, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

A second point is, perhaps, even more clear. This man also possessed spiritual knowledge. It is a great error to suppose that ignorance can do anybody any good. There is a religion which prefers to have ignorant people to deal with, but we have learned the truth of what Solomon said: "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." To be ignorant of the law of God is to be far off from the kingdom; and to be ignorant of the gospel is also to be in a measure far off from the kingdom: but this man knew the law, and knew it well. He had a spiritual appreciation of its

range, meaning, and spirituality. Notice how he puts it: he puts it well. He says, "To love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength,—this is the first commandment." Here we see, first, that he mentions sincere love, in the words "to love him with all the heart." God is to be loved, not in name, not with lip language, not with mere pretense, but with the heart. God requireth by his law the hearty obedience of his creatures. Next, the scribe puts it, "With all thy understanding "; that is, God deserves and demands the intelligent love of his creatures. He does not ask blind love of them: he desires them to know something of him, and of his works, and of his claims upon them, so as to love him because he deserves their affection. The understanding must justify and impel the affections. Then, he puts it, "with all thy soul "; that is, with the emotional nature. Love God with feeling—not coolly, but with the whole force of your feeling. Love him with your soul, for soul love is the soul of love. And then he adds, "and with all thy strength "; that is to say, intensity is to be thrown into our love to God. We are to serve him with our might, and throw all our whole energy into his worship. Thus he gives us, under four heads, a description of the kind of love which the law of God requires of us—sincere—"with all thy heart"; intelligent—"with all thy understanding"; emotional—"with all thy soul"; intense and energetic—"with all thy strength." This the scribe knew, and it was most valuable knowledge. Beloved, when a man begins intelligently to grasp the doctrines of the law and the gospel, when we perceive that he is no stranger to divine things, but that he can give a reason for his beliefs, and can state them to others, although we dare not conclude because of this knowledge that such a man is actually in the kingdom of God, we may safely conclude that he is not far from it. Give us candor, and let that candour be attended with enlightenment, and we are sure that the possessor of these things is not far from the kingdom of God.

A third point is more remarkable still, because it is to be feared that hundreds of professed Christians are nothing like so near to the kingdom of heaven as this man was. This scribe knew the superiority of an inward religion over that which is external, for he declares, "To love him with all thy heart is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Thousands at this hour are publicly teaching us that the principal point of religion is

that you shall be duly and properly baptized and confirmed, and shall reverently and properly receive the sacrament. They lay stress upon your receiving before you have your breakfast, and upon the breaker of the sacred bread having been duly touched on the head by a bishop, and I do not know what else of mere outward circumstance. Books have been written about how the service is to be performed, and how it is not to be performed, and a great noise has been made about a piece of bread which was brought before a court of law. I believe a very great dignitary has been so weak as to certify that this baked dough has been "reverently consumed": and yet this is not a heathen country, nor are we worshippers of fetishes! Great importance is attached to the style of garment, which should be worn by priests on Holy Monday, or Good Friday. Colours vary according to the almanack, and the age of the moon. I must confess I need all my gravity when I think of copes, and girdles, and surplices, and gowns being matters of serious discussion. Surely these poor dupes of superstition are far, very far, from the kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, nor clothing, nor posture, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Their whole line of thought is alien to the mind of God, who is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. In the whole business of exhibitional religion what is there to content the soul? What can there be in it to please God? If our God were a royal puppet I could conceive of his being pleased with ceremonial; or if he were like the heathens' idiotic deities I could understand that mummeries, masquerades, postures, processions, robes, and round-robins might please him; but seeing that he is God, the only wise, be it far from me to dream of such a thing. Such child's play can scarce be borne with by full-grown men, but for that glorious mind that filleth all immensity to be thought to be particular about the cut and color of a vestment seems to me to be little short of blasphemy. When the thing was typical of truth yet to be revealed, it was important; but now that the true light has risen, and the shadows have departed, no such explanation is possible. Can it really be true that courts of law and assemblies of the church discuss the question of men's turning to the east or to the west when they pray? Is it thought to be of some consequence how men shall turn, and twist, and bend? What god is this that they serve? What being is this that they adore? Certainly not Jehovah, the God of heaven, whom we worship, for he "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," that is to say, of this



building; and he hath abolished all rubrics save this:—"they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Only spiritual worship is worship, and only as the heart adores does God accept the homage which is offered to him. This scribe knew that even whole burnt offerings, though God had ordained them, and they were therefore right, and sacrifices, though the law had settled them, and they were therefore due, were nothing when compared with loving God with all the heart and with all the soul. He expresses this most plainly that "to love God with all the heart is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And see how broadly he puts it—"All whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" put together. If they could slay all the bullocks upon a thousand hills, and set Lebanon's self on fire, making it one huge altar upon which the holocaust should smoke, and even if they should pour out rivers of oil, and side by side with it ran streams of blood of fat beasts, yet all would be nothing. Who hath required this at their hands? The Lord's demands are not of this sort. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." What God asks is that we should love him first of all, and our neighbor as ourselves. Now, a man who has come so far as to shake off the superstition of confidence in external worship is not far from the kingdom of God. He who knows that if saved it will be by a spiritual change, and not by going to a place of worship, not by repeating prayers, not by joining a church, not by being baptized, not by taking the sacrament, knows more than many; and he who also knows that loving God with all his heart is an absolutely needful evidence of his being a child of God, and longs to feel that love, is not far from the kingdom. A sense of the value and necessity of spiritual religion is a most hopeful sign. I do not say that it is a sure sign of saving grace; but I am sure it is a token of being very near the kingdom. Oh that the man would take the one step which is now needed by turning his knowledge into practice! Oh that he would believe with all his heart, and live!

Another point is manifest in this man's confession; he saw very plainly the supremacy of God over the whole of our manhood. It was clear to him that there was but one God, and that man was made on purpose to be one and undivided in his service. He perceived that man should love, honor, and serve that one God with all his heart, with all his heart, with all his understanding, with all his soul, and with all his strength. Do you know

that, dear friend? Come now, if you are not a saved man, I will ask you—do you recognize this to be true, that it is your bounden duty to serve your God with all your heart and understanding, and soul, and strength? Do you admit this? If you do, and if you are an honest man, you are not far from the kingdom of God, because honest men earnestly endeavor to pay their debts, and when they find that they cannot, they are distressed. If you are in distress of mind because you cannot meet your obligations to God, then you are not far from the kingdom. I rejoice in your discovery of shortcoming, failure, and inability, for these lie near that hearty penitence which is the sister of saving faith, and the sure herald of joy and peace. When a man feels his own inability to do as he ought, when he trembles before the law which, nevertheless, he honors and admits to be just and right, then he is not far from self-renunciation, and from accepting that matchless righteousness which Jesus Christ has come to bring. A consciousness of the supremacy of the sovereignty of God over us, so that he ought to have every thought, every breath, every pulse, is the work of the Spirit, who thereby convinces us of sin, and it is a sweet sign of dawn in the once darkened soul. Admit that God ought to be heartily loved, and you are not far from loving him; feel that you are guilty for not loving, and the seeds of love are in your heart.

Once more only. Although this hopeful scribe recognized the value of spiritual religion, and the need of heart-work, and of the heart being wholly given to God, yet he did not despise outward religion so far as it was commanded of God. He says that to love God is better than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices; which was an admission that these things were good in their places. He was no rejecter of ceremonies which are commanded, because of the superstition of will-worshippers who invent ceremonies. We are not to give up the baptism of believers because of the unscriptural rite of infant sprinkling, nor to forsake the Lord's Supper because of the popish mass. Ordinances of God are good in their places, and what is to be dreaded is the perversion of them by thrusting them into the place of better and more important matters. Thus the scribe showed a well-balanced mind all round, and proved himself not far from the kingdom of God.

My dear friend, are you prepared to lay hold of truth wherever you find

it? Are you prepared to break away from party ties and family prejudices? Are you prepared to believe that the inward and spiritual part of religion is infinitely superior to the external part of it, be it right or be it wrong? Do you also admit the divine supremacy of God, and his right to you in all respects? And are you willing to take ordinances, such as he has ordained, in their place, and not out of it? Then, if all these things be in you, your character resembles that of this scribe of whom Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." I am right glad to meet with you, for you are not far from submitting to the divine authority, since you are already found admitting its right to you. I trust you are not far from entering into the realm of spiritual religion, for you already value it. You are not far from the privilege of being wholly renewed in heart, since you see the need of it. How glad I am that you should be now listening to the gospel! Happier still shall I be if God shall help me to say the right word to you at this good hour. The Lord send it!

II. Our second point is THE QUESTION SUGGESTED—this man came so near to the kingdom: did he ever enter it? We do not know. If anybody were to assert that he did not I should be ready to question his statement. If anybody were to declare that he did I should at once demand his authority for the assertion. We receive no information from the Scriptures, and it is always better where the word of God is silent to be silent ourselves. We should also observe another very good rule if you have to judge of a man's state, and know but little of it, always judge it favourably. Judges usually give a prisoner the benefit of the doubt; and when a man is not a prisoner, when he has come so far towards grace as this scribe, let us at any rate hope that he did enter into the kingdom.

I see no reason why he should not have done so; and that is my first answer to the question. He should have done so. Having come so far there were many doors by which, God's Spirit being with him, he might have entered into the kingdom; I mean doors of thought, by which the Holy Spirit would readily have led his candid mind into the faith of Christ. I will show you one. There was in after years another scribe, a rabbi—you will recollect his name—who said, "I consent unto the law, that it is good; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is

in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." You see the process of thought. It is a very simple one. This scribe sees the law of God to be a spiritual law, demanding the obedience of his heart, his understanding, his soul, and his strength. If he had thought awhile he would, as a candid man, have said, "I have not kept this law. What is more, I cannot keep it. If I try to keep it I find a something within me against which I struggle, but which, nevertheless, brings me into captivity to another law—a law of selfishness, a law of sin." Then, as a man anxious to be right, he would have said, "How can I be delivered? Oh that I might be set free to keep the law of God! I cannot abide in this bondage. I ought to keep this law, I shall never be happy till I do love God with all my heart, for he ought to be so loved, and I perceive that there can be no heaven to a heart which does not love God intensely, for this is one of the essentials of peace and rest. How can I get at it?" In such a condition as that, if he had heard the sweet invitation of our Lord, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," would he not have leaped at the sound? Do you not see the simple doorway for such a man as that to become a Christian? He had come so far that surely he should come a little farther. Let us trust that he did. At any rate, if any of you have come so far, may God's sweet Spirit lead you to take those other steps, and to enter into the kingdom, submitting to the sweet sovereignty of the Prince Immanuel, whose scepter is of silver, and whose servitude is an honor and a delight to all his subjects.

That is one door; now follow with me another track. Suppose this man had really loved God with all his heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength—I will not say perfectly, for that would be supposing an impossibility, but supposing that he had truly and sincerely loved God, he could not have been an hour in the company of the Lord Jesus without feeling the deepest union of heart to him. Would he not have exclaimed, "This man, too, loves God with all his heart"? He must have perceived it, for the zeal which Christ had for the Father was immeasurable; it flashed in every gleam of his eye, it tintured every word that fell from his lips. Jesus lived for God, and glorified the Father with all his heart and soul, and any person who truly loved God would soon have perceived that fact. "Ah!" he would have exclaimed, "here is one who loves God better than I

do; here is one who honors God more than I do; here is one who is more consecrated, more devoted, more godlike than I am." By that door he would have been led to admiration of Jesus, to communion with him, and ultimately to belief in him as the Messiah. Let us hope that the scribe was so led, for the way is plain enough. At any rate, if God in his grace has led any man here to love the Father, I am persuaded that he will love the Son; for he that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. My hearer, thou art certainly not far from the kingdom of God if thou hast come so far as to love God, even though thou knowest little as yet of his only begotten Son. God help you to take that one other step.

Here is another door. You notice that he said that to love God was more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Now, suppose that with that in his mind, he had sat down, and said, "This loving God is the main thing; why, then, is the law encumbered with burnt offerings and sacrifices? If they really are inferior to the moral precepts, and especially to the spiritual precepts, why are they there at all?" Then methinks he would have seen that they must be there for a spiritual purpose. And suppose he had begun to try and read the meaning of the paschal lamb, or of the daily lamb, or of the sin-offering, why, methinks, if he turned to that blessed fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and began to read it in order to understand the sacrifices of the old law, it would have happened to him as it did to the eunuch when Philip opened to him the Scriptures—he would have seen Jesus in them all. He must have seen him. And if you, dear friend, have come to see the right place of gospel ordinances through candidly searching out their meaning, you have seen that their whole teaching is Christ Jesus, the sacrifice for sin. There is nothing in the two great gospel ordinances but Christ. Christ's sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection set forth in baptism: Christ's death set forth until he come at the communion table—life given us by our Savior's death, and life sustained by the same means. Jesus is the body of the ordinances of the Old Testament, and the soul of those of the New. If you are but candid enough to desire to push through the veil, and get at the real meaning of every outward ordinance, you will see Jesus ere long.

There is another road by which the scribe might have been led to the Savior. Think again. Suppose that he had continued to glow and burn

with love to God. As that love grew the understanding would also become enlightened with it, and the soul would rise towards God. You know why that would be. It must be because the Holy Spirit was in the man, for no man loveth God or striveth to love God, with all his heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength, without there being in secret and unknown to him a divine power at the back impelling him in that direction. Now, do you think that the Holy Spirit would thus work in the man and not reveal Christ to him for his salvation? I cannot believe it. I am persuaded that, coming as that man did under the gospel of Christ, he would be by his candour, by his love of God, by the influence of the divine Spirit, in such a state of mind that, as when sparks fall upon dry tinder they ignite at once, so would the words of Jesus fall upon a mind prepared of the Spirit of God. That scribe was, therefore, not far from the kingdom of God. I do hope that there are some such hearts present at this hour. Some of you, I trust, can say, "Oh that I had Christ! I would give my eyes for him." If you mean that, why do you not have him? He is to be had for nothing. "Oh," says another, "I would die if I might have him and be saved." Why not live, and be saved? "Oh, but I would give anything." Why not leave off the idea of giving, and take freely what Jesus presents to you? But yet that very desire of yours—that longing of yours—proves that you are not far from the kingdom of God. My heart's desire is that as you have come so far you may now yield yourselves up to Jesus. That is the way of salvation: have done with self-salvation and let Jesus save you. When a man is in the water, if he kicks and struggles he will drown, but if he lies still he will float. When another comes to help, if he will be passive he will be saved, but all that he can do will hinder his deliverance. Be passive in the hands of Christ till he gives you life to be active with. Be nothing, and let him be everything. Trust him wholly and alone. Drop into his arms, and let him bear the weight of your sins and sorrows, and it shall not be said of you any longer that you are not far from the kingdom of God, but it shall be sung on earth and in heaven—"He has returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, glory be to God!"

Still, as I have said, there is the dark supposition that perhaps the scribe never did enter the kingdom. He may have been so near to the kingdom, and yet he may have lacked the one thing needful. If it were so, it was a grievous fact; and all we can now do is to profit by it. What could have

been the reason why he did not enter the kingdom? I cannot tell, we know so little of him; but if we might infer from the little we do know, I should suppose that if he did not enter it was from the unworthy motive of being swayed by his fellow-men. We judged that when he came to Christ to put the question, he came not of his own mind and motion. We began by thinking that he seemed half-hearted in his opposition, and that so he the more readily turned from a questioner into a candid admirer. It is, however, just possible that, being the spokesman for others, he had grown fond of taking the lead; and if he did not really enter the kingdom, it may have been because he would have lost his place in the front rank of scribe and pharisee, and this was too great a price to pay for truth and righteousness. I have known a man deeply impressed with religious things, and feeling his way aright; but a little company of half a dozen whom he met in the evening, of whom he was the leading spirit, have sufficed to hold him in bondage. They invite him to come again; they miss his genial society, his jest, his song, his merry talk. He cannot face it out, and tell them that he has a call elsewhere, a call to nobler things. He has not the resolute will to lead them in another direction, and dreads even to make the attempt. He wants to be the leading man; and so he gives up what his conscience suggests to him rather than not be the leader of men whom in his heart he must know to be unworthy of such a homage. In his own mind he thinks them fools; but, still, he is afraid that they should think him so, and therefore he becomes a greater and more guilty fool than they. Oh. that fear of men, that fear of men! You may meet with here and there a man of the better sort who begins to feel, "Yes, there is the light there: light worth having." He breaks away from his party, and its surroundings, and for a while is eager for the truth, which he has half discovered; but he fears the cold shoulder which society would give him, dreads the jeer of "Sir John," and the sneer of "My Lord." The half-opened eye is closed with saddest determination from fear of other children of darkness, who would mock at its better sight. This is a sight which might make an angel weep. Jesus is sold, but not for so much as clinked in the hand of Judas; he is bartered for a fool's smile, and for the company of the vain and frivolous. Ah me, that ever the sun should behold so dread a sight! Multitudes who know the truth, and are not far from the kingdom of God, nevertheless, never enter it, because of the fear of man, the love of approbation, the horror of being laughed at and jested

at. With such vile fetters immortal souls are bound for execution, and held back from everlasting blessedness. There is something very beautiful about many a young man of enquiring mind, and if you could transplant him, and set him in another soil, you might make something of him; but not in that shop, where all his fellows would make him the butt of their mirth if he were really a Christian, not in that work-room, where all the artisans would swear and chaff if he were but to avow his half-formed convictions. Want of courage, want of self-denial, is that fatal flaw which ruins what else had been a gem in the Redeemer's crown. All brave hearts mournfully pronounce that he is justly lost who is not bold enough to own his Savior, and the truth.

"I had as lief not be, as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself."

Afraid of another man! Am I then myself a man? Or am I but the mere mockery of manhood? Oh, sirs, let your manhood come to the rescue. God grant you grace to say, "What can it matter to me what men say as long as I am right?" They cannot break bones with their jests; and if they did, there have been Christians who have not only suffered the breaking of their bones, but the burning of their whole bodies for Christ's sake sooner than deny his sacred claims. What did Jesus say? "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." He who, to gain the whole world, would keep back a solitary truth, is a huge loser for his pains. He is mean and base, and not worthy to be numbered amongst those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Oh! if I speak to one who hesitates, let me remind him that, however it may look to-night to be a daring step to be decided for Christ, it will look very differently soon when the great trumpet shall sound, and ring o'er earth and sea, and the dead shall rise, and the judgment-seat shall be set, and the great white throne shall be unveiled. Then it will be seen to be a far more desperate daring to deny the Lord even to save life itself. What will the cowards do in that day who, to please men, forsook their Lord? What will they do who suppressed truth and stifled conscience when the Shepherd begins to divide the goats and the sheep from each other? Ay, what will they do who find themselves driven with the goats, though once they half decided to be numbered with the sheep? They were near the fold, but never entered.



What will they feel when he shall say, "Depart! Depart! I know you not. You knew not me in the day of my humiliation. You were ashamed of me in the world. You blushed at. my name. You covered up what was in your conscience in order to avoid man's laughter and rebuke. You knew not me, and now I know not you. Depart! Depart!" In proportion to the light against which you have shut your eyes will be your horror when that light shall blind you into eternal night. In proportion to the violence which you have done to your consciences will be the terror which your awakened consciences will work in you. In proportion to the nearness of the kingdom within which you came shall be the dreadful distance to which you will be driven.

I was thinking that, if the Lord were to pay men in their own coin, what an awful thing it would be if those who are now not far from the kingdom were told by the Lord, "You shall stay there for ever. You, who heard the gospel, and did not accept it, must stop where you are." Halt, sir! not a step more! Close to the gates of heaven—you stop there! To hear its music for ever, and to gnash your teeth for ever, because you cannot join in it! To hear the songs of the righteous, while you wail for ever! To know the brightness of bliss, but to be yourself in the black darkness for ever! To be within an inch of heaven, and yet in hell! The living water flowing at your feet, and yet your tongue for ever parched! The bread of life nigh at hand, and yet you cannot eat! Oh, think of it! Eternally not far from the kingdom! If you would not wish to be so, oh, be not out of Christ another minute! May God's Spirit enable you to leap right away from your undecided condition into living faith and loving obedience to Christ.

"So near to the Kingdom! yet what dost thou lack?  
So near to the Kingdom! what keepeth thee back?  
Renounce every idol, tho' dear it may be,  
And come to the Savior now pleading with thee."

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## **For The Sick And Afflicted**

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. - Job. 34:31-32

Even when addressing our fellow-men there should be a fitness about our speech; therefore Solomon represents the preacher as seeking out acceptable words, or words meet for the occasion. When we approach those who are high in authority this necessity becomes conspicuous, and therefore men who are petitioners in the courts of princes are very careful to order their language aright. Much more, then, when we speak before the Lord ought we to consider, as the text does, the meetness of our words. Some language must never be uttered in the divine presence, and even that which is allowed must be well weighed, and set forth with solemn humbleness. Hence Elihu does well to suggest in the text language that is "meet to be said unto God." May our lips ever be kept as by a watchful sentinel, lest they suffer anything to pass through them dishonorable to the Most High. In the divine presence—and we are always there—it is incumbent upon us to set a double watch over every word that comes from our mouth.

Remember that thought is speech before God. Thought is not speech to man, for men cannot read one another's thoughts until they are set forth by words or other outward signs, but God who reads the heart regards that as being speech which was never spoken, and he hears us say in our souls many things which were never uttered by our tongues. Beloved, there are thoughts which are not meet to be thought before the Lord; and it is well for us, especially those of us who are afflicted, to be very watchful over those thoughts, lest the Lord hear us say in our hearts things which will grieve his Spirit, and provoke him to jealousy. O saints of God, since you never think except in the immediate presence of your heavenly Father, make a conscience of your every thought, lest you sin in the secret chambers of your being, and charge God foolishly. Elihu tells

us what it would be proper for us to think and say, "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

We will use the text mainly at this time in reference to those who are being chastened; and afterwards we shall see if there is not teaching in it, even to those who, at present, are not smarting under the rod. Thirdly, we shall find a word in our text to those who are not the children of God, and, therefore, know nothing of the smarting rod of fatherly correction. Perhaps to them, also, God may speak through this text. O that his Holy Spirit may deign to do so.

I. But first, dear friends, let us commune together upon the text in its more natural application as addressed TO THE AFFLICTED. The instruction of the wise man is for them especially, and there are three duties here prescribed for them, or rather three privileges suggested, which they should pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to enjoy.

The first lesson is, it is meet for them to accept the affliction which the Lord sends, and to say unto God, "I have borne chastisement." We notice that the word "chastisement" is not actually in the Hebrew, though the Hebrew could not be well interpreted without supplying the word. It might exactly and literally be translated "I bear," or "I have borne." It is the softened heart saying to God, "I bear whatever thou wilt put upon me; I have borne it, I still bear it, and I will bear it, whatever thou mayest ordain it to be. I submit myself entirely to thee, and accept the load with which thou art pleased to weight me." Now, we ought to do this, dear friends, and we shall do it if we are right at heart. We should cheerfully submit, because no affliction from which we suffer has come to us by chance. We are not left to the misery of believing that things happen of themselves, and are independent of a divinely controlling power. We know that not a drop of bitter ever falls into our cup unless the wisdom of our heavenly Father has placed it there. We are not even left in a world governed by angels, or ruled by cherubim; we dwell where everything is ordered by God himself. Shall we rebel against the Most High? Shall we not let him do as seemeth good in his sight? Shall we not cover our lip in silence when we know that the evil is of the Lord? Shame upon us, if we

be his children, if this be not the prevalent spirit of our mind—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Moreover, we should not only bear all things because the Lord ordains them, but because he orders all things for a wise, kind, beneficent purpose. He doth not afflict willingly. He takes no delight in the sufferings of his children. Whenever adversity must come it is always with a purpose; and, if a purpose of God is to be subserved by my suffering, would I wish to escape from it? If his glory will come of it, shall I not even crave the honor of being the agent of his glory, even though it be by lying passive and enduring in anguish. Yes, beloved, since we know that God can only grieve his regenerated creatures for some purpose of love, we should willingly accept whatever sorrow he pleases to put upon us. And we have his assurance, besides, that all things work together for our good. Our trials are not merely sent with a good object, but with an object good towards ourselves, a design which is being answered by every twig of our heavenly father's rod. "The cup which our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it?" It is healing medicine and not deadly poison, therefore let us put it to our lips without a murmur, ay, quaff it to its very dregs, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

A constant submission to the divine will should be the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives. He should put an earnest negative upon his self-will by crying, "Not my will," and then he should with holy warmth beseech the Lord to execute his purpose, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." He should throw the whole vigor of his soul into the Lord's will, and exhibit more than submission, namely, a devout acquiescence in whatever the Lord appoints.

Beloved friends, we must not be content with bearing what the Lord sends, with the coolness which says, "It must be, and, therefore, I must put up with it." Such forced submission is far below a Christian grace, for many a heathen has attained it. The stolid stoic accepted what predestination handed out to him, and the Mahometan still does the same. We must go beyond unfeeling submission. We must not so harden our hearts against affliction as not to be affected by it. That chastisement which does not make us smart has failed of its end. It is by the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, that the heart is made better; and if there is no

real blueness—if it be merely a surface bruise—little good will come of it. "For a season we are in heaviness," says the apostle, "through manifold trials," and not only the trial, but the heaviness which comes of it, is needful to us. God would not have his children become like the ox or the ass, which present hard skins to hard blows, but he would have us tender and sensitive. There is such a thing as despising the chastening of the Lord, by a defiant attitude which seems to challenge the Lord to draw a tear or fetch a sigh from us. Against this let us be on our guard.

Neither, on the other hand, are we to receive affliction with a rebellious spirit. It is hard for us to kick against the pricks, like the ox which, when goaded, is irritated, and strikes out and drives the iron into itself deeper than it went before. We can easily do this by complaining that God is too severe with us. In this spirit we may "take arms against a sea of troubles;" but by opposing we shall not end them, but increase their raging. By a proud murmuring spirit we only bring upon ourselves trial upon trial; "the Lord resisteth the proud," and a high spirit challenges his opposition.

Neither, dear friends, as believers in God, are we to despair under trouble, for that is not bearing the cross, but lying down under it. We are to take up our appointed burden, and carry it, and not sit down in wicked sullenness, and murmur that we can do no more. Some are in a very naughty frame of mind, their moody spirits mutter that if God will be so severe with them they must yield to it, but they have lost all heart, and all faith, and all they ask for is leave to die. A child of God must not repine. He has not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin"; and, if he had, still he should say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Since Jesus, the man of sorrows, never murmured, it ill becomes any of his followers to do so. We must in patience possess our souls. Perhaps you think it easier for me to say this than it would be to practice it; and yet, by Almighty grace, a saint can bear to the utmost of bearing, to the utmost of suffering he can suffer, to the utmost of loss he can lose, and even to the uttermost of death itself he can die daily, and yet triumph through the divine life, for God, that worketh in us to will and to do, is almighty, and makes our weakness strong.

The Christian, then, is not to treat the cross which God puts upon him in any such way as I have described, but he is to accept it humbly, looking up to God, and saying, "Much worse than this I might reckon to receive even as thy child; for the discipline of thine house requireth the rod, and well might I expect to be chastened every morning." The child of God should feel that it is in very faithfulness that the Lord afflicts him, and that every stroke has love in it. Anything over and above the lowest abyss of hell is a great mercy to us. If we had to lie ill for fifty years and scarcely have a minute free from pain, yet since the Lord has pardoned our sins, and accepted us in Christ Jesus, and made us his children, we should be grateful for every pang, and still continue to bless the Lord upon our beds, and sing his high praises in the midst of the fires. Humbly, therefore, as sinners deserving divine wrath, we are bound to accept the chastenings of the Lord.

We should receive chastisement with meek submission, presenting ourselves to God that he may do with us still as he has dealt with us—not wishing to start aside to the right hand or to the left: asking him, if it may be his will to remove the load, to heal the pain, to deliver us from the bereavement, and the like, but still always leaving ample margin for full resignation of spirit. The gold is not to rebel against the goldsmith, but should at once yield to be placed in the crucible and thrust into the fire. The wheat as it lies upon the threshing-floor is not to have a will of its own, but to be willing to endure the strokes of the flail that the chaff may be separated from the precious corn. We are not far off being purged from dross and cleansed from chaff when we are perfectly willing to undergo any process which the divine wisdom may appoint us. Self and sin are married, and will never be divorced, and till our self-hood is crushed the seed of sin will still have abundant vitality in it; but when it is "not I" but "Christ that liveth in me," then have we come near to that mark to which God has called us, and to which, by his Spirit, he is leading us.

But we ought to go farther than this. We should accept chastisement cheerfully. It is a hard lesson, but a lesson which the Comforter is able to teach us—to be glad that God should have his way. Do you know what it is sometimes to be very pleased to do what you do not like to do? I mean

you would not have liked to do it, but you find that it pleases some one you love, and straightway the irksome task becomes a pleasure. Have you not felt, sometimes, when one whom you very much esteem is sick and ill, that you would be glad enough to bear the pain, at least for a day or two, that you might give the suffering one a little rest? Would you not find a pleasure in being an invalid for a while to let your beloved one enjoy a season of health? Let the same motive, in a higher degree, sway your spirit! Try to feel, "If it pleases God it pleases me. If, Lord, it is thy will, it shall be my will. Let the lashes of the scourge be multiplied, if so thou shalt be the more honored, and I shall be permitted to bring thee some degree of glory." The cross becomes sweet when our health is so sweetened by the Spirit that our will runs parallel with the will of God. We should learn to say, in the language of Elihu "I have borne, I do bear, I accept it all." To be as plastic clay on the potter's wheel, or as wax in the modeller's hand, should be our great desire. That is the first business of the sufferer.

The next duty is to forsake the sin which may have occasioned the chastisement. "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore." There is a connection between sin and suffering in every case. It would be very wrong for us to suppose that every man who suffers is therefore more guilty than others: that was the mistake of Job's friends—a mistake too commonly made every day: but it is right for the sufferer himself to judge his own case, by a standard which we may not use toward him. He should say, "Is there not some connection between this chastisement and sin that dwelleth in me?" And here he must not judge himself unrighteously, even for God, lest he plunge himself into unnecessary sorrow. There are afflictions which come from God, not on account of past sin, but to prevent sin in the future. There are also sharp prunings which are intended to make us bring forth more fruit: they are not sent because we have brought forth no fruit, but because we are fruitful boughs, and are worth pruning. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There are also afflictions which are sent by way of test, and trial, and proof, both for God's glory and for the manifestation of his power; as also for the comforting of others, that trembling saints may see how weak and feeble men can carry the heaviest cross for Christ's sake, and can triumph

under it. We are not to be sure that every sorrow comes to us because of any sin actually committed; yet it will be best for us to be more severe with ourselves than we should think of being with others, and always to ask, "Is there not some cause for this chastisement? May there not be something of which God would rid me, or something which has grieved him which has caused him to grieve me?" Brothers and sisters, I charge you never be lenient with yourselves. The best of us are men at the best, and at our best we have much to mourn over in the presence of the Most High. It is good to be always dissatisfied with ourselves, and pressing forward to a something yet beyond; always praying that in us Christ's likeness may be completely formed. Thorns are often put in the nest that we may search for hidden evils. "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" Has there been a defeat at Ai? May there not be an Achan in the camp? Has not a traitor concealed in some secret place a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold? Does not trial give a hint that there may be something amiss? Beloved, I ask myself and I ask you to look now, not only to your outward character, but to your more private life and to your walk before God, and see if there be not some flaw. Is there trouble in the family? Have you always acted towards the children and the servants as you should have done as a master and a father? Question yourself. The child is grieving you. Have you, good mother, always been as prayerful about that child as you should have been? May not your child's conduct to you be a fair reflection of your own conduct towards your heavenly Father? I do not mention any of these things to increase your grief, but in order that you may put your finger on the evil which provokes the Lord God, and may put it away. Have there been losses in business? Are you sure, brother, that when you were making money you always used it for God as you should? Were you a good steward? Did you give the Lord his full portion—the sacred tithe of all that you had? Or may you not have been too selfish—and may not that be the cause why you must now be reduced from wealth to comparative poverty? Is that so? Does the affliction scourge your body? Then has there been anything wrong with your habits? Has the flesh predominated over the spirit? Has there been a failure of the entire consecration of the vessel unto the Lord? Does the trial occur in the person of some dear one? You may not be conscious of any wrong there, but still look, dear friends! Search the whole of your conduct as the spies searched Canaan of old. If



your sin be glaring, there is little need of a chastisement to point it out to you, for you ought to see it without that: but there may be a secret sin between you and your Lord for which he has sent you chastisement, and after this you must raise a hue and cry. You know I do not mean that the Lord is punishing you for sin as a judge punishes a criminal, for he will not do that; since he has laid the punishment of sin upon Christ, and Christ has borne it as a matter of punitive justice. He, as a father, chasteneth his child, but never without a cause. I am urging you to see whether there may not be some cause for the present painful discipline. Never fall into the mistake of some who suppose that sin in God's children is a trifle. Why, if there is any place where sin is horrible it is in a child of God. Hence the text puts it, "I will not offend any more." Sin is an offensive thing to God, he cannot bear it. I should dislike a plague spot on anybody's face, but I should tremble to see it most of all upon my own child's face. Sin is more visible in a good man than in any other. I may drop a spot of ink upon a black handkerchief and never see it, but on a white one you will perceive it directly, and see it the more because of the whiteness of the linen which it defiles. You, child of God, know that just in proportion as you are sanctified—in proportion as you live near to God—sin will be grievous to the Most High. It is gloriously terrible to live near to God. I wonder if you understand me, all of you. To walk as a favored courtier with a monarch is a very delicate matter. Favourites have to pick their steps; for though they stand near a king, they well know how soon they may fall from their high position. We serve a jealous God. That is a wonderful question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" God is that consuming fire. God is the everlasting burnings. Who among us shall dwell with him? The answer is, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks": but it is only the man who is very jealous of himself who will be able to bear that fierce light which beats around the throne of God—that devouring flame which God himself is, as saith the apostle—"Even our God is a consuming fire." Caesar's wife must not only be without fault, but she must be above suspicion, and such must be the character of the child of God who, like Moses, lives in the inner circle—who stands on the mountain top—who knows what the peaks of Sinai mean, and what it is to be forty days in fellowship with the Most High.

Beloved friends, I urge upon you a very close search into what the transgression may be which has brought correction upon you, for it may be in you an offense which would scarcely be sin in anybody else. Another person might fall into your fault as a sin of ignorance but since you know better the sin is all the blacker in you. The Lord will be sanctified in them that draw near unto him, and woe to them if they defile themselves.

The third lesson in the text to the afflicted clearly teaches them that it is their duty and privilege to ask for more light. The text says, "That which I see not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Do you see the drift of this? It is the child of God awakened to look after the sin which the chastisement indicates, and since he cannot see all the evil that may be in himself, he turns to his God with this prayer, "What I see not teach thou me."

Beloved friends, it may be that, in looking over your past life and searching through your heart, you do not see your sin, for perhaps it is where you do not suspect. You have been looking in another quarter. Your own opinion is that you are weak in one point, but possibly you are far weaker in the opposite direction. In nothing do men make more mistakes than concerning their own characters. I have known a brother confess that he was deficient in firmness, when, in my opinion, he was about as obstinate as any man I knew. Another man has said that he was always wanting in coolness, and yet I thought that if I needed to fill an ice-well, I had only to put him into it. Persons misjudge themselves. Unfeeling people say they are too sensitive, and selfish persons imagine themselves to be victims to the good of others. So, it may be, you have been looking in one quarter for the sin, while your fault lies in the opposite point of the compass. Pray, then, "Lord, search me and try me, and that which I see not teach thou me." Remember, brethren, that our worst sins may lurk under our holiest things. Oh, how these evils will hide away—not under the docks and nettles of the dungheap—not they, but under the lilies and the roses of the garden. In the cups of the flowers they lurk. They do not flit through our souls like devils with dragons' wings; they fly as angels of light, with wings tinted as the rainbow. They come as sheep, and a very fat sort they seem to be, but they are wolves in

sheep's clothing. Watch, therefore, very carefully against the sins of your holy things. In our holy things we are nearer to God than at any other time, and hence such defilement soonest brings upon us the stroke of our heavenly Father's rod. Perhaps your sin is hidden away under something very dear to you. Jacob made a great search for the images—the teraphs which Laban worshipped. He could not find them. No; he did not like to disturb Rachel, and Laban did not like to disturb her either—a favourite wife and daughter must not be inconvenienced. She may sit still on the camel's furniture, but she hides the images there. Even thus you do not like to search in a certain quarter of your nature; it is a very tender subject—something you feel very grieved about when anybody even hints at it: it is just there that the sin is harboured. My brethren and sisters, let us be honest with the Lord. Let us really wish to know where we are wrong, and heartily long to be set right. Do you think we all honestly want to know our errors? Are there not chapters of the Bible which we do not like to read? If there are—if any text has a quarrel with you, quarrel with yourself; but yield wholly to the word of God. Is there any doctrine which you almost think is a truth, but your friends do not believe it, and they might, perhaps, think you heretical if you were to accept it, and therefore you dare not investigate any further? Oh, dear friends, let us be rid of all such dishonesty. So much of it has got into the church that many will not see things that are plain as a pikestaff. They will not see, for truth might cost them too dear. They cover up and hide away some parts of Scripture which it might be awkward for them to understand, because of their connection with a church, or their standing in a certain circle. This is hateful, and we need not wonder if God smites the man who allows himself in it. Be true, brother! You cannot deceive God. Do not try it. Ask him to search you through and through. Let your desire be, "Refining fire go through my heart with a mighty flame that shall devour everything like a lie, everything that is unholy, selfish, earthly, that I may be fully consecrated unto the Lord my God." This is the right way in which to treat our chastisements. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. That which I see not, teach thou me."

"Alas," says somebody, "we cannot say that we will do no more iniquity." Yes, we can say it a great deal more easily than we can practice it, and therefore it is a pity to say it except in the evangelical spirit, leaning

entirely on the divine strength. He who says, "I will do no more iniquity" has there and then perpetrated iniquity if he has vowed in his own strength, for he has exalted himself into the place of God by self-confidence. Yet we must feel in our inmost hearts that we desire to depart from all iniquities. There must be an earnest and hearty intent that, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire, so will we, as God helps us, shake off the sin, whatever it may be, which brings us the trial, or that causes the Lord to take away the light of his countenance from us. Oh, how earnestly would I urge my dear tried brothers and sisters to seek after this excellent fruit of affliction. May it come to every one of us according as the affliction comes, that we may never miss the sweet fruit of this bitter tree. God bless you who are tried, and support you under your griefs; but, above all, may he sanctify you through tribulation, for that is the main point, and it little matters how sharp the flames if you are purified by the fire.

II. And now, briefly, I am going to use the text for THOSE OF US WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED. What does the text say to us if we are not afflicted? Does it not say this—"If the afflicted man is to say 'I bear,' and to take up his yoke cheerfully, how cheerfully ought you and I to take up the daily yoke of our Christian labor"? Brother, sister, do you ever grow weary? Does the Sunday-school tax you too much? Is that Bible-class becoming somewhat a heaviness? That house-to-house visitation—has it become a drudgery? That distribution of tracts—is there a great sameness and tedium about it? Now look, my brother, look at yonder dear saint of God who has been for months upon his bed till the feathers have grown hard beneath him. He shifts from side to side but finds no ease—no sleep at night, no respite by day. Would you like to change places with him? Yet hear how he praises God amidst his many pains, and abundant weaknesses, and poverty. Do you prefer your lot to his? Well, then, in the name of everything that is good, accept your portion with joy, and throw your soul into the Lord's service. The great Captain might say to you, "What! tired of marching! I will send you back to the trenches, and let you lie there till you feel sick at heart of your inactivity. What! weary of fighting! You shall be put into the hospital with broken bones and made to lie there and pine, and see what you think of enforced inactivity." If I have any message to give from my own bed of

sickness it would be this—if you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can. If you desire to make a sick bed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with the mournful reflection that you wasted time while you were in health and strength. People said to me years ago, "You will break your constitution down with preaching ten times a week," and the like. Well, if I have done so, I am glad of it. I would do the same again. If I had fifty constitutions I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. You young men that are strong, overcome the wicked one and fight for the Lord while you can. You will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and Master. Crowd as much as you can into every day, and postpone no work till to-morrow. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

We have yet another remark for those that are strong. Should not the favors of God lead us to search out our sins? Chastisement acts like a black finger to point out our failures: ought not the love of God to do the same with its hand glittering with jewels? Lord, dost thou give me good health? Lord, dost thou spare my wife and my children to me? Dost thou give me of substance enough and to spare? Then, Lord, is there anything about me that might grieve thee? Do I harbour anything in my soul that might vex thy Spirit? Let thy love guide me that I may escape from these evils. It is a sweet text—"I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Your child only needs a glance of the eye, and he runs to you; but your horse and mule will not do that, you must put a bit into their mouths, and some of them must have very hard bits, and their mouths must be made very tender before they can be guided. You are men, do not be as the beasts are. Yet some of God's own children are very brutish. They will not obey his words, and so their God has to give them blows, for he will have his children obey him: if they will be drawn with cords of love so they shall be, but if they will not, they shall be driven with the rod. If you make yourselves horses and mules he will treat you like horses and mules, or you will have reason to think so; perhaps the best way to prevent you becoming altogether mulish is to treat you as if you were a mule, and so drive you out of it, by letting you see the effect of your folly. Let our

mercies act as a sweet medicine, and then we shall not need bitter potions.

Once again. Do you not think that while enjoying God's mercy we should be anxious to be searched by the light of the love of God? Should we not wish to use the light of the divine countenance that we may discover all our sin and overcome it. I know some Christians who will not come to this point. They have an ugly temper, and they say, "Well, you know, that is constitutional." Away for ever with such wicked self-excusing. It is idle to say, "I cannot help it, it is my temperament." Your temperament will destroy you, as surely as you live, if the grace of God does not destroy your temperament. If such excuses were permitted there is no crime, however abominable, for which temperament might not be pleaded. Thieves, harlots, drunkards, murderers might all set up this justification, for they all have their evil temperaments. Do you find in the law that any sin is excused upon the ground that it is "constitutional?" Do you find anything in the example of Christ, or in the precepts of the gospel, to justify a man in saying, "I must be treated with indulgence, for my nature is so inclined to a certain sin that I cannot help yielding to it: "My brother, you must not talk such nonsense. Your first business is to conquer the sin you love best; against it all your efforts, and all the grace you can get must be levelled. Jericho must be first besieged, for it is the strongest fort of the enemy, and until it is taken nothing can be done. I have generally noticed in conversion that the most complete change takes place in that very point in which the man was constitutionally most weak. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. "Well," cries one, "suppose I have a besetting sin, how can I help it?" I reply, if I knew that four fellows were going to beset me to-night on Clapham Common, I should take with me sufficient policemen to lock the fellows up. When a man knows that he has a besetting sin it is not for him to say, "It is a besetting sin and I cannot help it," he must, on the other hand, call for heavenly assistance against these besetments. If you have besetting sins, and you know it, fight with them, and overcome them by the blood of the Lamb. By faith in Jesus Christ, besetting sins go to be led captive and they must be led captive, for the child of God must overcome even to the end. He is to be more than conqueror through him that has loved him. Let the love of God, then, lead you to search yourselves and say, "That which I

see not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

III. The last remark I have to make is to THE UNCONVERTED. Perhaps there are some here who are not the people of God, and yet they are very happy and prosperous. They have all that heart can wish, and as they hear me talk about God's children being chastened, they say, "I do not want to be one of them, if such is their portion." You would rather be what you are, would you? "Yes," say you. Hearken! We will suppose that we have before us a prince of the blood who will one day be a king. He has been doing something wrong, and his father has chastened him the rod. There stands the young prince with the tears running down his cheeks; and over yonder is a street arab, who has no father that he knows of—certainly none that ever chastened him for his good. He may do what he likes—use any sort of language—steal, lie, swear, if he likes, and no one will chasten him. He stands on his head, or makes wheels in the streets, or rolls in the dirt, but no father ever holds a rod over him. He sees this little prince crying, and he laughs at him, "You don't have the liberty I do. You are not allowed to stand on your head as I do. Your father wouldn't let you beg for coppers by the side of the omnibuses as I do. You don't sleep under an arch all night as I do. I would not be you to catch that thrashing! I would sooner be a street-boy than a prince!" Your little prince very soon wipes his eyes, and answers, "Go along with you. Why, I would rather be chastened every day and be a prince and heir to a kingdom, than I would be you with all your fine liberty!" He looks down upon the ragged urchin with the greatest conceivable pity, even though he himself is smarting from the rod. Now, sinners, that is just what we think of you and your freedom from heavenly discipline. When you are merriest and happiest, and fullest of your joy, we would not be you for the world; when you have been electrified by that splendid spectacle at the theater, or have enjoyed yourself so much in a licentious dance, or, perhaps, in something worse, we would not be as you are. Take us at our worst—when we are most sick, most desponding, most tried, most penitent before God, we would not exchange with you at your best. Would we change with you, for all your mirth and sinful hilarity? No, that we would not! Ask the old woman in the winter time, who has only a couple of sticks to make a fire with, and has nothing to live upon but what the tender mercy of the parish allows her, ask her if she would change with

Dives in his purple and fine linen. Look at her. She puts on an old red cloak to shelter her poor limbs, which are as full of rheumatism as they can be; the cupboard is bare, her poor husband lies in the churchyard, and she has not a child to come and see her. Ah, there she is. You say, "She is a miserable object." Here is the young squire in his top-boots, coming home from the hunt. He is standing in front of her. He might say to her, with all his large possessions and broad acres, "You would change with me, mother, would you not?" She knows his character, and she knows that he has no love to God, and no union to Christ, and therefore she replies, "Change with you? no, that I would not, for a thousand worlds."

"Go you that boast of all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine;  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,  
But my Redeemers mine."

I have yet another word for you that fear not God. I wish you would reflect for a moment what will become of you one of these days. God loves his dear children very much: he loves them so much that Jesus died to save them, and yet he does not spare them when they sin, but he chastens them with the rod of men. Now, if he does so with his children, what will he do with you who are his enemies? If judgment begins at the house of God—if when his anger does but gently smoke it is so hot—what will it be when the winds of justice fan it to a furious flame? As when the fire sets the forests of the mountains burning, or as when the vast prairie becomes one sheet of fire, so shall it be in that dread day when God shall launch out all his vengeance against the sins of the ungodly. I beseech you, think of this. He spared not his own Son, but put him to a cruel death upon the tree for the sins of others: will he spare his enemies, think you, who have rebelled against him, and rejected his mercy, when he visits them for their own personal sins? "Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you."

One only thought, for I must not send you away with that terrible warning and no gospel encouragement. Learn a lesson from the Lord's



children. When his children are chastened they submit, and when they submit they obtain peace. Sinner, I pray you, learn wisdom; and if you have been troubled of late, if you have had trials from God, yield to him, yield to him. Old Master Quarles gives a quaint picture of a man who is striking at an enemy with a flail. The person assaulted runs right into the striker's arms, and so escapes the force of the stroke, and Quarles adds the remark, "The farther off the heavier the blow." Sinner, run in, run into God's bosom to-night. Say "I will arise and go unto my Father." God will not smite you if you come there. How can he? The Lord says, "Let him take hold of my strength." When that arm is lifted to scourge you, lay hold of it. Lay hold upon that arm of strength as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, for in him God hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people. Hang on the arm that else might smite you. Trust in the Lord, sinner, through Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice, and you shall find peace with him. Ask him with humble submission to put away the sin that has made you suffer, and has nearly cost you your soul. Pray him to search you, and find out the sin. Repent and believe the gospel. Forsake evil and cling to the Savior, the great Physician who heals the disease of sin, and you shall live. Come now to your Father's home. Those rags, that hungry belly, those swine and filthy troughs, those citizens that would not help you, that blandest of all citizens whose only kindness lay in degrading you lower than you were before—all these are sent to fetch you home. Believe it, soul, and say, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned"; and while you are yet saying it you shall have the kiss of his love, the embraces of his affection, the robe of his righteousness, and the fatted calf of spiritual food, and there shall be merriment concerning you, both on earth and in heaven. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **For Whom Did Christ Die**

## Christ died for the ungodly. - Romans 5:6

In this verse the human race is described as a sick man, whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength: no power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady, nor does he desire to do so; he could not save himself from his disease if he would, and would not if he could. I have no doubt that the apostle had in his eye the description of the helpless infant given by the prophet Ezekiel; it was an infant - an infant newly born - an infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed; left unwashed, unclothed, unfed, a prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances, forlorn, abandoned, hopeless. Our race is like the nation of Israel, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint. Such, unconverted men, are you! Only there is this darker shade in your picture, that your condition is not only your calamity, but your fault. In other diseases men are grieved at their sickness, but this is the worst feature in your case, that you love the evil which is destroying you. In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you: you are without will for that which is good, your "cannot" means "will not," your inability is not physical but moral, not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes, but of the willingly ignorant who refuse to look.

While man is in this condition Jesus interposes for his salvation. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"; "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," according to "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." The pith of my sermon will be an endeavour to declare that the reason of Christ's dying for us did not lie in our excellence; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound, for the persons for whom Jesus died were viewed by him as the reverse of good, and he came into the world to save those who are guilty before God, or, in the words of our text, "Christ died for the ungodly."

Now to our business. We shall dwell first upon the fact - "Christ died for the ungodly"; then we shall consider the fair inferences therefrom; and, thirdly, proceed to think and speak of the proclamation of this simple but wondrous truth.

First, here is THE FACT - "Christ died for the ungodly." Never did the human ear listen to a more astounding and yet cheering truth. Angels desire to look into it, and if men were wise they would ponder it night and day. Jesus, the Son of God, himself God over all, the infinitely glorious One, Creator of heaven and earth, out of love to me stooped to become a man and die. Christ, the thrice holy God, the pure-hearted man, in whom there was no sin and could be none, espoused the cause of the wicked. Jesus, whose doctrine makes deadly war on sin, whose Spirit is the destroyer of evil, whose whole self abhors iniquity, whose second advent will prove his indignation against transgression, yet undertook the cause of the impious, and even unto death pursued their salvation. The Christ of God, though he had no part or lot in the fall and the sin which has arisen out of it, has died to redeem us from its penalty, and, like the psalmist, he can cry, "Then I restored that which I took not away." Let all holy beings judge whether this is not the miracle of miracles!

Christ, the name given to our Lord, is an expressive word; it means "Anointed One," and indicates that he was sent upon a divine errand, commissioned by supreme authority. The Lord Jehovah said of old, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people"; and again, "I have given him as a covenant to the people, a leader and commander to the people." Jesus was both set apart to this work, and qualified for it by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He is no unauthorised saviour, no amateur deliverer, but an ambassador clothed with unbounded power from the great King, a Redeemer with full credentials from the Father. It is this ordained and appointed Saviour who has "died for the ungodly." Remember this, ye ungodly! Consider well who it was that came to lay down his life for such as you are.

The text says Christ died. He did a great deal besides dying, but the crowning act of his career of love for the ungodly, and that which rendered all the rest available to them, was his death for them. He actually gave up the ghost, not in fiction, but in fact. He laid down his life for us, breathing out his soul, even as other men do when they expire. That it might be indisputably clear that he was really dead, his heart was pierced with the soldier's spear, and forthwith came there out blood and water. The Roman governor would not have allowed the body to be

removed from the cross had he not been duly certified that Jesus was indeed dead. His relatives and friends who wrapped him in linen and laid him in Joseph's tomb, were sorrowfully sure that all that lay before them was a corpse. The Christ really died, and in saying that, we mean that he suffered all the pangs incident to death; only he endured much more and worse, for his was a death of peculiar pain and shame, and was not only attended by the forsaking of man, but by the departure of his God. That cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" was the innermost blackness of the thick darkness of death.

Our Lord's death was penal, inflicted upon him by divine justice; and rightly so, for on him lay our iniquities, and therefore on him must lay the suffering. "It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He died under circumstances which made his death most terrible. Condemned to a felon's gibbet, he was crucified amid a mob of jesters, with few sympathising eyes to gaze upon him; he bore the gaze of malice and the glance of scorn; he was hooted and jeered by a ribald throng, who were cruelly inventive in their taunts and blasphemies. There he hung, bleeding from many wounds, exposed to the sun, burning with fever, and devoured with thirst, under every circumstance of contumely, pain, and utter wretchedness; his death was of all deaths the most deadly death, and emphatically "Christ died."

But the pith of the text comes here, that "Christ died for the ungodly"; not for the righteous, not for the reverent and devout, but for the ungodly. Look at the original word, and you will find that it has the meaning of "impious, irreligious, and wicked." Our translation is by no means too strong, but scarcely expressive enough. To be ungodly, or godless, is to be in a dreadful state, but as use has softened the expression, perhaps you will see the sense more clearly if I read it, "Christ died for the impious," for those who have no reverence for God. Christ died for the godless, who, having cast off God, cast off with him all love for that which is right. I do not know a word that could more fitly describe the most irreligious of mankind than the original word in this place, and I believe it is used on purpose by the Spirit of God to convey to us the truth, which we are always slow to receive, that Christ did not die because men were good, or would be good, but died for them as ungodly - or, in other words, "he

came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Observe, then, that when the Son of God determined to die for men, he viewed them as ungodly, and far from God by wicked works. In casting his eye over our race he did not say, "Here and there I see spirits of nobler mould, pure, truthful, truth-seeking, brave, disinterested, and just; and therefore, because of these choice ones, I will die for this fallen race." No; but looking on them all, he whose judgment is infallible returned this verdict, "They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Putting them down at that estimate, and nothing better, Christ died for them. He did not please himself with some rosy dream of a superior race yet to come, when the age of iron should give place to the age of gold, - some halcyon period of human development, in which civilisation would banish crime, and wisdom would conduct man back to God. Full well he knew that, left to itself, the world would grow worse and worse, and that by its very wisdom it would darken its own eyes. It was not because a golden age would come by natural progress, but just because such a thing was impossible, unless he died to procure it, that Jesus died for a race which, apart from him, could only develop into deeper damnation. Jesus viewed us as we really were, not as our pride fancies us to be; he saw us to be without God, enemies of our own Creator, dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt, and set on mischief, and even in our occasional cry for good, searching for it with blinded judgment and prejudiced heart, so that we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He saw that in us was no good thing, but every possible evil, so that we were lost, - utterly, helplessly, hopelessly lost apart from him: yet viewing us as in that graceless and Godless plight and condition, he died for us.

I would have you remember that the view under which Jesus beheld us was not only the true one, but, for us, the kindly one; because had it been written that Christ died for the better sort, then each troubled spirit would have inferred "he died not for me." Had the merit of his death been the perquisite of honesty, where would have been the dying thief? If of chastity, where the woman that loved much? If of courageous fidelity, how would it have fared with the apostles, for they all forsook him and fled? There are times when the bravest man trembles lest he should be

found a coward, the most disinterested frets about the selfishness of his heart, and the most pure is staggered by his own impurity; where, then, would have been hope for one of us, if the gospel had been only another form of law, and the benefits of the cross had been reserved as the rewards of virtue? The gospel does not come to us as a premium for virtue, but it presents us with forgiveness for sin. It is not a reward for health, but a medicine for sickness. Therefore, to meet all cases, it puts us down at our worst, and, like the good Samaritan with the wounded traveller, it comes to us where we are. "Christ died for the impious" is a great net which takes in even the leviathan sinner; and of all the creeping sinners innumerable which swarm the sea of sin, there is not one kind which this great net does not encompass.

Let us note well that in this condition lay the need of our race that Christ should die. I do not see how it could have been written "Christ died for the good." To what end for the good? Why need they his death? If men are perfect, does God need to be reconciled to them? Was he ever opposed to holy beings? Impossible! On the other hand, were the good ever the enemies of God? If such there be are they not of necessity his friends? If man be by nature just with God, to what end should the Saviour die? "The just for the unjust" I can understand; but the "just dying for the just" were a double injustice - an injustice that the just should be punished at all, and another injustice that the just should be punished for them. Oh no! If Christ died, it must be because there was a penalty to be paid for sin committed, hence he must have died for those who had committed the sin. If Christ died, it must have been because "a fountain filled with blood" was necessary for the cleansing away of heinous stains; hence, it must have been for those who are defiled. Suppose there should be found anywhere in this world an unfallen man - perfectly innocent of all actual sin, and free from any tendency to it, there would be a superfluity of cruelty in the crucifixion of the innocent Christ for such an individual. What need has he that Christ should die for him, when he has in his own innocence the right to live? If there be found beneath the copes of heaven an individual who, notwithstanding some former slips and flaws, can yet, by future diligence, completely justify himself before God, then it is clear that there is no need for Christ to die for him. I would not insult him by telling him that Christ died for him, for

he would reply to me, "Why should he? Cannot I make myself just without him?" In the very nature of things it must be so, that if Christ Jesus dies he must die for the ungodly. Such agonies as his would not have been endured had there not been a cause, and what cause could there have been but sin?

Some have said that Jesus died as our example; but that is not altogether true. Christ's death is not absolutely an example for men, it was a march into a region of which he said, "Ye cannot follow me now." His life was our example, but not his death in all respects, for we are by no means bound to surrender ourselves voluntarily to our enemies as he did, but when persecuted in one city we are bidden to flee to another. To be willing to die for the truth is a most Christly thing, and in that Jesus is our example; but into the winepress which he trod it is not ours to enter, the voluntary element which was peculiar to his death renders it inimitable. He said, "I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." One word of his would have delivered him from his foes; he had but to say "Begone!" and the Roman guards must have fled like chaff before the wind. He died because he willed to do so; of his own accord he yielded up his spirit to the Father. It must have been as an atonement for the guilty; it could not have been as an example, for no man is bound voluntarily to die. Both the dictates of nature, and the command of the law, require us to preserve our lives. "Thou shalt not kill" means "Thou shalt not voluntarily give up thine own life any more than take the life of another." Jesus stood in a special position, and therefore he died; but his example would have been complete enough without his death, had it not been for the peculiar office which he had undertaken. We may fairly conclude that Christ died for men who needed such a death; and, as the good did not need it for an example - and in fact it is not an example to them - he must have died for the ungodly.

The sum of our text is this - all the benefits resulting from the Redeemer's passion, and from all the works that followed upon it, are for those who by nature are ungodly. His gospel is that sinners believing in him are saved. His sacrifice has put away sin from all who trust him, and, therefore, it was offered for those who had sin upon them before. "He

rose again for our justification," but certainly not for the justification of those who can be justified by their own works. He ascended on high, and we are told that he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." He lives to intercede, and Isaiah tells us that "He made intercession for the transgressors." The aim of his death, resurrection, ascension, and eternal life, is towards the sinful sons of men. His death has brought pardon, but it cannot be pardon for those who have no sin - pardon is only for the guilty. He is exalted on high "to give repentance," but surely not to give repentance to those who have never sinned, and have nothing to repent of. Repentance and remission both imply previous guilt in those who receive them: unless, then, these gifts of the exalted Saviour are mere shams and superfluities, they must be meant for the really guilty. From his side there flowed out water as well as blood - the water is intended to cleanse polluted nature, then certainly not the nature of the sinless, but the nature of the impure; and so both blood and water flowed for sinners who need the double purification. To-day the Holy Spirit regenerates men as the result of the Redeemer's death; and who can be regenerated but those who need a new heart and a right spirit? To regenerate the already pure and innocent were ridiculous; regeneration is a work which creates life where there was formerly death, gives a heart of flesh to those whose hearts were originally stone, and implants the love of holiness where sin once had sole dominion. Conversion is also another gift, which comes through his death, but does he turn those whose faces are already in the right direction? It cannot be. He converts the sinner from the error of his ways, he turns the disobedient into the right way, he leads back the stray sheep to the fold. Adoption is another gift which comes to us by the cross. Does the Lord adopt those who are already his sons by nature? If children already, what room is there for adoption? No; but the grand act of divine love is that which takes those who are "children of wrath even as others," and by sovereign grace puts them among the children, and makes them "heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

To-day I see the Good Shepherd in all the energy of his mighty love, going forth into the dreadful wilderness. For whom is he gone forth? For the ninety and nine who feed at home? No, but into the desert his love sends him, over hill and dale, to seek the one lost sheep which has gone astray. Behold, I see him arousing his church, like a good housewife, to cleanse



her house. With the besom of the law she sweeps, and with the candle of the word she searches, and what for? For those bright new coined pieces fresh from the mint, which glitter safely in her purse? Assuredly not, but for that lost piece which has rolled away into the dust, and lies hidden in the dark corner. And lo! grandest of all visions! I see the Eternal Father, himself, in the infinity of his love, going forth in haste to meet a returning child. And whom does he go to meet? The elder brother returning from the field, bringing his sheaves with him? An Esau, who has brought him savoury meat such as his soul loveth? A Joseph whose godly life has made him lord over all Egypt? Nay, the Father leaves his home to meet a returning prodigal, who has companied with harlots, and grovelled among swine, who comes back to him in disgraceful rags, and disgusting filthiness! It is on a sinner's neck that the Father weeps; it is on a guilty cheek that he sets his kisses; it is for an unworthy one that the fatted calf is killed, and the best robe is worn, and the house is made merry with music and with dancing. Yes, tell it, and let it ring round earth and heaven, Christ died for the ungodly. Mercy seeks the guilty, grace has to do with the impious, the irreligious and the wicked. The physician has not come to heal the healthy, but to heal the sick. The great philanthropist has not come to bless the rich and the great, but the captive and the prisoner. He puts down the mighty from their seats, for he is a stern leveller, but he has come to lift the beggar from the dunghill, and to set him among princes, even the princes of his people. Sing ye, then, with the holy Virgin, and let your song be loud and sweet, - "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." O ye guilty ones, believe in him and live.

II. Let us now consider THE PLAIN INFERENCES FROM THIS FACT. Let me have your hearts as well as your ears, especially those of you who are not yet saved, for I desire you to be blessed by the truths uttered; and oh, may the Spirit of God cause it to be so. It is clear that those of you who are ungodly - and if you are unconverted you are that - are in great danger. Jesus would not interpose his life and bear the bloody sweat and crown of thorns, and nails, and spear, and scorn unmitigated, and death

itself, if there were not solemn need and imminent peril. There is danger, solemn danger, for you. You are under the wrath of God already, and you will soon die, and then, as surely as you live, you will be lost, and lost forever; as certain as the righteous will enter into everlasting life, you will be driven into everlasting punishment. The cross is the danger signal to you, it warns you that if God spared not his only Son, he will not spare you. It is the lighthouse set on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place, or Jesus had not needed to suffer such infinite agonies to save us from it.

It is also fairly to be inferred that out of this danger only Christ can deliver the ungodly, and he only through his death. If a less price than that of the life of the Son of God could have redeemed men, he would have been spared. When a country is at war, and you see a mother give up her only boy to fight her country's battles - her only well-beloved, blameless son - you know that the battle must be raging very fiercely, and that the country is in stern danger: for, if she could find a substitute for him, though she gave all her wealth, she would lavish it freely to spare her darling. If she were certain that in his heart a bullet would find its target, she must have strong love for her country, and her country must be in dire necessity ere she would bid him go. If, then, "God spared not his Son, but freely delivered him up for us all," there must have been a dread necessity for it. It must have stood thus: die he, or the sinner must, or justice must; and since justice could not, and the Father desired that the sinner should not, then Christ must; and so he did. Oh, miracle of love! I tell you, sinners, you cannot help yourselves, nor can all the priests of Rome or Oxford help you, let them perform their antics as they may; Jesus alone can save, and that only by his death. There on the bloody tree hangs all man's hope; if you enter heaven it must be by force of the incarnate God's bleeding out his life for you. You are in such peril that only the pierced hand can lift you out of it. Look to him, at once, I pray you, ere the proud waters go over your soul.

Then let it be noticed - and this is the point I want constantly to keep before your view - that Jesus died out of pure pity. He must have died out of the most gratuitous benevolence to the undeserving, because the

character of those for whom he died could not have attracted him, but must have been repulsive to his holy soul. The impious, the godless - can Christ love these for their character? No, he loved them notwithstanding their offences, loved them as creatures fallen and miserable, loved them according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, from pity, and not from admiration. Viewing them as ungodly, yet he loved them. This is extraordinary love! I do not wonder that some persons are loved by others, for they wear a potent charm in their countenances, their ways are winsome, and their characters charm you into affection; "but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He looked at us, and there was not a solitary beauty spot upon us: we were covered with "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," distortions, defilements, and pollutions; and yet, for all that, Jesus loved us. He loved us because he would love us; because his heart was full of pity, and he could not let us perish. Pity moved him to seek the most needy objects that his love might display its utmost ability in lifting men from the lowest degradation, and putting them in the highest position of holiness and honour.

Observe another inference. If Christ died for the ungodly, this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, "We are not fit to come." But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you? I hear the reply, "But I have been so very vile." Yes, you have been impious, but your sin is not worse than this word ungodly will compass. Christ died for those who were wicked, thoroughly wicked. The Greek word is so expressive that it must take in your case, however wrongly you have acted. "But I cannot believe that Christ died for such as I am," says one. Then, sir, mark! I hold you to your words, and charge you with contradicting the Eternal God to his teeth, and making him a liar. Your statement gives God the lie. The Lord declares that "Christ died for the ungodly," and you say he did not, what is that but to make God a liar? How can you expect mercy if you persist in such proud unbelief? Believe the divine revelation. Close in at once with the gospel. Forsake your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall surely live. The fact that Christ died for the ungodly renders self-righteousness a folly. Why need a man pretend that he is good if "Christ died for the ungodly?" We have an

orphanage, and the qualification for our orphanage is that the child for whom admission is sought shall be utterly destitute. I will suppose a widow trying to show to me and my fellow trustees that her boy is a fitting object for the charity; will she tell us that her child has a rich uncle? Will she enlarge upon her own capacities for earning a living? Why, this would be to argue against herself, and she is much too wise for that, I warrant you, for she knows that any such statements would damage rather than serve her cause. So, sinner, do not pretend to be righteous, do not dream that you are better than others, for that is to argue against yourself. Prove that you are not by nature ungodly, and you prove yourself to be one for whom Jesus did not die. Jesus comes to make the ungodly godly, and the sinful holy, but the raw material upon which he works is described in the text not by its goodness but by its badness; it is for the ungodly that Jesus died. "Oh, but if I felt!" Felt what? Felt something which would make you better? Then you would not so clearly come under the description here given. If you are destitute of good feelings, and thoughts, and hopes, and emotions, you are ungodly, and "Christ died for the ungodly." Believe in him and you shall be saved from that ungodliness.

"Well," cries out some Pharisaic moralist, "this is dangerous doctrine." How so? Would it be dangerous doctrine to say that physicians exercise their skill to cure sick people and not healthy ones? Would that encourage sickness? Would that discourage health? You know better; you know that to inform the sick of a physician who can heal them is one of the best means for promoting their cure. If ungodly and impious men would take heart and run to the Saviour, and by him become cured of impiety and ungodliness, would not that be a good thing? Jesus has come to make the ungodly godly, the impious pious, the wicked obedient, and the dishonest upright. He has not come to save them in their sins, but from their sins; and this is the best of news for those who are diseased with sin. Self-righteousness is a folly, and despair is a crime, since Christ died for the ungodly. None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude; this great gate is set so wide open that the very worst of men may enter, and you, dear hearer, may enter now.

I think it is also very evident from our text that when they are saved, the

converted find no ground of boasting; for when their hearts are renewed and made to love God they cannot say, "See how good I am," because they were not so by nature; they were ungodly, and, as such, Christ died for them. Whatever goodness there may be in them after conversion they ascribe it to the grace of God, since by nature they were alienated from God, and far removed from righteousness. If the truth of natural depravity be but known and felt, free grace must be believed in, and then all glorying is at an end.

This will also keep the saved ones from thinking lightly of sin. If God had forgiven sinners without an atonement they might have thought little of transgression, but now that pardon comes to them through the bitter griefs of their Redeemer they cannot but see it to be an exceeding great evil. When we look to Jesus dying on the cross we end our dalliance with sin, and utterly abhor the cause of so great suffering to so dear a Saviour. Every wound of Jesus is an argument against sin. We never know the full evil of our iniquities till we see what it cost the Redeemer to put them away.

Salvation by the death of Christ is the strongest conceivable promoter of all the things which are pure, honest, lovely, and of good report. It makes sin so loathsome that the saved one cannot take up even its name without dread. "I will take away the name of Baali out of thy mouth." He looks upon it as we should regard a knife rusted with gore, wherewith some villain had killed our mother, our wife, or child. Could we play with it? Could we bear it about our persons or endure it in our sight? No, accursed thing! stained with the heart's blood of my beloved, I would fain fling thee into the bottomless abyss! Sin is that dagger which stabbed the Saviour's heart, and henceforth it must be the abomination of every man who has been redeemed by the atoning sacrifice.

To close this point. Christ's death for the ungodly is the grandest argument to make the ungodly love him when they are saved. To love Christ is the mainspring of obedience in men - how shall men be led to love him? If you would grow love, you must sow love. Go, then; and let men know the love of Christ to sinners, and they will, by grace, be moved to love him in return. No doubt all of us require to know the threatenings of the wrath of God; but that which soonest touches my heart is Christ's

free love to an unworthy one like myself. When my sins seem blackest to me, and yet I know that through Christ's death I am forgiven, this blest assurance melts me down.

"If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,  
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul.  
I still had stubborn been;  
But mercy has my heart subdued,  
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,  
And now I hate my sin."

I have heard of a soldier who had been put in prison for drunkenness and insubordination several times and he had been also flogged, but nothing improved him. At last he was taken in the commission of another offence, and brought before the commanding officer, who said to him, "My man, I have tried everything in the martial code with you, except shooting you; you have been imprisoned and whipped, but nothing has changed you. I am determined to try something else with you. You have caused us a great deal of trouble and anxiety, and you seem resolved to do so still; I shall, therefore, change my plans with you, and I shall neither fine you, flog you, nor imprison you; I will see what kindness will do, and therefore I fully and freely forgive you." The man burst into tears, for he reckoned on a round number of lashes, and had steeled himself to bear them, but when he found he was to be forgiven, and set free, he said, "Sir, you shall not have to find fault with me again." Mercy won his heart. Now, sinner, in that fashion God is dealing with you. Great sinners! Ungodly sinners! God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. I have threatened you, and you hardened your hearts against me. Therefore, come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Well," says one, "I am afraid if you talk to sinners so they will go and sin more and more." Yes, there are brutes everywhere, who can be so unnatural as to sin because grace abounds, but I bless God there is such a thing as the influence of love, and I am rejoiced that many feel the force of it, and yield to the conquering arms of amazing grace. The Spirit of God wins the day by such arguments as these; love is the great battering-ram which opens gates of brass. When the Lord says, "I

have blotted out thy transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities," then the man is moved to repentance.

I can tell you hundreds and thousands of cases in which this infinite love has done all the good that morality itself could ask to have done; it has changed the heart and turned the entire current of the man's nature from sin to righteousness. The sinner has believed, repented, turned from his evil ways, and become zealous for holiness. Looking to Jesus he has felt his sin forgiven, and he has started up a new man, to lead a new life. God grant it may be so this morning, and he shall have all the glory of it.

III. So now we must close - and this is the last point - THE PROCLAMATION OF THIS FACT, that "Christ died for the ungodly." I would not mind if I were condemned to live fifty years more, and never to be allowed to speak but these five words, if I might be allowed to utter them in the ear of every man, and woman, and child who lives. "CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY" is the best message that even angels could bring to men. In the proclamation of this the whole church ought to take its share. Those of us who can address thousands should be diligent to cry aloud - "Christ died for the ungodly"; but those of you who can speak to one, or write a letter to one, must keep on at this - "Christ died for the ungodly." Shout it out, or whisper it out; print it in capitals, or write it in a lady's hand - "Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it solemnly, it is not a thing for jest. Speak it joyfully; it is not a theme for sorrow, but for joy. Speak it firmly; it is indisputable fact. Facts of science, as they call them, are always questioned: this is unquestionable. Speak it earnestly; for if there be any truth which ought to arouse all a man's soul it is this: "Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it where the ungodly live, and that is at your own house. Speak it also down in the dark corners of the city, in the haunts of debauchery, in the home of the thief, in the den to the depraved. Tell it in the gaol; and sit down at the dying bed and read in a tender whisper - "Christ died for the ungodly." When you pass the harlot in the street, do not give a toss with that proud head of yours, but remember that "Christ died for the ungodly"; and when you recollect those that injured you, say no bitter word, but hold your tongue, and remember "Christ died for the ungodly." Make this henceforth the message of your life - "Christ died for the ungodly."

And, oh, dear friends, you that are not saved, take care that you receive this message. Believe it. Go to God with this on your tongue - "Lord save me, for Christ died for the ungodly, and I am of them." Fling yourself right on to this as a man commits himself to his lifebelt amid the surging billows. "But I do not feel," says one. Trust not your feelings if you do; but with no feelings and no hopes of your own, cling desperately to this, "Christ died for the ungodly." The transforming, elevating, spiritualising, moralising, sanctifying power of this great fact you shall soon know and be no more ungodly; but first, as ungodly, rest you on this, "Christ died for the ungodly." Accept this truth, my dear hearer, and you are saved. I do not mean merely that you will be pardoned, I do not mean that you will enter heaven, I mean much more; I mean that you will have a new heart; you will be saved from the love of sin, saved from drunkenness, saved from uncleanness, saved from blasphemy, saved from dishonesty. "Christ died for the ungodly" - if that be really known and trusted in, it will open in your soul new springs of living water which will cleanse the Augean stable of your nature, and make a temple of God of that which was before a den of thieves. Trust in the mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ, and a new era in your life's history will at once commence.

Having put this as plainly as I know how, and having guarded my speech to prevent there being anything like a flowery sentence in it, having tried to put this as clearly as daylight itself, - that "Christ died for the ungodly," if your ears refuse the precious boons that come through the dying Christ, your blood be on your own heads, for there is no other way of salvation for any one among you. Whether you reject or accept this, I am clear. But oh! do not reject it, for it is your life. If the Son of God dies for sinners, and sinners reject his blood, they have committed the most heinous offence possible. I will not venture to affirm, but I do suggest that the devils in hell are not capable of so great a stretch of criminality as is involved in the rejection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here lies the highest love. The incarnate God bleeds to death to save men, and men hate God so much that they will not even have him as he dies to save them. They will not be reconciled to their Creator, though he stoops from his loftiness to the depths of woe in the person of his Son on their behalf. This is depravity indeed, and desperateness of rebellion. God grant you



may not be guilty of it. There can be no fiercer flame of wrath than that which will break forth from love that has been trampled upon, when men have put from them eternal life, and done despite to the Lamb of God. "Oh," says one, "would God I could believe!" "Sir, what difficulty is there in it? Is it hard to believe the truth? Darest thou belie thy God? Art thou steeling thy heart to such desperateness that thou wilt call thy God a liar?" "No; I believe Christ died for the ungodly," says one, "but I want to know how to get the merit of that death applied to my own soul." Thou mayest, then, for here it is - "He that believeth in him," that is, he that trusts in him, "is not condemned." Here is the gospel and the whole of it - "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned."

I am a poor weak man like yourselves, but my gospel is not weak; and it would be no stronger if one of "the mailed cherubim, or sworded seraphim" could take the platform and stand here instead of me. He could tell to you no better news. God, in condescension to your weakness, has chosen one of your fellow mortals to bear to you this message of infinite affection. Do not reject it! By your souls' value, by their immortality, by the hope of heaven and by the dread of hell, lay hold upon eternal life; and by the fear that this may be your last day on earth, yea, and this evening your last hour, I do beseech you now, "steal away to Jesus." There is life in a look at the crucified one; there is life at this moment for you. Look to him now and live. Amen.

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## **Foretastes Of The Heavenly Life**

And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down

unto us, and brought us word again and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us. - Deuteronomy 1:25

You remember the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent twelve men as spies into the land of Canaan, who brought back with them the fruit of the land, amongst the rest a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. But I shall not remark upon the figure, but only say that as they learned of Canaan by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we be the Lord's beloved, may learn something of what heaven is—a state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here on earth.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruits which it produced, brought by their brethren, and when they ate thereof. Perhaps there was but little for so many, and yet those who did eat were made at once to understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. Now, then, beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of Eshcol. We have had some fruits of heaven even since we have been on earth, and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which bringeth forth such rare and choice delights.

I shall, therefore, present to you some views of heaven in order to give you some idea how it is that the Christian on earth enjoys a foretaste of the blessings that are yet to be revealed. Possibly, there are scarce two Christians who have the same news of heaven; though they all expect the same heaven, yet the most prominent feature in it is different to each different mind according to its constitution.

I. Now, I will confess what is to me the most prominent feature of heaven, judging at the present moment. At another time I may love heaven better for another thing: but lately I have learned to love heaven as A PLACE OF SECURITY.

We have been greatly saddened as we have seen some high professors turning from their profession—ay, and worse still, some of the Lord's own

beloved committing grievous faults and slips, which have brought disgrace upon their character, and injury to their souls. Now I have learned to look to heaven lately as a place where we shall never, never sin—where our feet shall be fixed firmly upon a rock—where there is neither tripping nor sliding—where faults shall be unknown—where we shall have no need to keep watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there is no foe that shall annoy us—where we shall not be on our guard day and night watching against the incursion of foes, for there "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." I have looked upon it as the land of complete security, where the garment shall be always white, where the face shall be always anointed with fresh oil, where there is no fear of slipping or turning away, but where we shall stand fast for ever. And I ask you, if that be a true view of heaven—and I am sure it is one feature of it—do not the saints even on earth enjoy some fruits of Paradise, even in this sense? Do we not even in these huts and villages below sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The doctrine of God's word is, that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe, that all believers must hold on their way, that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find him a faithful and immutable keeper. On such a doctrine we can enjoy security even on earth; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip and trip, but nevertheless a security well nigh as great, because it secures us against ultimate ruin, and renders us certain that we shall attain to eternal felicity.

And, beloved, have you never sat down and reflected on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints? I am sure you have, and God has brought home to you a sense of your security in the person of Christ. He has told you that your name is graven on his hand; he has whispered in your ear the promise, "Fear thou not, I am with thee." You have been led to look upon him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God; and in such sweet contemplation I am sure you have been drinking some of the juice of his spiced pomegranates; you have had some of the choice fruits of Paradise; you have had some of the enjoyments which the perfect saints have above in a sense of your complete and eternal security in Christ Jesus. Oh, how I

love that doctrine of the perseverance of the saints! I shall at once renounce the pulpit when I cannot preach it, for any other form of teaching seems to me to be a blank desert and a howling wilderness—as unworthy of God as it would be beneath even my acceptance, frail worm as I am. I could never either believe or preach a gospel which saves me today and rejects me tomorrow—a gospel which puts me in Christ's family one hour, and makes me a child of the devil the next,—a gospel which justifies and then condemns me—a gospel which pardons me, and afterward casts me down to hell. Such a gospel is abhorrent to reason itself, much more it is contrary to the mind of God whom we delight to serve. Every true believer in Jesus can sing, with Toplady,—

"My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impressed on his heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace:  
Yes, I to the end shall endure.  
As sure as the earnest is given;  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Yes, beloved, we do enjoy a sense of perfect security even as we dwell in this land of wars and fightings. As the spies brought their brethren bunches of the grapes, so in the security we enjoy, we have a foretaste and earnest of the bliss of Paradise.

II. In the next place, most probably the greater part of you love to think of heaven under another aspect: as A PLACE OF PERFECT REST.

Son of toil, you love the sanctuary because it is there you sit to hear God's word, and rest your wearied limbs. When you have wiped the hot sweat from your burning brow, you have often thought of heaven where your labors shall be over; you have sung with sweet emphasis,—

"There shall I bathe my weary soul  
In seas of heavenly rest,  
And not a wave of trouble roll Across my peaceful breast."

Rest, rest, rest,—this is what you want. And to me this idea of heaven is exceedingly beautiful. Rest I know I never shall have beneath this sky, while Christ's church is as barbarous as it is; for the most barbarous of masters is the church of Christ. I have served it, and am well-nigh hounded to my grave by Christian ministers perpetually requiring me to do impossibilities that they know no mortal strength can accomplish. Willing I am to labor till I drop, but more I cannot do; yet I am perpetually assailed on this side and the other, till, go where I may, there seems no rest for me till I slumber in my grave; and I do look forward to heaven with some degree of happiness. There I shall rest from labors constant and perpetual, though much loved.

And you, too, who have been toiling long to gain an object you have sought after; you will be glad when you get to heaven. You have said if you could get it you would lie down and rest; you have toiled after a certain amount of riches, you have said if you could once gain a competence you would then make yourself at ease. Or, you have been laboring long to gain a certain point of character, and then you have said you would lay down your arms and rest. Ay, but you have not reached it yet; and you love heaven because heaven is the goal to the racer, the target of the arrow of existence; you love heaven because it will be the couch of time, ay, an eternal rest for the poor weary struggler upon earth. You love it as a place of rest; and do we never enjoy a foretaste of heaven upon earth in that sense? O, yes, beloved! blessed be God, "we who have believed do enter into rest." Our peace is like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. God may give to his people rest: even the rest that remaineth for the people of God. We have stormy trials and bitter troubles in the world; but we have learned to say, "Return unto thy rest, o my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Did you never, in times of great distress, climb up to your closet, and there on your knees pour out your heart before God? Did you never feel after you had so done that you had bathed yourself in rest, so that—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,  
And storms of sorrow fall,"

you cared not one whit for them? Though wars and tumults were raging around you, you were kept in perfect peace, for you had found a great

protecting shield in Christ; you had looked upon the face of God's Anointed. Ah, Christian, that rest without a billow of disturbance, that rest so placid and serene, which in your deepest troubles you have been enabled to enjoy in the bosom of Christ, is to you a bunch of the mighty vintage of heaven, one grape of the heavenly cluster which you shall soon partake of in the land of the hereafter. Here, again, you see we can have a foretaste of heaven, and realize what it is even while here upon earth.

III. That idea of heaven as a place of rest will suit some indolent professors, and, therefore, let me just give the very opposite of it. I do think that one of the worst sins a man can be guilty of in this world is to be idle. I can almost forgive a drunkard, but a lazy man I do think there is very little pardon for. I think a man who is idle has as good a reason to be a penitent before God as David had when he was an adulterer, for the most abominable thing in the world is for a man to let the grass grow up to his ankles and do nothing. God never sent a man into the world to be idle. And there are some who make a tolerably fair profession, but who do nothing from one year's end to the other.

The next idea of heaven is, that it is A PLACE OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. It is a place where they serve God day and night in his temple, and never know weariness, and never require to slumber. Do you know what is the deliciousness of work? For although we must complain when people expect impossibilities of us, it is the highest enjoyment of life to be busily engaged for Christ. Tell me the day I do not preach, I will tell you the day in which I am not happy; but the day in which it is my privilege to preach the gospel, and labor for God, is generally the day of my peaceful and quiet enjoyment after all. Service is delight. Praising God is pleasure. Laboring for him is the highest delight a mortal can know, O, how sweet it must be to sing his praises, and never feel that the throat is dry! O, how blessed to flap the wing for ever and never feel it flag! O, what sweet enjoyment to run upon his errands, evermore to circle round the throne of God in heaven while eternity shall last, and never once lay the head on the pillow, never once feel the throbbings of fatigue, never once the pangs that admonish us that we need to cease, but to keep on for ever like eternity's own self—a broad river rolling on with perpetual floods of labor! O, that must be enjoyment! That must be, indeed, a heaven, to

serve God day and night in his temple! But you have served God on earth, and have had foretastes of that. I wish some of you knew the sweets of labor a little more, for although labor breedeth sweat, it breedeth sweets too—more especially labor for Christ. There is a satisfaction before the work; there is a satisfaction in the work; there is a satisfaction after the work, and there is a satisfaction in looking for the fruits of the work; and a great satisfaction when we get the fruits. Labor for Christ is, indeed, the robing-room of heaven; if it be not heaven itself, it is one of the most blissful foretastes of it. Thank God, Christian, if you can do any thing for your Master. Thank him if it is your privilege to do the least thing for him, for remember in so doing he is giving you a taste of the grapes of Eshcol. But you indolent people, you do not get the grapes of Eshcol, because you are too lazy to carry that big bunch. You would like it to come into your mouths without the trouble of gathering it; but you do not care to go forth and serve God. You sit still and look after yourselves, but what do you do for other people? You go to your place of worship; you talk about your Sunday-school and Sick Visitation Society, and so on. You never teach in the Sunday-school, and you never visit a sick person, and yet you take a great deal of credit to yourself while you do nothing at all. You will never know much of the enjoyments of heavenly glory until you know a little of the work of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

IV. Another view of heaven is, that it is A PLACE OF COMPLETE VICTORY AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. This is the battlefield; there is the triumphal procession. This is the land of the sword and the spear; that in the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight; that is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound—that is the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest. O, what a thrill of joy shall shoot through the hearts of all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in heaven, when death itself, the last of foes, shall be slain—when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ—when he shall have overthrown sin and trampled corruption as the mire of the streets—when the great shout of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be! O, dear brethren, you and I have foretastes of even that. We know what conquests, what souls' battles we have even here. Did you never struggle against an evil heart, and at

last overcome it? O, with what joy did you lift your eyes to heaven, the tears flowing down your cheeks, and say, "Lord, I bless thee that I have been able to overcome that sin." Did you ever have a strong temptation, and did you wrestle hard with it, and know what it was to sing with great joy, "My feet slipped; but thy mercy held me up?" Have you, like Bunyan's Christian', fought with old Apollyon, and have you seen him flap his dragon-wings and fly away? There you had a foretaste of heaven; you had just a guess of what the ultimate victory will be. In the death of that one Philistine you had the destruction of the whole army. That Goliath who fell beneath your sling and stone was but one out of the multitude who must yield their bodies to the fowls of heaven. God gives you partial triumphs that they may be the earnest of ultimate and complete victory. Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a grape of Eshcol, a foretaste of the joys of heaven!

V. Furthermore, without doubt one of the best views we can ever give of heaven is, that it is A STATE OF COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD, recognized and felt in the conscience. I suppose that a great part of the joy of the blessed saints consists in a knowledge that there is nothing in them to which God is hostile; that their peace with God has not any thing to mar it; that they are so completely in union with the principles and thoughts of the Most High; that his love is set on them; that their love is set on him; that they are one with God in every respect. Well, beloved, and have we not enjoyed a sense of acceptance here below? Blotted and blurred by many doubts and fears, yet there have been moments when we have known ourselves as well accepted as we shall know ourselves to be even when we stand before the throne. There have been bright days with some of us, when we could "set to our seal" that God was true; and, when afterward, feeling that the Lord knoweth them that are his, we could say, "And I know that I am his too." Then have we known the meaning of Dr. Watts when he sang,—

"When I can say, 'My God is mine;'  
When I can feel thy glories shine;  
I tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good or great.



While such a scene of sacred joys  
Our raptured eyes and souls employs,  
Here we could sit, and gaze away  
A long, an everlasting day."

We had such a clear view of the perfection of Christ's righteousness that we felt that God had accepted us, and we could not be otherwise than happy; we had such a sense of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, we felt sure that our sins were all pardoned, and that they never could be mentioned unto us in mercy for ever. And, beloved, though I have spoken of other joys, let me say, this is the cream of all of them, to know ourselves accepted in God's sight. O! to feel that I, a guilty worm, am now received in my Father's bosom; that I, a lost prodigal, am now feasting at his table with delight; that I, who once heard the voice of his anger, now listen to the notes of his love. This is joy—this is joy worth worlds. What more can they know up there than that? And were it not that our sense of it were so imperfect, we might bring heaven down to earth, and might at least dwell in the suburbs of the celestial city, if we could not be privileged to go within the gates. So you see, again, we can have bunches of the grapes of Eshcol in that sense. Seeing that heaven is a state of acceptance, we, too, can know and feel that acceptance, and rejoice in it.

VI. And, again, heaven is A STATE OF GREAT AND GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. You look forward to your experience in heaven, you sing,—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know  
All I desired or wished below;  
and every power find a sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy."

You are now looking at it darkly through a glass: there you shall see face to face Christ looks down on the Bible, and the Bible is his looking-glass. You look into it, and see the face of Christ as in a mirror darkly; but soon you shall look upon himself and see him face to face. You expect heaven as a place of peculiar manifestations. You believe that there he will unvail his face to you; that—

"Millions of years your wondering eyes  
Shall o'er your Saviour's beauties rove."

You are expecting to see his face, and never, never sin. You are longing to know the secrets of his heart. You believe that. in that day you shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the world of spirits. Well, beloved, though Christ does not manifest himself to us as he does to the bright ones there, have not you and I had manifestations even while we have been in this vale of tears? Speak, beloved; let your heart speak; hast thou not had visions of Calvary; has not thy Master sometimes touched thy eyes with eye-salve, and let thee see him on his cross? Hast thou not said —

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the cross I spend,  
Life, and health, and peace possessing,  
From the sinner's dying Friend.

Here I'd sit for ever viewing  
Mercy stream in streams of blood!  
Precious drops my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God"?

Have you not wept for joy and grief when you saw him bleeding out his life from his heart for you, and beheld him nailed to the tree for your sakes! O yes! I know you have had such manifestations of him. And have you not seen him in his risen glories? Have you not beheld him there exalted on his throne? Have you not by faith beheld him as the Judge of the quick and the dead, and as the Prince of the kings of the earth? Have you not looked through the dim future, and seen him with the crown of all the kingdoms on his head, with the diadems of all monarchies beneath his feet, and the scepters of all thrones in his hand? Have you not anticipated the moment of his most glorious triumphs, when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,  
with illimitable sway"?

Yes, you have, and therein you have had foretastes of heaven. When

Christ has thus revealed himself to you, you have looked within the veil, and, therefore, you have seen what is there, you have had some glimpses of Jesus while here; those glimpses of Jesus are but the beginning of what shall never end. Those joyous melodies of praise and thanksgiving are but the preludes of the notes of Paradise.

VII. And now, lastly, the highest idea of heaven, perhaps, is that it is A PLACE OF MOST HALLOWED AND BLISSFUL COMMUNION. I have not given you near half that I might have given you of the various characteristics of heaven, as described in God's word, but communion is the best. Communion! that word so little spoken of, so seldom understood. That word, communion! Dearly, beloved, you hear us say, "And the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all;" but there are many of you that do not know the meaning of that sweet heaven in a word. Communion! It is the flower of language; it is the honeycomb of words. Communion! You like to talk of corruption best, do you not? Well, if you like that filthy word, you are very willing to meditate upon it. I do so when I am forced to do it; but communion seems to me to be a sweeter word than that. You like to talk a great deal about affliction, don't you? Well, if you love the black word—ah! you have reason to love it; but if you love to be happy upon it, you may do so; but give me for my constant text and for my constant joy, communion. And I will not choose which kind of communion it shall be. Sweet Master, if thou givest me communion with thee in thy sufferings, if I have to bear reproach and shame for thy name's sake, I will thank thee; if I may have fellowship with thee in it, and if thou wilt give me to suffer for thy sake, I will call it honor, that so I can be a partaker of thy sufferings, and if thou givest me sweet enjoyments, if thou dost raise me up and make me to sit in heavenly places in Christ, I will bless thee. I will bless thee for ascension communion—communion with Christ in his glories. Do you not say the same? And for communion with Christ in death. Have you died unto the world, as Christ did die unto himself? And then have you had communion with him in resurrection. Have you felt that you are raised to newness of life, even as was he? And have you had communion with him in ascension, so that you could know yourself to be an heir to a throne in Paradise? If so, you have had the best earnest you can receive of the joys of Paradise. To be in heaven is to lean one's head upon the breast of Jesus. You have done it on earth? Then you

know what heaven is. To be in heaven is to talk with Jesus, to sit at his feet, to let our heart beat against his heart. If you have had that on earth, you have had some of the grapes of heaven.

Cherish, then, these foretastes, of whatever kind they may have been in your individual case. Differently constituted, you will all look at heaven in a different light. Keep your foretaste just as God has given it to you. He has given each of you some one; if you love it, it is most suitable to your own condition. Treasure it up; think much of it. Think more of your Master. For, remember, it is "Christ in you the hope of glory," after all, that is your only foretaste of heaven; and the more fully prepared shall you be for the bliss of the joyous ones in the land of the happy.

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# Forgiveness

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. - Isaiah 43:25

There are some passages of sacred writ which have been more abundantly blessed to the conversion of souls than others. They may be called salvation texts. We may not be able to discover how it is, or why it is, but certainly it is the fact, that some chosen verses have been more used of God to bring men to the cross of Christ than any others in his Word. Certainly they are not more inspired, but I suppose they are more noticeable from their position, from their peculiar phraseology more adapted to catch the eye of the reader, and more suitable to a prevailing spiritual condition. All the stars in the heavens shine very brightly, but only a few attract the eye of the mariner, and direct his course; the reason is this, that those few stars from their peculiar grouping are more readily distinguished, and the eye easily fixes upon them. So I suppose it is with those passages of God's Word which especially attract attention, and direct the sinner to the cross of Christ. It so happens that this text is one of the chief of them. I have found it, in my experience, to be a most useful one; for out of the hundreds of persons who have come to me to narrate their conversion and experience, I have found a very large proportion who have traced the divine change which has been wrought in their hearts to the hearing of this precious declaration of sovereign mercy read, and the application of it with power to their souls: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Hence I feel this morning somewhat pleased to have such a text, because I anticipate that my Master will give me souls; and I feel likewise somewhat afraid lest I should spoil the passage by my own imperfect handling thereof. I will, therefore, cast myself implicitly on the help of the Spirit, so that whatever I speak, may be suggested by him, and whatever he saith that may I speak, to the exclusion of my own thoughts as much as possible.

We shall notice first, this morning, the recipients of mercy - the persons of whom the Lord is here speaking; secondly, the deed of mercy, - "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions;" thirdly, the reason for mercy - "for mine own sake;" and fourthly, the promise of mercy - "I will not remember thy sins."

I. We are about to see who are THE RECIPIENTS OF MERCY; and I would have you all listen; peradventure there be some strayed in here who are the very chief of sinners - some who have sinned against light and knowledge, who have gone the full length of their powers for sin, so that they come here self-condemned, and fearing that for them there is neither mercy nor pardon. I am about to talk to you of the lovingkindness of our glorious Jehovah, and may some of you be led to read your own condition in those characters which I shall describe to you.

If you will turn to your Bibles, you will find who are the persons here spoken of. Look for example at the 22nd verse of the chapter from which our text is taken, and you will see, first, that they were prayerless people: "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." And are there not some prayerless ones sitting or standing here this morning? Might I not walk along these benches, and point my finger to one and another, and say, "Thou art not a praying one?" Or might I not reach out my hand to one and another upon this platform, and say, "Thou hast not been with God in secret, and held heart converse with him?" These prayerless ones may have repeated many a form of prayer, but the breathing desire, the living words, have not come from their lips. Thou hast lived, sinner, up to this time without sincere prayer, and if an ejaculation has been forced from thy lips from a fear that took hold of thee; if a cry has gone forth from thee when in the sufferings of a sick bed, because the pains of death gat hold upon thee; if it has not been thy habit to pray, the impressions of that trying period have soon been forgotten. Is prayer your constant practice, my hearers? How many of you now before me, ay, and behind me too, must confess that you have not prayed, that it is not your habit to hold communion with God. Prayerless souls are Christless souls; for you can have no real fellowship with Christ, no communion with the Father, unless you approach his mercy-seat, and be often there; and yet if you are condemning yourselves, and lamenting that this has been your condition,

you need not despair, for this mercy is for you: "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;" yet, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake."

Next, these persons were despisers of religion, for observe the language of the same verse: - "Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." And may I not say to some here - thou despisest religion, thou hatest God; thou art weary of him, and lovest not his services. As for the Sabbath-day, do not too many of you find it the most tiresome day in the week, and do you not, in fact, look over your ledger on the Sabbath afternoon? If you were compelled to attend a place of worship twice on the Sabbath-day, would you not think it the greatest and most terrible hardship that could be inflicted upon you? You have to find some worldly amusement to make the hours of the Sabbath-day pass away with any comfort at all. So far from wishing that "congregations might ne'er break up." and the Sabbath last for eternity, is it not to some of you the most tedious day of the week? You feel it to be a weariness, and are glad when it is gone. You do not understand the sentiment expressed by the poet:<P>

"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing.

You know nothing of the pain of banishment from the courts of Zion, whither the sacred tribes repair; and when there you do not hold communion with God, rejoicing that the hallowed place has become a Bethel - the house of God - the very gate of heaven. You can never say -

"My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss."

Ah, no! not only is religion unlovely to you, but it is a weariness. But if you are now convinced of this sin, and are repenting of it, and desire to be delivered from its power, then God speaks to you this morning, and says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake - return unto me, with unfeigned repentance, and I will have mercy upon

you."

Note, again, the character. They have been thankless persons: "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings." They have been unthankful. They had their cattle and their flocks all multiplied and increased many fold, but they did not bring even one of the small cattle to him in return. Thou never gavest him a kid for a burnt offering, but hast been like the swine, regardless of the oak which strews food upon the ground for thee; thou hast been a carnal worldly character, receiving a gift, but never thanking the Almighty who caused it to be bestowed; while the little chicken, after it has drunk of the stream, lifteth its head, as if to thank God who provided the water. Thou hast been fed, day by day, by an Almighty power, and yet thou hast never given in return even one of the small cattle of thy flock for a burnt offering. This is true of some who attend our houses of prayer; they very rarely give to any collection for the cause of God; they are like the man in America, of whom some one has told us, who boasted that religion had been to him a very cheap thing, costing him only a few cents a year, of whom a good man said, "The Lord have mercy on your little stingy soul." If a man has no more religion than that, if he has not a religion that will make him generous, he has no religion at all. I thought of that passage last Thursday night, while I was preaching: "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money." God needeth nothing at your hands, but he likes little presents, he loves now and then to receive of your substance; for you know that little as it is in his eyes, comparatively speaking it is great, because it comes from a friend. But some of you have never bought him a sweet cane with your money - never sang a hymn to his praise; you have attributed everything to your good luck, and have boasted that you have obtained everything you have got by the labour of your own hands, and that you can say, I have need to thank nobody for what I have. That has been thy spirit; thou hast given no thanks to God, - the God of heaven and earth; thou hast not gloried him, but thyself, and yet the Most High is willing to pardon thy sin in this thing, if thou art but unfeignedly penitent, and dost sue for forgiveness, for he saith also to you, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions."

Yet, again, these people were a useless people. "Neither hast thou filled



me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." It is well said, the chief end of man is to glorify God. For that purpose God made the sun, moon, and stars, and all his works, that they might honor him. And yet how many are there, even, perhaps among my hearers this morning, who have never honored God in their lives. Ask yourselves what have you done? If you were to write your own history, it would be little better than that of Belzoni's toad, which existed in the rock for three thousand years; you may have lived like it, but you have done nothing. What souls have you ever won to the Saviour? How has his name been magnified by you? Have you ever served him? How have you ever worked for him? What have you done for God? Have you not been cumberers of the ground; taking the nourishment of the earth where some better tree might have grown, and bearing no fruit to the great husbandman, or at least, only a few sorry crabs, that were not worth his acceptance. For all you have done, the world might as well have never known you. You have not been even so much use as the glow-worm, which, at least, serves to light the steps of the traveller. The world may possibly be glad to get rid of some of you, and rejoice when you are gone. Perhaps you have assisted in destroying the souls of those with whom you have been connected in life. You can recollect the time when you led that young man first into the ale house. You can remember the hour when you swore a most horrible oath; your child was within hearing, and learned to be profane also. You may look upon some souls who are going even now to damnation through your example; and in hell you may see spirits starting up from their iron beds, and hear them shrieking in their woe: "Who is it that led me here, and caused my soul to be destroyed? - thou art the author of my damnation." Is the indictment true? Will you not be compelled to plead guilty to the charge? Do you not even now repent of your great transgressions? Even if it be so, my Master authorizes me to say again, "Thus saith the Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out my transgressions, and will not remember thy sins."

Again, there are some who may be termed sanctuary sinners in Zion - and these are the worst of sinners. I can usually tell whether inquirers have been the children of pious parents or no, if after a confession of great guilt they feel unable to proceed at the remembrance of what they once were. Groaning, and sobbing, and tears running down

their cheeks, are the silent language of their woe. When I see this, I always know that the language that succeeds will be: "I have been the child of pious parents; and I feel that I am one of the worst of sinners, because I was brought up to religion; and yet I disregarded it, and turned aside from it." O yes, the worst of sinners are sinners in Zion, because they sin against light and knowledge; they force their way to hell, as John Bunyan says, over the Cross of Christ; and the worst way to hell is to go by the cross to it. Many of you now before me were consecrated to God by a beloved mother, and your father taught you to read and love the Scriptures of truth. You were brought up like Timothy; you well understand the theory of the way of salvation, and yet you come here, young men, some of you enemies to God and without Christ, and despisers of his word; some of you are even scoffers, or if not actually scoffers, you say religion is nought to you, and by your actions, if not by your words, declare it is nothing to you that Jesus should die. Ah! when I speak to you, I would not forget myself. Should it ever be my lot to wake up in hell, I should be amongst the most horribly damned there, for I had a most pious training, and should be forced to take my place with the sanctuary sinners. And you that are such, whom I am addressing now, are you not afraid? Ask yourselves now, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?" Do you tremble and shake for fear, and with a penitent heart desire forgiveness? If so, then I say again, in my Master's name - who spake nothing but love and mercy to penitent sinners, who said, "Neither do I condemn thee" - Jehovah now declares "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Yet, once more, we have here men who had wearied God: "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." You see the man who has been a professor of religion, and can look back twenty years ago, when he was a member of a Christian church; he was apparently walking in the fear of the Lord, and all men thought he had received the grace of God in truth; but he has turned aside into the paths of sin; sometimes his lips have been defiled with oaths, and his soul the bondsman of sin; but even now he is often found in God's house; sometimes he is affected to tears, and says within himself, "Surely I will return unto the Lord, for then was it better with me than now." Self-

condemned, he stands and weeps in the bitterness of his heart; and mark you, it may be this morning he has stepped into this vast assembly, and that his knees are knocking one against the other, yet it may be that his goodness shall prove like the morning cloud and the early dew, that passeth away; or it may be that the turning point is now come; "Now or never," as Baxter used to say; now God or Satan, now accepted or condemned. Poor backslider, return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon thee; he will blot out all thy sins, and so blot them out that he will not remember them against thee any more for ever.

These, then, are the characters who receive mercy. Some of you may say, "You seem to think us a bad lot" - and so I do. Others exclaim, "How can you talk to us in this way? We are a honest, moral, and upright people." If so, then I have no gospel to preach to you. You may go elsewhere if you will, for you may get moral sermons in scores of chapels if you want them; but I am come in my Master's name to preach to sinners, and so I will not say a word to you Pharisees except this - By so much as you think yourself righteous and holy, by so much shall ye be cast out of God's presence at last. Your sentence will be eternal banishment from the presence of him who hath said to every repenting sinner, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins."

II. The second point is, THE DEED OF MERCY. We have found out the persons to whom God will give mercy; now what is mercy's deed? It is a deed of forgiveness, and in speaking of it, I shall speak first of its being a divine forgiveness - "I, even I, am he." Divine pardon is the only forgiveness possible; for no one can remit sin but God only, and it matters not whether a Roman Catholic Priest, or any other priest shall say in the name of God, "I absolve thee from thy transgressions," it is abominable blasphemy. If a man has offended me I can forgive him, but if he has offended God I cannot forgive him. The only discharge possible is pardon by God; but then it is the only pardon necessary. Suppose I have so sinned that the king or the queen will not pardon me, that my brethren will not forgive me, and that I cannot pardon myself; if God absolves me, that is all the acquittal that will be necessary for my salvation. Perhaps I stand condemned by the law of my country: I am a murderer and must suffer on the scaffold; the queen refuses to pardon, and perhaps she does

right in such a refusal; but I do not want her forgiveness in order to enter heaven; if God acquits me, that will be enough. Were I such a reprobate that all men hissed at me and wished me gone from existence, if I knew that they would never forgive my crime - though I ought to desire my fellow- creatures' forgiveness - it would not be necessary that I should have it to enter heaven. If God says, I forgive thee, that is enough. It is only God that can forgive satisfactorily; because no human pardon can ease the troubled conscience. The self-righteous Pharisee may be content to give himself into the hands of a priest to be rocked to sleep in the cradle of delusion, but the poor convinced sinner wants something more than the arrogant dictum of a priest - ten thousand of them, with all their enchantments, he feels to be all in vain, unless Jehovah himself shall say, "I have blotted out thy sins for mine own sake."

Again, it is surprising forgiveness; for the text speaks as if God himself were surprised that such sins should be remitted: "I, even, I;" it is so surprising that it is repeated in this way, lest any of us should doubt it. And it is amazing to the poor sinner when first awakened to his sin and danger. It seems to be too good to be true, and he "wonders to feel his own hardness depart," the mercy offered is so overwhelming. It is said that Alexander, whenever he attacked a city, put a light before the gate of it; and if the inhabitants surrendered before the light was burnt out, he spared them; but if the light went out first, he put them all to death. But our Master is more merciful than this; for if he had manifested grace only while a small light would burn, where should we have been? There be some here seventy or eighty years of age, and God has mercy on you still; but there is a light you know which when once quenched, extinguishes all hope of pardon - the light of life. See then, grey-headed man, thy candle is burnt almost to the socket - it has but the snuff left. Seventy years thou hast been here living in sin, and yet mercy waits on thee; but thou shalt soon depart, and mark me, there is no hope for thee then. But surprising grace, mercy's message is still proclaiming -

"For while the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

Unutterable mercy! There is no sinner out of hell so black but that God

can wash him white. There is not out of the pit one so guilty that God is not able and willing to forgive him; for he declares the wondrous fact - "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions."

Notice once more, that it is a present forgiveness. It does not say I am he that will blot out thy transgressions, but that blotteth them out now. There are some who believe, or at least seem to imagine, that it is not possible to know whether our sins are forgiven in this life. We may have hope, it is thought, that at last there will be a balance to strike on our side. But this will not satisfy the poor soul who is really seeking pardon, and is anxious to find it; and God has therefore blessedly told us, that he blotteth out our sin now; that he will do it at any moment the sinner believes. As soon as he trusts in his crucified God, all his sins are forgiven, whether past, present, or to come. Even supposing that he is yet to commit them, they are all pardoned. If I live eighty years after I receive pardon, doubtless I shall fall into many errors, but the one pardon will avail for them as well as for the past. Jesus Christ bore our punishment, and God will never require at my hands the fulfilment of that law which Christ has honored in my stead; for then would there be injustice in heaven: and that be far from God. It is no more possible for a pardoned man to be lost than for Christ to be lost, because Christ is the sinner's surety. Jehovah will never require my debt to be paid twice. Let none impute injustice to the God of the whole earth: let none suppose that he will twice exact the penalty of one sin. If you have been the chief of sinners, you may have the chief of sinner's forgiveness, and God can bestow it now.

I cannot help noticing the completeness of this forgiveness. Suppose you call on your creditor, and say to him, "I have nothing to pay with." "Well," says he, "I can issue a distress against you, and place you in prison and keep you there." You still reply that you have nothing and he must do what he can. Suppose he should then say, "I will forgive all." You now stand amazed and say, "Can it be possible that you will give me that great debt of a thousand pounds?" He replies, "Yes, I will." "But how am I to know it?" There is a bond: he takes it and crosses it all out and hands it back to you, and says, "There is a full discharge, I have blotted it all out." So does the Lord deal with penitents. He has a book in which all your

debts are written; but with the blood of Christ he crosses out the handwriting of ordinances which is there written against you. The bond is destroyed, and he will not demand payment for it again. The devil will sometimes insinuate to the contrary, as he did to Martin Luther. "Bring me the catalogue of my sins," said Luther; and he brought a scroll black and long. "Is that all?" said Luther. "No," said the devil; and he brought yet another. "And now," said the heroic saint of God, "write at the foot of the scroll: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." That is a full discharge."

III. Now, very briefly, the third thing - THE REASON FOR MERCY. Says one poor sinner, "Why should God forgive me? I am sure there is no reason why he should, for I have never done anything to deserve his mercy." Hear what God says, "I am not about to forgive you for your own sake, but for my own sake." "But, Lord, I shall not be thankful enough." "I am not about to pardon you because of your gratitude, but for my name's sake." "But, Lord, if I am taken into thy church I can do very little for thy cause in future years, for I have spent my best days in the devil's service, surely the impure dregs of my life cannot be sweet to thee, O God." "I will not engage to forgive you for your sake, but for my own. I do not want you," says God, "I can do as well without you as with you, the cattle upon a thousand hills are mine; and if I pleased I could create a whole race of men for my service, who should be as renowned as the greatest monarchs, or the most eloquent preachers, but I can do as well without them, as with them; and I forgive you therefore for my own sake." Is there not hope for a guilty sinner here? It cannot be pleaded by any one that his sins are too great to be pardoned, for the amount of guilt is hereby put entirely out of consideration, seeing that God forgives not on account of the sinner, but for his own sake. Did you never hear of a physician visiting a man upon a sick bed, when the poor man said, "I have nothing to give you for your attention to me." "But," says the doctor, "I did not ask for anything; I attend you from pure benevolence; and moreover to prove my skill. It will make no difference to me how long you live, I love to try my skill, and let the world know that I have power to heal diseases. I want to get myself a name." And so God says, I desire to have a name for mercy; so that the worse you are, the more God is honored in your salvation. Go then to Christ, poor sinner - naked, filthy, poor, wretched, vile, lost, dead,

come as thou art, for there is nothing required in thee, except the need of him:

"This he gives you,  
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

"for mine own sake," says God, "I will forgive."

IV. Now to conclude - THE PROMISE OF MERCY. "And will not remember thy sins." There are some things which even God cannot do. Though it is true he is Omnipotent, yet there are some things he cannot do. God cannot lie - he cannot forsake his people - he cannot disown his covenant; and this is one of the things it might be thought he could not do - that is, forget. Is it impossible for God to forget? We finite creatures suffer many things to slip, but can the Almighty ever do so? That God who counteth the stars and calleth them all by their names - who knoweth how many animalculae there are in the mighty ocean - who notices every grain of dust that floats in the summer air, and is acquainted with every leaf of the forest, can he cease to remember? Perhaps we may answer "No." Not as to the absolute fact of the committal of the deed; but there are senses in which the expression is entirely accurate. In what sense are we to understand God's forgetfulness of our sins?

First of all, he will not exact punishment for them when we come before his judgment bar at last. The Christian will have many accusers. The devil will come and say "That man is a great sinner." "I don't remember it," says God. "That man rebelled against thee, and cursed thee," says the accuser. "I do not remember it," says God, "for I have said I will not remember his sins." Conscience says, "Ah! but Lord, it is true, I did sin against thee, and that most grievously." "I do not remember it," says God - "I said, I will not remember his sins." Let all the demons of the pit clamour in God's ear, and let them vehemently shout out a list of our sins, we may stand boldly forth at that great day, and sing, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" for God does not even remember their sin. The Judge does not remember it, and who then shall punish? Unrighteous as we were; wicked as we have been; yet he has forgotten it all. Who then can bring to remembrance what God has forgotten? He

says, "I will cast thy sins into the depths of the sea," not into the shallows where they might be fished up again, but into the depths of the sea, where Satan himself cannot find them. There are no such things as sins recorded against God's people. Christ has so taken them away, that sin becomes a nonentity to Christians - it is all gone, and through Jesu's blood they are clean.

The second meaning of this is, I will not remember thy sins to suspect thee. There is a father, and he has a wayward son who went away that he might live a life of looseness and profligacy; but after a while he comes home again in a state of penitence. The father says, "I will forgive thee." But he says next day to his younger son, "There is business to be done at a distant town to-morrow, and here is the money for you to do it with." He does not trust the returned prodigal with it. "I have trusted him before with money," says the father to himself, "and he robbed me, and it makes me afraid to trust him again." But our heavenly Father says, "I will not remember thy sins." He not only forgives the past, but trusts his people with precious talents. He never suspects them. He has never one suspicious thought. He loves them just as much as if they had never gone astray. He will employ them to preach his gospel; he will put them into the Sunday-school, and make them servants of his Son: for he says, "I will not remember thy sins."

Again: he will not remember in his distribution of the recompense of the reward. The earthly parent will kindly pass over the faults of the prodigal; but you know when that father comes to die, and is about to make his will, the lawyer sitting by his side, he says, "I shall give so much to William, who always behaved well, and my other son shall have so-and-so, and my daughter, she shall have so much; but there is that prodigal, I have spent a large sum upon him when he was young, but he wasted what he received, and though I have taken him again into favour, and for the present he is going on well; still I think I must make a little difference between him and the others. I think it would not be fair - though I have forgiven him - to treat him precisely as the rest;" and so the lawyer puts him down for a few hundred pounds, while the others, perhaps, get their thousands. But God will not remember your sins like that; he gives all an inheritance. He will give heaven to the chief of sinners as well as to the



chief of saints. When he divides the portion to his children, it may be he will put Mary Magdalene as high as he does Peter, and the thief as high as he does John; yea, the malefactor who died on the cross is as much in the sight of God as the most moral person that ever lived. Here is a blessed forgetfulness. What sayest thou, poor sinner? Is thy heart drawn by a mysterious inspiration to the foot of the cross? Then I thank my Master; for I trust the one object of my life is to win souls for Christ, and if I may be blessed in that, my life shall be happy. Still do you say, "My sins are too great to be forgiven." Nay, but O man, as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his mercy above thy sins, and so far does his grace exceed thy thoughts. Oh, but sayest thou, "He will not accept me." What then is the meaning of this text - "He is able to save unto the uttermost;" or this - "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and again - "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Do you still say, "This does not include me." Oh be not so faithless, but rather believe. Oh! had I the power, God knows I would weep myself away in order to win your souls.

"But feeble our compassion proves,  
And can but weep where most it loves."

I can do nothing but preach God's gospel; but since the moment Christ forgave me, I cannot help speaking of his love. I turned away from his gospel, and would have none of his reproofs. I cared not for his voice or his Word. That blessed Bible lay unread; these knees refused to bend in prayer, and my eyes looked on vanity. Has he not pardoned? Has he not forgiven? Yes. Then sooner may this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, than cease to proclaim free-grace in all its mighty displays of electing, redeeming, pardoning, and saving mercy. Oh! how loud ought I to sing, seeing I am out of hell, and delivered from condemnation. And if I am out of hell, why should not you be? Why should I be saved and not another? It was for sinners, remember, that Jesus came. Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus - the very chief of sinners, were accepted, and why do you foolishly conclude that you are cast out? Oh, poor penitent if you perish, you will be the FIRST penitent who ever did so. God give you his blessing, my dear friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## Forgiveness Made Easy

Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. -  
Ephesians 4:32

The heathen moralists, when they wished to teach virtue, could not point to the example of their gods, for, according to their mythologists, the gods were a compound of every imaginable, and, I had almost said, unimaginable vice. Many of the classic deities surpassed the worst of men in their crimes: they were as much greater in iniquity as they were supposed to be superior in power. It is an ill day for a people when their gods are worse than themselves. The blessed purity of our holy faith is conspicuous, not only in its precepts, but in the character of the God whom it reveals. There is no excellency which we can propose but we can see it brightly shining in the Lord our God: there is no line of conduct in which a believer should excel but we can point to Christ Jesus our Lord and Master as the pattern of it. In the highest places of the Christian faith you have the highest virtue, and unto God our Father and the Lord Jesus be the highest praise. We can urge you to the tenderest spirit of forgiveness by pointing to God who for Christ's sake has forgiven you. What nobler motive can you require for forgiving one another? With such high examples, brethren, what manner of people ought we to be? We have sometimes heard of men who were better than their religion, but that is quite impossible with us: we can never, in spirit or in act, rise to the sublime elevation of our divine religion. We should constantly be rising above ourselves, and above the most gracious of our fellow Christians, and yet above us we shall still behold our God and Saviour. We may go from strength to strength in thoughts of goodness and duties of piety, but Jesus is higher still, and evermore we must be looking up to him as we climb the sacred hill of grace.

At this time we wish to speak a little concerning the duties of love and forgiveness; and here we note, at once, that the apostle sets before us the

example of God himself. Upon that bright example we shall spend most of our time, but I hope not quite so much as to forget the practical part, which is so much needed in these days by certain Unforgiving spirits who nevertheless assume the Christian name. The theme of God's forgiving love is so fascinating that we may linger awhile, and a long while too, upon that bright example of forgiveness which God has set before us, but from it all I hope we shall be gathering grace by which to forgive others even to seventy times seven.

We shall take the text word by word, and so we shall obtain the clearest divisions.

I. The first word to think about is "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE." We use these words very often; but probably we have never thought of their Three, and even at this time we cannot bring forth the whole of their meaning. Let us touch thereon with thoughtfulness, praying the good Spirit to instruct us. "For Christ's sake;" all the good things which God has bestowed upon us have come to us "for Christ's sake," but especially the forgiveness of our sins has come "for Christ's sake." This is the plain assertion of the text. What does it mean? It means, surely, first, for the sake of the great atonement which Christ has offered. The great God can, as a just Lawgiver and King, readily pass by our offences because of the expiation for sin which Christ has offered. If sin were merely a personal affront toward God, we have abundant evidence that he would be ready enough to pass it by without exacting vengeance; but it is a great deal more than that. Those who view it as a mere personal affront against God are but very shallow thinkers. Sin is an attack upon the moral government of God; it undermines the foundations of society, and were it permitted to have its way it would reduce everything to anarchy, and even destroy the governing power and the Ruler himself. God hath a great realm to govern, not merely of men that dwell on the face of the earth, but beneath his sway there are angels, and principalities, and powers, and we do not know how many worlds of intelligent beings. It would certainly be a monstrous thing to suppose that God has made yonder myriads of worlds that we see sparkling in the sky at night without having placed some living creatures in them; it is far more reasonable to suppose that this earth is an altogether insignificant speck in the divine dominion, a mere

province in the boundless empire of the King of kings. Now, this world having rebelled against God high-handedly, as it has done, unless there were a satisfaction demanded for its rebellion it would be a tolerated assault upon the dominion of the great Judge of all, and a lowering of his royal influence over all his domain. If sin in man's case were left unpunished it would soon be known through myriads of worlds, and in fact by ten thousand times ten thousand races of creatures, that they might sin with impunity; if one race had done so, why not all the rest? This would be a proclamation of universal license to rebel. It would probably be the worst calamity that could happen—that any sin should go unpunished by the supreme Judge. Sometimes in a state, unless the lawgiver executes the law against the murderer, life will be in peril, and everything will become insecure, and therefore it becomes mercy to write the death-warrant: so is it with God in reference to this world of sinners. It is his very love as well as his holiness and his justice which, if I may use such a term, compels him to severity of judgment, so that sin cannot and must not be blotted out till atonement has been presented. There must first of all be a sacrifice for sin, which, mark you, the great Father, to show his love, himself supplies, for it is his own Son who is given to die, and so the Father himself supplies the ransom through his Son, that Son being also one with himself by bonds of essential unity, mysterious but most intense. If God demands the penalty in justice, he himself supplies it in love. 'Tis a wondrous mystery, this mystery of the way of salvation by an atoning sacrifice; but this much is clear, that now God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, because satisfaction has been made to the injured honour of the divine government, and justice is satisfied. I want you to consider for a moment how readily God may now blot out sin since Christ hath died. The blotting out of sin seems hard till we see the cross, and then it appears easy enough. I have looked at sin till it seemed to blind me with its horror, and I said in myself, "This damned spot can never be washed out; no fuller's soap can change its hue; sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots. O sin, thou deep, eternal evil, what can remove thee?" And then I have seen the Son of God dying on the cross, and read the anguish of his soul, and heard the cries which showed the torment of his spirit when God his Father had forsaken him, and it has seemed to me as if the blotting out of sin were the easiest thing under heaven. When I have seen Jesus die I have not been able to

understand how any sin could be difficult to remove. Let a man stand on Calvary and look on him whom he hath pierced, and believe and accept the atonement made, and it becomes the simplest thing possible that his debt should be discharged now that it is paid, that his freedom should be given now that the ransom is found, and that he should be no longer under condemnation, since the guilt that condemned him has been carried away by his great Substitute and Lord. It is then because of what Jesus Christ has suffered in our stead that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

The second rendering of the text would be this, that God has forgiven us because of the representative character of Christ. It should never be forgotten that we originally fell by a representative. Adam stood for us, and he was our federal head. We did not fall personally at the first, but in our representative. Had he kept the conditions of the covenant we had stood through him, but, inasmuch as he fell, we fell in him. I pray you cavil not at the arrangement, because there lay the hope of our lace. The angels probably fell individually, one by one, and hence they fell irretrievably,—there was no restoring them: but as we fell in one Adam, there remained the possibility of our rising in another Adam; and therefore in the fulness of time God sent forth his Son Jesus Christ, born of a woman, made under the law to become the second Adam. He undertook to remove our burdens and to fulfil the conditions of our restoration. According to covenant he must appear in our nature, and that nature in the fulness of time he assumed. He must bear the penalty: that he hath done in his personal suffering and death. He must obey the law: that he has done to the utmost. And now Christ Jesus, having borne penalty and fulfilled law, is himself justified before God, and stands forth before God as the representative of all that are in him. God for Christ's sake has accepted us in him, has forgiven us in him, and looks upon us with love infinite and changeless in him. This is how all our blessings come to us—in and through Christ Jesus; and if we are indeed in him, the Lord doth not only forgive us our sin, but he bestows upon us the boundless riches of his grace in him: in fact, he treats us as he would treat his Son, he deals with us as he would deal with Jesus. Oh, how pleasant to think that when the just God looks upon us it is through the reconciling medium, he views us through the Mediator. We sometimes sing a hymn

which says -

"Him and then the sinner see,  
Look through Jesus' wounds on me,"

and this is just what the Lord doth. He counts us just for the sake of our Saviour's atonement, and because of his representative character.

Now go a little further. When we read "for Christ's sake" it surely means for the deep love which the Father bears him. My brethren, can you guess a little of the love which the Father hath toward the Only-begotten? We cannot pry into the wondrous mystery of the eternal filiation of the Son of God lest we be blinded by excess of light; but this we know, that they are one God,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and the union which exists between them is intense beyond conception. "The Father loveth the Son," was always true, and is true now; but how deeply, how intensely he loves the Son no mind can conceive. Now, brethren, the Lord will do great things for the sake of a Son whom he loves as he loveth Jesus, for in addition to the fact of his eternally loving him, as being one with him by nature and essence, there is now the superadded cause of love arising out of what the Lord Jesus hath done as the servant of the Father. Remember that our Lord Jesus has been obedient to his Father's will—obedient to death, even to the death of the cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name. One of the sweetest thoughts, to my mind, which I sometimes suck at when I am alone, is this—that God the Father will do anything for Christ. Here is also another piece of a honeycomb—when I can plead Christ's name I am sure to win my suit of him. "For Christ's sake" is a plea that always touches the heart of the great God. Show that for you to receive such and such a blessing will glorify Christ, and the Father cannot withhold it, for it is his delight to honour Jesus. We speak after the manner of men, of course, and on such a theme as this we must be careful, but still we can only speak as men, being only men. It is the joy of the Father to express his love to his Son. Throughout all ages they have had fellowship one with another: they have always been one in all their designs, they have never differed upon any points and cannot differ; and you notice when our Lord says, "Father, glorify thy Son," he is so knit with the Father that he adds, "that thy Son also may glorify thee." Their mutual love is inconceivably great, and,

therefore, brethren, God will do anything for Jesus. God will forgive us for Christ's sake; yea, he has done so in the case of thousands around me. And thou, big black sinner, if thou wilt go to God at this moment and say, "Lord, I cannot ask thee to forgive me for my own sake, but do it out of love for thy dear Son," he will do it, for he will do anything for the sake of Jesus. If thou art at this time conscious of sin so as to despair of thyself, it is well that thou shouldest be so, for self-despair is only common-sense, since there is nothing in thyself upon which thou canst rely. But do catch at this hope—it is not a straw, it is a good substantial life-buoy—if thou canst ask forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, God will do anything for Jesus, and he will do anything for thee for his dear sake.

So we read our text once more in the light of a truth which grows out of the love of God; namely, that God does forgive sin for the sake of glorifying Christ. Christ took the shame that he might magnify his Father, and now his Father delights to magnify him by blotting out the sin. If you can prove that any gift to you would reflect glory upon Christ, you may depend upon it you will have it. If there is anything under heaven that would make Christ more illustrious the Father would not spare it for a moment. If thou seest that for thee to have thy sin forgiven would raise the fame of the Saviour, go and plead that argument with God, and thou shalt surely prevail. Will it not make Christ glad if he saves such a sinner as thou art? Then go with this argument in thy mouth, "Father, glorify thy Son by exalting him as a glorious Saviour in saving me." I find this often a great lever at a dead lift,—to say unto the Lord, "Lord, thou knowest the straits I am in; thou knowest how undeserving I am; thou knowest what a poor, undone creature I am before thee; but if thy dear Son shall help and save me the very angels will stand and wonder at his mighty grace, and so it will bring glory to him, therefore I entreat thee be gracious unto me." Be sure thou art certain to prevail if thou canst plead that it will glorify Christ, and surely thou wouldest not wish to have a thing that would not glorify him. Thy prayer shall always be prevalent, if thy heart be in such a state that thou art willing to have or not to have, according as it will honour thy Lord: if it will not glorify Christ, be thou more than content to do without the choicest earthly good; but be thou doubly grateful when the boon that is granted tends to bring honour to the ever dear and worshipful name of Jesus. "For Christ's sake." It is a precious word; dwell

upon it, and lay up this sentence in the archives of thy memory—the Father will do anything for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son.

II. Now, secondly, we pass on to observe what it is which we are told in the text has been done for us, and to us, for Christ's sake. "God for Christ's sake HATH FORGIVEN YOU."

First notice, that he has done this certainly. The apostle does not say he hopes so, but he says, "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Are you in the number of the forgiven, my dear hearer? Hast thou believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then, as sure as you have believed, God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Have you put your trust in the atoning sacrifice? Then God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. You have not begun to be a Christian, I hope, with the idea that one day, at some future period, you may obtain forgiveness. No. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Pardon is not a prize to be run for, but a blessing received at the first step of the race. If you have believed in Jesus your sin has all gone—all gone; all your sin has been erased from the records of the past, never to be mentioned against you for ever. The moment a sinner looks to Christ, the burden of his sin rolls from off his shoulders never to return. If Christ hath washed thee, (and he has if thou hast believed in him,) then thou art clean every whit, and before the Lord thou standest delivered from every trace of guilt. Pardon is not a matter of hope, but a matter of fact. Expectation looks for many a blessing, but pardon is a realized favour which faith holds in her hand even now. If Christ took thy load, thy load cannot remain on thine own back: if Christ paid thy debts, then they do not stand in God's books against thee. How can they? It stands to reason that if thy Substitute has taken thy sin and put it away, thy sin lies no more on thee. God for Christ's sake hath forgiven thee. Get hold of that grand truth, and hold it, though all the devils in hell roar at thee. Grasp it as with a hand of steel; grip it as for life: "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me,"—may each one of us be able to say that. We shall not feel the divine sweetness and force of the text unless we can make a personal matter of it by the Holy Ghost.

Then notice that God has forgiven us continuously. He not only forgave us at the first all our sins, but he continues daily to forgive, for the act of forgiveness is a continuous one. I have sometimes heard it said that we



were so forgiven when we first believed that there is no need to ask for further forgiveness; to which I reply—We were so completely forgiven when we first believed that we ought continually to ask for the perpetuity of that one far-reaching act, that the Lord may continue to exert towards us that fulness of forgiving grace which absolved us perfectly at the first, that we may continue to walk before him with a sense of that complete forgiveness, clear and unquestioned. I know I was forgiven when first I believed in Christ; and I am equally sure of it now: the one absolution continues to ring in my ears like joy-bells which never cease. Pardon once given continues to be given. When through doubt and anxiety I was not sure of my pardon, yet it was still true; for he that believeth on him is not condemned, even though he may write bitter things against himself. Beloved friend, catch hold of that, and do not let it go. Divine pardon is a continuous act.

And this forgiveness on God's part was most free. We did nothing to obtain it by merit, and we brought nothing wherewith to purchase it. He forgave us for Christ's sake, not for aught that we had done. True, we did repent, and did believe, but repentance and faith he gave us, so that he did not forgive us for the sake of them, but purely of his own dear love, because he delighteth in mercy, and is never more like himself than when he passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

Remember, also, that he forgave us fully. It was not here and there a sin that he blotted out, but the whole horrible list and catalogue of our offences he destroyed at once. The substitution of our Lord has finished that matter even to perfection: -

"Because the sinless Saviour died,  
My sinful soul is counted free;  
For God, the Just, is satisfied  
To look on him and pardon me."

All our transgressions are swept away at once, carried off as by a flood, and so completely removed from us that no guilty trace of them remains. They are all gone! O ye believers, think of this, for the all is no little thing: sins against a holy God, sins against his loving Son, sins against gospel as well as against law, sins against man as well as against God, sins of the

body as well as sins of the mind, sins as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, and as great as the sea itself: all, all are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. All this evil was rolled into one great mass, and laid upon Jesus, and having borne it all he has made an end of it for ever. When the Lord forgave us he forgave us the whole debt. He did not take the bill and say, "I strike out this item and that," but the pen went through it all;—PAID. It was a receipt in full of all demands, Jesus took the handwriting which was against us and nailed it to his cross, to show before the entire universe that its power to condemn us had ceased for ever. We have in him a full forgiveness.

And let it be remembered that this forgiveness which God has given us for Christ's sake is an eternal forgiveness. He will never rake up our past offences and a second time impute them, he will not find us on an evil day, and say, "I have had great patience with you, but now will I deal with you after your sins." Far otherwise; he that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. Irreversible is the pardon of heaven. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never repents what he has given, or forgiven. "Tis done, 'tis done for ever: Jehovah absolves and the sentence stands fast for ever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Blessed be God for eternal pardon!

And since I could not find a word to finish with but this one, I will use it: he hath divinely pardoned us. There is such a truth, reality, and emphasis in the pardon of God as you can never find in the pardon of man; for though a man should forgive all you have done against him, if you have treated him very badly, yet it is more than you could expect that he should quite forget it, but the Lord says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more for ever." If a man has played you false, although you have forgiven him, you are not likely to trust him again. It is an old proverb, "Never ride a broken-knee'd horse," and it is not a bad proverb either. But see how the Lord deals with his people. When Peter was set on his legs again he was a broken-knee'd horse enough, and yet see how gloriously the Lord rode that charger on the day of Pentecost. Did he not

go forth conquering and to conquer? The Lord lets bygones be bygones so completely that he trusts pardoned souls with his secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; and he entrusts some of us with his choicest treasures, for Paul said, "He hath put me in trust with the gospel, though I was a blasphemer." He commits to our keeping that priceless casket which encloses the best hope of men, namely, the gospel of Jesus. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." This shows how perfect is our forgiveness,—nay, I must put it, how divine is the forgiveness which we have received. Let us rejoice in that grand promise which comes to us by the mouth of Jeremiah of old, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here is annihilation—the only annihilation I know of—the absolute annihilation of sin through the pardon which the Lord gives to his people. Let us sing it as though it were a choice hymn—"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none."

III. Now, if you have drank into the spirit of our subject you will be strengthened to bear what I have to say to you upon a point of practice. "FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Let me say, at the commencement, that I do not know of anyone here present who has fallen out with anybody else, and therefore I shall make no personal allusions. If I did know of quarrels and bickerings it is very likely that I should say about the same, but I do not happen to know of any, and if therefore, my remarks should come home, I would earnestly beg each one so affected to believe that what I say is intended for him, and to receive it as a pointed, personal message from God.

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now observe how the apostle puts it. Does he say "forgiving another"? No, that is not the text, if you look at it. It is "forgiving, one another." One another! Ah, then that means that if you have to forgive to-day, it is very likely that you will yourself need to be forgiven to-morrow for it is "forgiving one another." It is turn and turn about, a mutual operation, a co-operative service. In fact, it is a joint-stock business of mutual forgiveness, and members of Christian churches should take large shares

in this concern. "Forgiving one another." You forgive me, and I forgive you, and we forgive them, and they forgive us, and so a circle of unlimited forbearance and love goes round the world. There is something wrong about me that needs to be forgiven by my brother, but there is also something wrong about my brother which needs to be forgiven by me, and this is what the apostle means—that we are all of us mutually to be exercising the sacred art and mystery of forgiving one another. If we always did this we should not endure those who have a special faculty for spying out faults. There are some who, whatever church they are in, always bring an ill report of it. I have heard this sort of thing from many—"There is no love among Christians at all." I will tell you the character of the gentleman who makes that observation; he is both unloving and unlovely, and so he is out of the track of the pilgrims of love. Another cries, "There is no sincerity in the world now." That man is a hypocrite: be you quite sure of that. Judge a bird by its song, and a man by his utterance. The censorious measure our corn, but they use their own bushels. You may know very well what a man is by what he says of others. It is a gauge of character which very seldom will deceive you, to judge other men by their own judgment of their fellows. Their speech betrays their heart. Show me your tongue, sir! Now I know whether you are sick or well. He that speaketh with an ill tongue of his neighbour hath an ill heart; rest assured of that. Let us begin our Christian career with the full assurance that we shall have a great deal to forgive in other people, but that there will be a great deal more to be forgiven in ourselves, and let us set our account upon having to exercise gentleness, and needing its exercise from others, "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Note again. When we forgive, it is a poor and humble business compared with God's forgiving us, because we are only forgiving one another, that is, forgiving fellow-servants; whereas when God forgives us it is the Judge of all the earth forgiving, not his fellows, but his rebel subjects, guilty of treason against his majesty. For God to forgive is something great; for us to forgive, though some think it great, should be regarded as a very small matter.

Then reflect upon the matter to be forgiven. Our Lord in his parable tells

us that the fellow-servant owed a few pence, but the servant himself was debtor to his master many talents. What we owe to God is infinite, but what our fellow creature owes to us is a very small sum. What did he do which has so much offended you? "He said a very shameful thing about me." It was very bad of him, no doubt. "Then he played me a very nasty trick, and acted very ungraciously; in fact, he behaved scandalously, and if you hear the story you will be quite indignant." Well, I am indignant. He is a bad fellow, there is no doubt about it; and so are you. So were you certainly when you first came to God; bad as he is to you, you have been much worse to the Lord. I will warrant that his blacks towards you are whites compared with your blacks in the presence of God. "Oh, but you would not believe how basely he acted." No, and I dare say I should hardly believe it if I heard how base you have been to the Lord; at any rate, it should make our eyes fill with tears to think how we have grieved our God, and vexed his Spirit. Some of us have had so much manifest forgiveness, so much outward sin forgiven, that for us to forgive ought to be as natural as to open our hands. After such forgiveness as the Lord has bestowed on some of us, we should be wicked servants indeed if we were to take our brother by the throat and say, "Pay me what thou owest." We should deserve to be given over to the tormentors by our angry Master if we did not count it joy to pass by a brother's fault.

If anyone here who is a Christian finds a difficulty in forgiveness, I am going to give him three words which will help him wonderfully. I would put them into the good man's mouth. I gave them to you just now, and prayed you to get the sweetness of them; here they are again! "For Christ's sake." Cannot you forgive an offender on that ground? Ah, the girl has acted very shamefully, and you, her father, have said some strong things, but I beg you to forgive her for Christ's sake. Cannot you do it with that motive? It is true your son has behaved very wrongly, and nothing hurts a father's heart more than the wicked conduct of a son. You did in a fit of anger say a very stern thing, and deny him your house for ever. I entreat you to eat your words up for Christ's sake. Sometimes when I have been pleading a case like that, the person I have been persuading has kindly said, "I will do it for you, sir." I have said, "I will thank you if you will do it at all, but I would rather you would have said you would do it for my Master, for what a blessed Master he has been to you! Do it for

his sake." I may be speaking very plainly home to some of you. I hope I am. If there be any of you who have got into a bad state of heart and have said you never will forgive a rebellious son, do not say so again till you have looked at the matter, for Christ's sake. Not for the boy's sake, not for your neighbour's sake who has offended you, not for any other reason do I urge you to mercy, but for Christ's sake. Come, you two brothers, who have fallen out, love each other for Christ's sake; come, you two sisters, come you two friends who have been alienated, get together directly, and end all your ill feeling for Christ's sake. You must not keep a drop of malice in your soul, for Christ's sake. Oh charming word, how it melts us, and as it melts it seems to leave no trace of anger behind it: for Christ's sake our love suffers long and never fails.

I do not know how to put this next word I am going to say. It is a paradox. You must forgive or you cannot be saved; at the same time you must not do it from compulsion; you must do it freely. There is a way of carrying this into practice, though I cannot explain it in words. You must forgive, not because you are forced to, but because you heartily do it. Remember, it is of no use for you to put your money into that offering box as you go out unless you remember first to forgive your brother. God will not accept the gifts, prayers, or praises of an unrelenting heart. Though you leave all your substance to his cause, he will not accept a penny of it if you die in an unforgiving temper. There is no grace where there is no willingness to overlook faults. John saith, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" The very prayer that teaches you to ask for mercy bids you say "forgive us, as we forgive our debtors." Unless you have forgiven others you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer.

Finally, I want to say to you all, brethren, that, as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, if we are to forgive one another, there must be some other things which we ought to do. And the first is, do not let us provoke each other to offend. If I know that a man does not like a certain thing, I will not thrust it in his way. Do not say, "Well, but if he is short tempered, I cannot help it; he should not be so ready to take offence. I cannot be always paying deference to his absurd sensitiveness." No; but, brother, your friend is very ready to take offence, and you know that he is; have

respect, then, to his infirmity of temper, such as you would have if he were afflicted in body. If you have rheumatism or gout, your friends do not go stamping across the room and saying, "He ought not to mind that; he ought not to feel it." Kind-hearted people step across the floor with a light step, for fear they should hurt the poor suffering limb. If a man has a diseased mind and is very irritable, treat him gently, pity his infirmity, and do not irritate him. A friend wrote me a short while ago a letter of serious complaint against a brother who had been very angry with him, and had spoken very sharply while excited to passion. I felt bound to hear the other side of the story, and I was obliged to say, "Now, you two brothers are both wrong. You, my brother, lost your temper; but you, my other brother, irritated him, so that I do not wonder he did lose his temper. And when you saw he had lost his temper why did you not go away, or do something to quiet him? No, but you remained to increase the wrath, and then wrote to expose him." I blame the wood for burning, but what shall I say of the bellows? It was wrong to blaze, but was it right to fan the flame? Very often when a man is angry he may not be the only one to blame. Therefore, brothers and sisters, if we are to forgive each other, do not let us provoke each other to offend.

In the next place, do not make offences. Oftentimes a man has been offended at another for no reason at all. One person has said of another as he passed him in the street, "He will not even nod to me. He is too proud to own me, because I am a poor man." Now, that beloved friend who was thus blamed could not see much further than his hand, for he was shortsighted. Another has been censured for not hearing, though he was deaf, and another for not shaking hands when his arm was crippled. Do not imagine offences where they are not intended.

Next, do not take offences where they are intended. It is a splendid thing if you will not be offended. Nothing makes a man feel so small as when you accept what he intended for an insult as if it were a compliment, and thank him for it. Can you master yourself to that point? Remember, when you have conquered yourself you have conquered the world. You have overcome everybody when you have so fully overcome your own spirit that you remain content with that which naturally would excite your wrath.

Then, if you must be offended, dear brother, do not exaggerate an offence. Some good women, I was about to say, and men also, when they come as tale-bearers with a charge, make a great many flourishes and additions. They go a long way round, and they bring innumerable beliefs, and suggestions, and hints, and hearsays into the business, until a midge's egg becomes as huge as ever was laid by an ostrich. I begin coolly to strip off the feathers and the paint, and I say, "Now, I do not see what that point had to do with it, or what that remark has in it all I can see when I come to look at the bare fact is so-and-so, and that was not much, was it?" "Oh, but there was more intended." Do not believe that, dear brother, dear sister. If there must be something wrong, let it be as little as you can. If you have a telescope, look through the large hole and minify instead of magnifying, or, better still, do not look at it at all. A blind eye is often the best eye a man can have, and a deaf ear is better by far than one which hears too much. "Also take no heed," says Solomon, "unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." Something you have done may irritate a servant, and he may make remarks which are unbecoming and impertinent. Don't hear what he is muttering. Keep out of hearing, he will be sorry to-morrow, and if he thinks you did not hear him he will continue in your service and be faithful to you. What would you do if your master picked you up for every word, and if he caught up every sentence that you uttered? How would you live at all if he reckoned sharply with you? No, dear friends, as you have to forgive one another, do not take offence, and when offence is given do not exaggerate it, and, if you can, do not even observe it.

Then, again, do not publish offences. There has been something very offensive said. What then? Do not repeat it. Do not go first to one, and then to another, and say, "Now this is quite private, and mind you keep it a secret; So-and-so has spoken shamefully." Better that you should let your heart break than go up and down with a fire-brand in this fashion. If a brother has done wrong why should you do wrong? You will be doing wrong if you publish his fault. Remember how the curse came upon Noah's son for exposing his father; and how much better it is for us all when there is anything wrong to go backward and cover it, without even looking at it ourselves, if we can help it. Cover it up: cover it up. Charity covereth a multitude of sins. Not only one, two, three sins will charity



cover, but she carries a cloak which covereth a whole host of faults.

Above all, my brethren, and with this I close, never in any way, directly or indirectly, avenge yourselves. For any fault that is ever done to you, the Master says unto you,—resist not evil. In all things bend, bow, yield, submit. "If you tread on a worm it will turn," says somebody. And is a worm your example? Christ shall be mine. It is a shocking thing when a Christian man forgets his Lord to find an excuse for himself among the poor creatures under his feet. But if it must be so, what does a worm do when it turns? When you have trodden on a worm, does it bite? Does the worm hurt any one? Ah, no. It has turned, but it has turned in its agony and writhed before you, that is all. You may do that, if you must. Brother, the most splendid vengeance you can ever have is to do good to them that do you evil, and to speak well of them that speak ill of you. They will be ashamed to look at you; they will never hurt you again if they see that you cannot be provoked except it be to greater love and larger kindness. This ought to be the mark of Christians; not "I will have the law of you," or "I will avenge myself," but "I will bear and forbear even to the end." "Vengeance is mine. I will repay it, saith the Lord." Do not take that into your hand which God says belongs to him, but as he for Christ's sake has forgiven you, so also forgive all those who do you wrong. "How long am I to do that?" says one. "I would not mind doing it three or four times." There was one of old who would go the length of six or seven, but Jesus Christ said "unto seventy times seven. That is a very considerable number. You may count whether you have yet reached that amount, and if you have you will now be glad to begin again, still forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. God help us to be patient to the end. Though I have not just now been preaching Christ Jesus as the object of the sinner's trust, yet remember that he must also be the object of our imitation. This is the kind of doctrine which Christ himself preached, and therefore, since he preached continually this love to our neighbour, and forgiveness of our enemies, we ought both to preach and to practise it. Go ye and believe in him, and be imitators of him, remembering that he forgave his murderers upon the cross whereon he wrought out our redemption. May his Spirit rest upon you evermore. Amen.

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## **The Form And Spirit Of Religion**

Let fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.  
- 1 Samuel 4:3

These men made a great mistake: what they wanted was the Lord in their midst; whereas they imagined that the symbol of God's presence, the ark of the covenant, would be amply sufficient to bestow upon them the assistance which they required in the day of battle. As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being: he hath within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit; his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual—always so; but since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that his religion should have something of the outward, external, and material, in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it. This was especially the case under the old dispensation. The religion of the Jew is really a heavenly and spiritual thing; a thing of thought, a thing that concerns the mind and spirit; but the Jew was untaught; he was but a babe, unable to understand spiritual things unless he saw them pictured out to him, or, (to repeat what I have just said) unless he saw them embodied in some outward type and symbol: and therefore God was pleased to give the Jew a great number of ceremonies, which were to his religion what the body is to man's soul. The Jewish religion taught the doctrine of the atonement, but the Jew could not understand it, and therefore God gave him a lamb to be slain every morning and every evening, and he gave him a goat over which the sins of the people were to be confessed, and which was to be

driven into the depths of the wilderness, to show the great doctrine of a substitute and atonement through him. The Jewish religion teaches, as one of its prominent doctrines, the unity of the Godhead; but the Jew was ever apt to forget that there was but one God; and God, to teach him that, would have but one temple, and but one altar upon which the sacrifice might rightly be offered. So that the idea of the one God was (as I have already said) made incarnate in the fact that there was but one temple, but one altar, and but one great high priest. And mark, this is true of our religion—Christianity: not true to so full an extent as of Judaism—for the religion of the Jew had a gross and heavy body—but our religion has a body transparent, and having but little of materialism in it. If you ask me what I would call the materialism of our religion, the embodiment of the spiritual part of that in which we trust and hope, I would point, first of all, to the two ordinances of the Lord, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would point you next to the services of God's house, to the Sabbath day, to the outward ritual of our worship: I would point you to our solemn song, to our sacred service of prayer; and I would point you also—and I think I am right in so doing—to the form of sound words, which we ever desire to hold fast and firm, as containing that creed which it is necessary for men to believe if they would hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day; for the Apostle Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." So that it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses, that religion must have a body, that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision, and that we may see it.

Now, three points this morning inferred from our narrative. The first point is this—that the outward form of religion is to be carefully and reverently observed. But my second and most important head is this—you will notice that the very men who have the least of the spirit of religion are the most superstitiously observant of the form of it; just as you find the people here, who did not care for God, had a very superstitious regard for that chest called the ark of the covenant. And then, my third point will be, that those who trust in the outward form of religion, apart from the spirit of it, are fearfully deceived, and the result of their deception must be of the most fatal character. The first point I feel is necessary, lest I

should lead any to despise the form of religion, while endeavoring to insist upon the absolute necessity of attending in the first place to the spirit of it.

I. In the first place then, **THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED.** This ark of the covenant was with the Jew the most sacred instrument of his religion. There were many other things which he held holy: but this ark always stood in the most holy place, and it was rendered doubly sacred, because, between the outstretched wings of those cherubic figures that rested upon the mercy-seat, there was usually to be seen a bright light, called the Shekinah, which manifested that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubims, was there. And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the forefront of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instruments of the law—that is, the ark; and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up. When the tribes came to it, there was no ford, but the priests put the staves of the ark upon their shoulders, and they marched with solemn pace down to the waters' edge, and before the presence of the ark the waters receded, so that the people went through dry-shod. And when they had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground; for the priests, blowing the trumpets and carrying the ark, went before, when they compassed the city seven days, and at last, by the power of the ark, or rather by the power of that God who dwelt within the ark, the walls of Jericho fell flat down, and every man went straight up to the slaughter. These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right, and they would be sure to triumph; and, while I shall have in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth, and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

It is quite certain, in the first place, that the form of religion must never

be altered. You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they be correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. I should think it is a high sin and treason against heaven, if, believing that baptism signifieth immersion, and immersion only, I should pretend to administer it by sprinkling; or, believing that baptism appertaineth to believers only, I should consider myself a criminal in the sight of God if I should give it to any but those who believe. Even so with the Lord's Supper. Believing that it consists of bread and wine, I hold it to be highly blasphemous in the Church of Rome to withhold the cup from the people; and knowing that this ordinance was intended for the Lord's people only, I consider it an act of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven, when any are admitted to the Lord's Supper who have not made a profession of their faith and of their repentance, and who do not declare themselves to be the true children of God. And with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, no alteration must be allowed here. I know that forms of doctrine are very little, compared with the spirit and the heart; but still we must not alter even the form of it. It has often been said, that we ought not to have a strict religion. I believe that is just the very thing we ought to have: a religion that is of such a cast that it does not know how to alter; a religion that comes from the Infallible Head of the Church, that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, and which to the latest time is to be like the Law and the Prophets—not on jot or tittle of it must fail while the earth endureth. The men who think that we may alter this and alter that, and still maintain the spirit of religion, have some truth on their side; but let them remember, that while the spirit of religion may be maintained in the midst of many errors, yet every error tends to weaken our spirituality. And, beside that, have no right to consider the effect upon ourselves merely. Whatever form of religion God has ordained, it is ours to practise without the slightest alteration; and to alter any one of the ordinances of God is an act of dire profanation; however reasonable that alteration may seem to be, it is treason against high heaven, and is not to be permitted in the Church of Christ. "Hold fast the form of sound words," said Paul, "which thou hast heard of me;" or, as I remember to have said before, while the form of religion is not power, yet unless the form be carefully observed, it is not easy to

maintain the power. It is like an egg-shell enclosing the egg; there is no life in the shell, but you must take care you do not crack it, or else you may destroy the life within. The ordinances and doctrines of our faith are only the shell of religion—they are not the life; but we must take care that we do not hurt so much as the outward shell, for if we do, we may endanger the life within; though that may manage to live, it must be weakened by any injury done to the outward form thereof.

And as the form must not be altered, so it must not be despised. These Philistines despised the ark. They took it and set it in their idol temple, and the result was that their idol god, Dagon, was broken in pieces. They then sent it through their cities, and they were smitten with emerods. And then, being afraid to put it within walls, they set it in the open country, and they were invaded with mice, so that everything was eaten up. God would not have any dishonour put even upon the outward form of his religion; he would have men reverently take care that they did no dishonour even to his ark; it might be nothing but gopher-wood, but because, between the wings of those cherubim God had dwelt, the ark was to be held sacred, and God would not have it dishonoured. Take care, ye that despise God, lest ye despise his outward ordinances. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God's House, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing—all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains; the body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul; and as I would have no man maim my body, even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul, so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it.

Yet one more remark, and that a very solemn one. As the outward form is neither to be altered nor despised, so neither is it to be intruded upon by unworthy persons. You remember that this ark of the covenant, after it was brought back from the land of the Philistines, was set in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and the Bethshemites took off the lid, and looked into the ark of the Lord, and, for this, the Lord "smote of that people fifty-thousand and three-score and ten men; and the people

lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." These Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonouring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within, and the sight of those marvellous tables of stone struck them with death; for the law, when it is not covered by the mercy-seat, is death to any man, and it was death to them. Now, you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage: "He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." How frightful an announcement is that! A curse is pronounced upon the man who dares to touch even the outward form of religion, unless he hath the power of it; and we know there is nothing which excites God's holy anger more swiftly than a man's attending to the ordinances of his house and making an outward profession of being in Christ, while he has no part nor lot in the matter. Oh, take heed. The outward ordinances of Christ are not the vitality of religion, but nevertheless they are so solemnly important, that we must neither alter nor despise them, nor rush into them without being invited; for if we do so, the curse of God must light upon us for having despised the holy thing of the Most High God of Israel.

And now, before I close this first head, let me remark, that the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved. We have in our reading had two instances of that. There was holy Eli: he knew very well that the ark of God was not God; he understood that it was but the outward sign of the inward and spiritual; yet when the ark of God was taken, mark the poor old man's trouble: his heart broke, and then he fell down and broke his neck. Then there was that nameless woman. Her husband was the priest who attended to this very ark, but he was a man whose character I cannot describe better than by saying that he was a son of Belial. It is hard for a woman to believe religion if she has a minister for a husband who is profane and wicked. This woman's husband not only committed wrongs against God, but against her. He was a filthy and unclean person, who polluted the very courts of the Lord's house with his fornications; and yet she had such faith in her God, that she knew how to love the religion which her husband, by his awful character, brought into

disrepute. She knew how to distinguish between the man and his duty, between the priest and the priesthood, between the officer and the office. I do wonder at her. I am sure there is nothing that staggers our faith like seeing a minister walking inconsistently; but this man was the chief minister, and her own husband, living in known sin, and a sin which came home to her, because he sinned against her. I am sure it was wonderful that she believed at all; but so strong was her faith and attachment to her religion, that though, like Eli, she knew that the ark was not God, that the form was not the inward thing, yet the form itself was so precious to her, that the pangs of child-birth were hurried on prematurely and in the midst of her pain, this still was uppermost—that the ark of the Lord was taken. It was in vain to cheer her with the news that her child was born; it was an idle tale to her, and she rejoiced not in it. She lay in a swoon; but at last, opening her eyes, and remembering that her husband was dead, and that therefore, according to Jewish usage, it was her duty to give the child a name, she faintly opened her lips before she died, and said, "Call his name Inglorious (Ichabod) for the glory is departed;" and then she added this reason for it: she did not say, "because my husband is dead," though she loved him; she did not say, "because my father-in-law, Eli, is dead" or "because my nation has been defeated," but she added that all-significant reason, "because the ark of the Lord was taken;" and she died. Oh, I would to God that we all loved God's house, and loved the ways of God, and the ordinances of God as much as she did. While we attach no superstitious importance to the outward ceremony, I wish we thought as much of holy things, because of the Holy One of Israel. as did Eli, and this nameless, but noble woman.

Thus I have preached upon the first head, and no ceremonialist here, I am sure, can differ from me, for they must all say it is true. Even the Puseyite will confess that this is just what he believes—that ceremonies ought to be carefully observed. But I shall not agree with Mr. Puseyite in the second head.

II. Now, it is a notorious fact, that **THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS.** We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither



repent, nor pray, nor seek God and his prophets; yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in every country where there had been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly, that the people who don't know anything about true religion, have always been the most careful about the forms. Do you want to know the man who used to swallow widows' houses, and devour the patrimonies of the fatherless? Do you want to know the hypocrites, the deceivers, in the days of Christ? Why, they were the Pharisees, who "for a show made long prayers;" they were the men who gave alms to the poor in the corners of the street—the men that tithed the anise, and the mint, and the cummin, and forgot the weightier matters of the law, such as justice and righteousness. If you wanted to find the seducer, the unjust judge, the liar, the perjured man, in the days of Christ, you had only to ask for the man who had fasted thrice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. These Pharisees would do any wicked action, and never stick at it; yet if in drinking wine a small gnat should have fallen in and been swallowed with it, they would have considered themselves defiled, because their law did not allow them to eat a creature from which the blood had not been withdrawn. Thus they strained at the gnat, thus getting the reputation of being very religious, and swallowed the camel, hump and all. You smile; but what they did in their day is done now. You know the Romanists; did you ever know one of them who would not think it to be a very high offence against the Majesty of Heaven, if he were to eat any meat on Good Friday? Do you know anyone of them who did not think it necessary to keep Lent with strict punctilious observance? Notice how carefully they go to their places of worship on the Sabbath morning, how diligently they observe that sacred rite of crossing their foreheads with holy water. How necessary is it, that the holy water and everything else of the same kind, should be tenderly cared for. And do not the same persons in their own countries keep their theatres open on the Sabbath day? Do you not find the very men, who are so solemnly observant of their religion in the morning, forgetting it all in the evening; thinking no more of the Sabbath, which they call holy, than if it were any other day, but making it more a day of merriment than any day of the week? Look again at our Church of England; God be thanked that there are so many true Evangelical men in the midst of it; but there are certain sections there to whom my remarks will apply. Do you want to know the men who

know nothing at all about the new birth, who do not know what it is to be justified by faith, who have not a spark of religion? Do you know where to find them? They are the men that never said their creed without turning their heads the right way, that never said the name of Jesus without bowing their heads most reverently; they are the men who always take care that the church should be builded so as to be a goodly edifice, in order that the parishioners going there may see the glory of God in the glory of his house; they are the people who mark every red letter day, who take care that every rubric is attended to, who think that holly on Christmas is a most heavenly thing, and a few flowers upon the altar almost equal to the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. These are the gentlemen who could no more preach without a cassock than they could live without a head. Of course they have not any religion at all, and because the inner life is clean gone, evaporated, dissipated, they have to be so extremely particular that they observe the outward form of it. I know many Evangelical Churchmen (and they are generally precise enough) that would break through every form. I could point you out this morning some two or three clergymen of the Church of England who are heretical enough to be sitting here and listening to the words of one who is a Dissenter, and of course a Schismatic, but who would no more think of calling me a Schismatic than they would think of flying, and would give me the right hand of fellowship with all their hearts. I believe that many of them would forget the rubrics if they could, and, if it were in their power, would cut their catechism all to pieces, and turn half of their church prayer-book out of doors. And these are the men that have most religion; they care least about the form but they have most of the grace within; they have more true religion, more evangelism, more of the grace of God in their hearts, than fifty of their Puseyite brethren.

But let me come to Dissenters, for we are just as bad. I must deal with all alike. We have among us a certain class of people, a sort of dissenting Puseyites, Where the Puseyite thinks it necessary to keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday, these good brethren take as much care to keep holy day the wrong way, as the others the right way. They think it would be a grievous sin to go to chapel on Good Friday, and they are solemnly in earnest that they should never break the law of the church not to observe holy days. To them it is a very sacred thing that they should always be

found in their chapel twice on the Sunday; they think it highly necessary that they should have their children baptized, or that they should be baptized themselves, and that they should take the Lord's Supper. That is all well and good; but alas! we must confess it, there are some among us who, if they are orthodox in their opinions and precise in their outward practice, are quite content to be utterly destitute of the power of religion. I must deal faithfully with all. I know in all our dissenting denominations there are to be found many self-righteous persons, who have not any religion at all, but who are the most precise people in all the world to stick up for the outward form of it. Do you not know some old member of the church here and there? Well, you say, if anybody in the church is a hypocrite, I should say old So-and-so is one. If you were to propose any alteration in anything, oh! how these gentlemen would bristle up; how they would draw their swords. They! they love every nail in the chapel door, they would not have a different colour for the pulpit for the world. They will have everything strictly observed. Their whole salvation seems to depend upon the rightness of the form. Oh no, not they; they could not think of altering may of the forms of their church. You know it is quite as easy for a man to trust in ceremonials, when the are severely simple, as for a man to rely upon them with they are gorgeous and superb. A man may as much trust in the simple ordinance of immersion and the breaking of bread, as another may trust in the high mass and in the prayers of priests. We man have Rome in Dissent, and Rome in the Church of England, and Rome anywhere; for wherever there is a trust in ceremonies, there is the essence of Popery, there is anti-Christ and the man of sin. Oh! take heed of this any of you who have been relying upon your ceremonies. This is just the truth, that the more zeal for ceremonies, generally the less power of vital godliness within. But now, how is it that the man who would not eat anything but salt-fish on Good Friday, cheats his neighbour on Saturday? How is it that the man who never would by any means go to anything but an orthodox sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Baptist Chapel, can be found committing acts of injustice in his daily business, and perhaps more filthy deeds still? I will tell you, the man feels he must have some righteousness or other, and when he knows himself to be a good-for-nothing rascal, he feels he has not got a moral righteousness, and therefore he tries to get a ceremonial one. Mark the man that drinks and swears, that commits all kinds of iniquity, and you

will very often find him (I have known such cases) the most superstitiously reverent man that can be found. He would not go inside a place of worship without taking off his hat immediately. He will curse and swear outside, perhaps, and it never pricks his conscience; but to walk up the aisle of a church with his hat on—oh! how frightful. He feels, if he did so, he would be lost for ever. He would not forget to tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, but all the while the weightier matters of the law are left totally unregarded. Another reason is, because a religion of ceremonies is so much easier than true religion. To say Ava Maria and Pater Nosters is easy enough; you may soon get it over, and it does not check the conscience much. To go to chapel twice on the Sunday—there is nothing very hard in that. It is not half so hard as turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is not half so hard as breaking off one's sin by righteousness, and putting one's trust in Christ Jesus alone. Therefore, because the thing is so easy, people like it better. Again it is so complimentary. When the Romanist beats his back, and flogs his flesh, why is it that he likes that better than the simple gospel, "Believe and live?" Why, because it just flatters his pride. He thinks he is beating the devil out of himself, but he is in reality beating him in—the devil of pride is coming in. He whispers, "Ah! you are a good man to have flogged yourself like that! you will carry yourself to heaven by the merit of your wounds and bruises." Poor human nature always like that. In fact, the more exacting a religion is, the better people like it. The more religion ties you up, and binds you, if it does not touch the heart, the better people like to carry it out. Hindooism has its great hold upon the people, because they can get a great stock of merit by walking with spikes in their shoes; or rolling themselves many thousands of miles, or drinking the filthy waters of the Ganges, or offering themselves to die. All these things please human nature. "Believe and live" is too humbling; to trust alone in Christ casts down man's high looks; therefore man says, "Away with it!" and he turns to anything rather than to Christ.

Besides, there is another reason. Men always like the religion of ceremonies, because it does not need the giving up of their favourite sins. "Why", says a man, "if all that is needed for me to be saved, is to have the Sacrament given me by the priest when I come to die, what a delightful religion that is! I can drink, swear, and do just as I like. I have nothing to

do but to get greased at last with holy oil, and off I go to heaven with all my sins about me." Says another, "We can have all our gaities and frivolities, all the pomp of life and the pride of flesh; all that we need is to get confirmed; then, afterwards, sometimes to go to church, take a handsomely bound prayer-book and Bible, be very attentive and observant, and the bishop will no doubt set us all right." This just suits many men, because there is no trouble about it. They can keep on with their gaities and with their sins, and yet they believe they can go to heaven with them. Men do not like that old-fashioned gospel which tells them that sin and the sinner must part, or else they must be damned. They do not like to be told that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and that old-fashioned text, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," will never be palatable to human nature. Human nature does not mind what you tell it to do, so long as you do not tell it what to believe. You may tell it to observe this, that, and the other, and the man will do it, and thank you, and the harder it is, the better he will like you; but once tell him, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved," his pride is all up at once; he cannot endure it, and he hates the man that preaches it to him, and drives the very thought of the gospel from his soul.

III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that TO TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING, AND WILL END IN THE MOST TERRIFIC CONSEQUENCES. When these people had got the ark into the camp, they shouted for joy, because they thought themselves quite safe; but, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works, and ceremonial observances! How frightful is that delusion which teaches for the gospel a thing which is not "the gospel," nor "another gospel;" but it is a thing that would pervert the gospel of Christ. My hearer, let me ask thee solemnly, what is thy ground of hope? Dost thou rely on baptism? O man, how foolish art thou! What can a few drops of water, put upon an infant's forehead, do? Some lying hypocrites tell us that children are regenerated by drops of water. What kind of regeneration is that? We have seen people hanged that were regenerated in this fashion. There have been men that have lived all their

lives whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, and murderers, who have been regenerated in their baptism by that kind of regeneration. Oh, be not deceived by a regeneration so absurd, so palpable even to flesh and blood, as one of the lying wonders that have come from hell itself. But mayhap thou sayest, "Sir, I rely upon my baptism, in after life." Ah, my friends, what can washing in water do? As the Lord liveth, if thou trusteth in baptism thou trusteth in a thing that will fail thee at last. For what is washing in water, unless it is preceded by faith and repentance? We baptize you, not in order to wash away your sins, but because we believe they are washed away beforehand; and if we did not think you believed so, we would not admit you to participation in that ordinance. But if you will pervert this to your own destruction, by trusting in it, take heed; you are warned this morning. For as "circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," so baptism availeth nothing.

I may have some here who are saying within themselves, "Well, if I do not go to heaven, nobody will, for I have been brought up to my church as regularly as possible; I was regularly confirmed; my godfathers and godmothers stood for me in my childhood, and all after the right fashion. I have come here, it is true, but it is about the first offence I ever committed, coming into this Schismatic conventicle; if it please God to forgive, I will never do so again. I always go to church, and I have no doubt that by taking the Sacrament and saying my prayers I shall go to heaven." Ah! you are awfully deceived, for unless you are born again you must come back to the old standard after all—unless you are in blessed union with the Lamb, unless you have found repentance for sin, unless you have true living faith in the Lord Jesus, you may keep all these things, you may observe every jot and tittle, but the gates of heaven must be shut in your face, and "depart from me, I never knew you," must be your doom, even though you reply, "Thou hast eaten and drunk in our streets, and we have listened to thy voice." No, my friends, be ye Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Dissenters, it matters not, ye have your ceremonies; and there are some among us that rely upon them. This one truth cuts at the root of us all. If this be our hope, it is a foul delusion. We just have faith in Jesus, we must have the new heart and the right spirit; no outward forms can make us clean. The leprosy lies deep within; and unless there be an inward work, no outward work can ever satisfy God,

and give us an entrance into Paradise.

But before I close, there is one thing I want you to notice, and that is, that this ark not only could not give victory to Israel, but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it. This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. What would the Romanist think, if I should tell him that his outward forms can never save him; and how would he grind his teeth if I were to tell him, as I do, that the outward forms can never save his priest, for his priest and he must be lost together unless they have some better trust than this! But we have even in Protestant churches too much priestcraft. People say, "Well, if the Gospel does not save me, I am confident of the salvation of my minister." Rest assured that he that serveth at God's altar is no more secure from destruction, unless he hath a living faith in Christ, than you yourselves. Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and so must every priest be if he relies on ceremonies himself or teaches others to do so. I cannot imagine a more frightful death-bed than that of a man who has been a priest—I mean a man who has taught others to trust in ceremonies. When he is buried, it will be said of him that he died in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection; but oh! the moment after death, when he opens his eyes to see his delusion! while he was on earth he was fool enough to think that drops of water could save him, that a piece of bread and a cup of wine could renew his heart, and save his soul, but when he gets into another world he will lose this folly, and then will the thought flash upon him, like a lightning flash, writhing his soul with misery—Ah! I am destitute of the one thing needful; I had no love to Christ, I never had that repentance which needed not to be repented of; I never fled to Jesus, and now I know that that hymn is true -

"Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God has given,  
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise the soul to heaven."

Oh! how frightful then afterwards to meet his parishioners, to see those to whom he had preached, and to be howled at through the pit by men whom he was the instrument of destroying, by telling them to trust in a

rotten foundation. Let me free myself from any such fear as that. As the Lord my God liveth before whom I stand this day—man, woman, my brother, my sister, in the race of Adam, if thou reliest on anything short of the blood of Jesus Christ, thou trustest in a lie; and if thy salvation ends in anything short of a thorough change of heart, if it makes thee anything less than a new creature in Christ Jesus, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it, thou hast a religion which is not equal to the necessities of thy case, and when thou needest it most, it will reel beneath thy feet and leave thee without a standing place whereon to rest, overwhelmed with dismay and overcome by despair.

Now, before I send you away, let me make this last remark. I hear one say, "Sir, I renounce all trust in good works and ceremonies. Tell me how can I be saved?" The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment; God must and will punish sin; Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the room, place, and stead of all that believe on him. Your business, then, this morning is to make this inquiry, Do I want a Savior? Do I feel that I want him? And my business, if you answer that question aright is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and thou shalt be saved.

Ah! there is one in heaven to-day, I firmly believe, who was always a worshipper in this place, and at New Park Street—a young man who was led here to listen to the gospel, and was converted to God; and last Sabbath morning was caught away to heaven in the burning house at Bloomsbury—one of those young men who was taken out of the ruins, one who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth here. It is stated in some of the papers, that his mother was far from a religious woman, and was somewhat given to drink; he had to struggle with some temptation and opposition, but he was enabled to hold on his way, and then, in such an hour as he thought not, the Son of Man came for him, and caught him to himself in the midst of flames and crashing timbers and the uprising of smoke. Oh! I may have one here, that, ere another Sabbath morning comes, may be launched into eternity, if not by the same deplorable process, yet in as hasty a manner; and as my soul rejoices over that young man, to think that God should have honoured me in bringing him to Christ before he took him up to heaven, I must lament that there are any



of you in a peril so frightful, as to be living without God, without Christ, without a hope of heaven; to have death hanging over you, and yet not to tremble at it. Oh! this morning I beseech you, close with Christ. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little: for blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

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## **The Form Of Sound Words**

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. - 2 Timothy 1:13

My incessant anxiety for you, dearly beloved in the faith of Jesus Christ, is that I may be able, in the first place, to teach you what God's truth is; and then, trusting that I have to the best of my ability taught you what I believe to be God's most holy gospel, my next anxiety is, that you should "hold fast the form of sound words;" that whatever may occur in the future, should death snatch away your pastor, or should anything occur which might put you in perilous circumstances, so that you were tempted to embrace any system of heresy, you might every one of you stand as firm and as unmoved as rocks, and as strong as mountains be, abiding in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," whereof ye have heard, and which we have proclaimed unto you. If the gospel be worth your hearing, and if it be a true gospel, it is worth your holding, and our anxiety is, that you should be so established in the faith, that you may, "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful that has promised."

The Apostle most earnestly admonished Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." I do not suppose that by this it is intended that Paul ever wrote out for Timothy a list of doctrines; or that he gave him a small abstract of divinity, to which he desired him to subscribe his name, as the

articles of the church over which he was made a pastor. If so, doubtless the document would have been preserved and enrolled in the canons of Scripture as one of the writings of an inspired man. I can scarce think such a creed would have been lost, whilst other creeds have been preserved and handed down to us. I conceive that what the Apostle meant was this: - "Timothy, when I have preached to you, you have heard certain grand outlines of truth; you have heard from me the great system of faith in Jesus Christ; in my writings and public speakings you have heard me continually insist upon a certain pattern or form of faith; now I bid you, my dearly beloved son in the gospel, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

This morning I shall first attempt to tell you what I conceive to be a "form of sound words," which we are to hold fast. In the second place, I shall endeavour to urge upon you the strong necessity of holding fast that form. In the third place, I shall warn you of some dangers to which you will be exposed, tempting you to give up the form of sound words. Then, in the last place I shall mention the two great holdfasts, faith and love in Christ Jesus, which are the great means of "holding fast the form of sound words."

1. What is a "FORM OF SOUND WORDS?" Ten thousand persons will quarrel upon this. One will say, "My creed is a form of sound words;" another will declare that his creed also is sound, if not infallible. We will not, therefore, enter into all the minutiae which distinguish creeds from each other, but just simply say, that no system can be a form of sound words unless it is perfectly scriptural. We receive no doctrines as the doctrines of men; whatever authority come to us which is not the authority of the Holy Spirit, and inspired by God, is no authority at all to us. We laugh to scorn all the dogmatism of men; we care for nothing they assert, however strongly they declare it, or however eloquently they plead for it; we utterly reject and discard it; we hold it a sin to "take for doctrines the commandments of men;" we give no heed to the traditions that are handed down to us. If our opponent cannot quote text or verse for anything he advances, we hold no argument with him. Scripture is the only weapon we can acknowledge.

But since it is said that texts may be found to prove almost everything, we must remark, that a form of sound words must be one that exalts God and puts down man. We dare not for a moment think that any doctrine is sound that does not put the crown upon the head of Jesus, and does not exalt the Almighty. If we see a doctrine which exalts the creature, we do not care one fig about what arguments may be brought to support it; we know that it is a lie, unless it lays the creature in the very dust of abasement, and exalts the Creator. If it does not do this, it is nothing but a rotten doctrine of pride; it may dazzle us with the brilliant malaria rising from its marshes, but it never can shed a true and healthful light into the soul; it is a rotten doctrine, not fit to be builded on the gospel, unless it exalts Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah the Father, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit.

We think, also, that we may judge of the soundness of doctrine by its tendency. We can never think a doctrine sound, when we see plainly upon its very surface that it has a tendency to create sin in men. Unless it be a doctrine according to godliness, we cannot conceive it to be a doctrine of God. Unless the believer of it, earnestly and truthfully believing it, doth give himself to virtue - unless that doctrine has in itself a natural tendency to promote in him a love to the right - we are at first sight suspicious of it; and if we find on examination that it is a licentious doctrine - it may have all the glitter and the glare of novelty, but we cast it away as not being the doctrine of Christianity, because it does not promote holiness in the soul.

We shall, perhaps, be asked what we do regard as a form of sound words, and what those doctrines are which are scriptural, which at the same time are healthful to the spirit and exalting to God. We answer, we believe a form of sound words must embrace, first of all, the doctrine of God's being and nature, we must have the Trinity in Unity, and the Unity in Trinity. Any doctrine, which hath not the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as equal persons in one undivided essence, we cast aside as being unsound, for we are sure that such doctrines must be derogatory to God's glory; and if they be so it is enough for us. If any man despise either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, we despise him, and despise his teachings, and cannot even say to him, "I wish you God speed."

Now, we hold, that a form of sound words must look upon man aright as well as upon God aright; it must teach that man is utterly fallen, that he is sinful, and for his sin condemned, and in himself altogether hopeless of salvation. If it exalts man by giving him a character which is not a true one, and clothing him with a spurious robe of righteousness, woven by his own fingers, we reject and discard it utterly.

And next, we think that a doctrine that is sound must have right views of salvation, as being of the Lord alone; unless we find in it everlasting, unchanging love, working out a salvation for a people "who were not a people," but were made a people by special grace; unless we find discriminating love, others may say what they will - we cannot consider such a creed to be a form of sound words, unless we discern redeeming mercy openly and boldly taught; unless we see final perseverance, and all those great and glorious truths which are the very bulwarks of our religion, others may embrace the doctrine as being a form of sound words; but we cannot, and we dare not. We love the old system of our forefathers; we love the old truths of Scripture, not because they are old, but because we cannot consider anything to be truth which doth not hold the scriptural view of salvation. Methinks Paul himself, in this very chapter, gives us a form of sound words, where he speaks of "God who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

I need not stop this morning to prove to you that which I have briefly hinted at as a form of sound words, because you believe it, and believe it firmly. I am not about to urge you to receive it, because I know you have already received it; but what I have to say is, "Hold fast," I beseech you, "the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

**II. Now let me show you THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING FAST THIS FORM OF SOUND WORD, AND KEEPING IT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, FOR THE CHURCH'S SAKE, FOR THE WORLD'S SAKE.**

First, for your own sake, hold it fast, for thereby you will receive ten thousand blessings; you will receive the blessing of peace in your

conscience. I protest, before God, that if at any time I ever doubt one of the great things I receive from God, instantly there comes an aching void which the world can never fill, and which I can never get filled until I receive that doctrine again, and believe it with all my heart. When at any time I am cast down and dejected, I always find comfort in reading books which are strong on the doctrines of the faith of the gospel; if I turn to some of them that treat of God's eternal love, revealed to his chosen people in the person of Christ; and if I remember some of the exceeding great and precious promises made to the elect in their covenant head, my faith at once becomes strong, and my soul, with wings sublime, mounts upwards towards its God. You cannot tell, beloved, if you have never tasted, how sweet is the peace which the doctrines of grace will give to the soul; there is nothing like them. They are -

"A sovereign balm for every wound,  
A cordial for our fears."

They are God's sweet lullaby, wherewith he singeth his children to sleep, even in storms. They are God's sheet anchors, which are cast out into the sea, to hold our little vessels fast in the midst of tempests. There is a "peace of God which passeth all understanding," which accrues to a man who is strong believer, but you know the tendency of the day is to give up old land marks and to adopt new ones, and to avow anything rather than the old-fashioned divinity. Well, my dear friends, if any of you like to try new doctrines, I warn you, that if you be the children of God you will soon be sick enough of those new-fangled notions, those newly invented doctrines, which are continually taught. You may, for the first week, be pleased enough with their novelty; you may wonder at their transcendental spirituality, or something else, which entices you on; but you will not have lived on them long, before you will say, "Alas! alas! I have taken in my hands the apples of Sodom; they were fair to look upon, but they are ashes in my mouth." If you would be peaceful, keep fast to the truth, hold fast the form of sound words: so shall "your peace be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

"Hold fast the form of sound words," again, let me say, because it will tend very much to your growth. He who holds fast the truth will grow faster than he who is continually shifting from doctrine to doctrine. What

a mighty number of spiritual weathercocks we have in this world now. We have men who in the morning hear a Calvinistic preacher, and say, "Oh, it is delightful;" in the evening they hear an Arminian, and they say, "Oh, it is just as good; and no doubt they are both true, though one contradicts the other!" The glorious charity of the present day is such, that it believes lies to be as good as truth; and lies and truth have met together and kissed each other; and he that telleth truth is called a bigot, and truth has ceased to be honourable in the world! Ah! beloved, we know better than to profess such unlimited, but false charity; the truth is, we know how to "hold fast the form of sounds words," which has been given to us, because in this way we grow. Changeable people cannot grow much. If you have a tree in your garden plant it in one place to-day, and tomorrow place it somewhere else, how much bigger will it be in six months? It will be dead very likely; or if it does not die, it will not be very much grown; it will be marvellously stunted. So it is with some of you: you plant yourselves there; then you are persuaded that you are not quite right, and you go and plant yourself somewhere else. Why, there are men who are anythingarians; who go dodging about from one denomination to another, and cannot tell what they are; our opinion is, of these people, that they believe nothing, and are good for nothing, and anybody may have them that likes; we do not consider men to be worth much, unless they have settle principles, and "hold fast the form of sound words." You cannot grow unless you hold it fast. How should I know any more of my faith in ten years' time, if I allowed it to take ten forms in ten years? I should be but a smatterer in each, and know nothing thoroughly of one. But he that hath one faith, and knoweth it to be the faith of God, and holdeth it fast, how strong he becomes in his faith? Each wind or tempest doth but confirm him, as the fierce winds root the oaks, and make them strong, standing firmly in their places; but if I shift and change, I am none the better, but rather the worse. For your own peace sake then, and for your growth, "hold fast the form of sound words."

But, my beloved, I would beseech you to hold it fast for your own sakes, from a remembrance of the great evils which will follow the contrary course. If you do not "hold fast the form of sound words," listen to me while I tell you what you will do.

In the first place, every deviation from truth is a sin. It is not simply a sin for me to do a wrong act, but it is a sin for me to believe a wrong doctrine. Lately our ministers have absolved us all from obeying God in our judgments; they have told us point blank, many of them, in their drawing-rooms, and some of them in the pulpit, that we shall never be asked in the day of judgment what we believed. We have been told that for our acts we shall be responsible, but for our faith we shall be irresponsible, or something very much like it; they have told us plainly, that the God who made us, although he has authority over our hands, our feet, our eyes and our lips, hath but little authority over our judgments; they have told us, that if we make ever such blunders in divinity, they are no sins, so long as we can live right lives. But is that true? No; the whole man is bound to serve God; and if God gives me a judgment, I am bound to employ that judgment in his service; and if that judgment receive an untruth, it has received stolen goods, and I have sinned as much as if I put forth my hand to take my neighbour's goods. There may be degrees in the sin. If it be a sin of ignorance, it is nevertheless a sin; but it is not so heinous as a sin of negligence, which I fear it is with many. I tell you, beloved, if, for instance, baptism be not by immersion, I commit a sin every time I practice it; and if it be, my brother commits a sin who does not practise it. If Election be true, I am committing a sin if I do not believe it; and if Final Perseverance be true, I am committing a sin before Almighty God, if I do not receive it; and if it be not true, then I sin in embracing what is not scriptural. Error in doctrine is as much a sin as error in practice. In everything we are bound to serve our God with all our might, exercising those powers of judging and believing which he has given unto us; and I warn you, Christians, not to think it is a little thing to hold faith with a feeble hand: it is a sin every time you do aught which makes you waver in the faith of Jesus Christ. Remember, too, that error in doctrine is not only a sin, but a sin which has a great tendency to increase. When a man once in his life believes a wrong thing, it is marvellous how quickly he believes another wrong thing. Once open the door to a false doctrine - Satan says it is but a little one - ay, but he only puts the little one in like the small end of the wedge, and he means to drive in a larger one; and he will say it is only a little more, and a little more, and a little more. The most damnable heretics who ever perverted the faith of God erred by littles and littles; those who have gone the

widest from truth have only gone so by degrees. Whence came the Church of Rome, that mass of abominations? Why, from gradual departures. It did not become abominable at first; it was not the "mother of harlots" all at once; but it first did deck itself in some ornaments, then in others, and by-and-bye it went on to commit its fornications with the kings of the earth. It fell by little and little, and in the same way it separated itself from the truth. For centuries it was a Church of Christ, and it is difficult to say, looking at history, when was the exact point in which it ceased to be numbered with Christian Churches. Take care, Christians, if you commit one error, you cannot tell how many more you will commit.

"Hold fast the form of sound words," because error in doctrine almost inevitably leads to error in practice. When a man believes wrongly, he will soon act wrongly. Faith has a great influence on our conduct. As a man's faith, so is he. If you begin to imbibe erroneous doctrines, they soon have an effect on your practice. Keep fast to the bulwarks of your fathers' faith. If you do not, the enemy will make sad havoc with you. "Hold fast the form of sound words which was delivered unto you."

2. And now, for the good of the Church itself, I want you all to "hold fast the form of sound words." Would you wish to see the Church prosperous? Would you wish to see it peaceful? Then "hold fast the form of sound words." What is the cause of divisions, schisms, quarrels, and bickerings amongst us? It is not the fault of the truth; it is the fault of the errors. There would have been peace in the Church, entire and perpetual peace, if there had been purity - entire and perpetual purity - in the Church. Going down to Sheerness on Friday, I was told by some one on board that during the late gale several of the ships there had their anchors rent up, and had gone dashing against the other ships, and had done considerable damage. Now, if their anchors had held fast and firm, no damage would have been done. Ask me the cause of the damage which has been done to our churches by the different denominations, and I tell you, it is because all their anchors did not hold fast. If they had held fast by the truth, there would have been no disputing; disputing comes from errors. If there be any ill feeling, you must not trace it to the truth - you must trace it to the error. If the Church had always kept firm to the faith, and had always been united to the great doctrines of the truth, there would have been no



disputes. Keep firm to you belief, and you will prevent discord in the Church.

Keep to your faith, I say again, for the Church's sake, for so you will promote strength in the Church. I saw lying between Chatham and Sheerness a number of ships that I supposed to be old hulks; and I thought how stupid Government was to let them remain there, and not chop them up for firewood, or something else; but some one said to me, those ships can soon be fitted for service; they look old now, but they only want a little paint, and when the Admiralty requires them, they will be commissioned and made fit for use. So we have heard some people say, "There are those old doctrines - what good are they?" Wait; there is not a doctrine in God's Bible that has not its use. Those ships that you may think are not wanted, will be useful by-and-bye. So it is with the doctrines of the Bible. Do not say, Break up those old doctrines, you can do without them." Nay, we want them, and we must have them. Some people say, "Why do you preach against Arminians? we have not much to fear from them now." But I like to practice my men against the time comes for action. We are not going to burn our ships; they will be wanted by-and-bye, and when we sail out of harbour, the men will say, "Whence came these old ships?" "Why," we will reply, "they are just the doctrines you thought good for nothing; now we bring them out, and we will make good use of them." Now-a-days we are having new and marvellous hymn-books, full of perfect nonsense; and we are having new theories, and new systems; and they say, "Why be so stringent? our Christian brethren may believe what they like on those points just now;" but as certain as there is a church in this land, they will want our old ships to fight their battles; they may do very well in times of peace, but they will not do in the time of war. They will then need our broadside to support the faith of the gospel, though now they laugh at us. For the strength of the church, my brethren, I bid you "hold fast the form of sound words."

"Well," says one, "I think we ought to hold the truth firmly; but I do not see the necessity for holding the form of it; I think we might cut and trim a little, and then our doctrines would be received better." Suppose, my friends, we should have some valuable egg, and some one should say, "Well, now, the shell is good for nothing; there will never be a bird

produced by the shell certainly, why not break the shell? I should simply smile in his face and say, "My dear friend, I want the shell to take care of what is inside. I know the vital principle is the most important, but I want the shell to take care of the vital principle." You say, "Hold fast the principle, but do not be so severe about the form. You are an old Puritan, and want to be too strict in religion; let us just alter a few things, and make it a little palatable." My dear friends, do not break the shell; you are doing far more damage than you think. We willingly admit the form is but little; but when men attack the form, what is their object? They do not hate the form; they hate the substance. Keep the substance then, and keep the form too. Not only hold the same doctrines, but hold them in the same shape - just as angular, rough and rugged as they were, for if you do not, it is difficult to change the form and yet to keep fast the substance. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard of me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ."

3. Again, I say, "hold fast the form of sound words," for the world's sake. Pardon me when I say that, speaking after the manner of men, I believe that the progress of the gospel has been awfully impeded by the errors of its preachers. I never wonder when I see a Jew an unbeliever in Christianity, for this reason, that the Jew very seldom sees Christianity in its beauty. For hundreds of years what has the Jew thought Christianity to be? Why, pure idolatry. He has seen the Catholic bow down to blocks of wood and stone; he has seen him prostrating himself before the Virgin Mary and all saints; and the Jew has said, "Ah! this is my watchword - hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is our Lord; I could not be a Christian, for to worship one God is the essential part of my religion." So the heathen, I believe have seen a false system of Christianity, and they have said, "What! is that your Christianity?" and they did not receive it. But I believe that when the gospel is purged from all the rudiments of men, and all the chaff and dust have been winnowed from it, and it is presented in all its naked simplicity, it will be sure to win the day; and I say again, speaking as a man, the gospel might have made a ten thousand fold greater progress, if it had been preached in all its simplicity, instead of that diluted or rather distorted form in which it is commonly proclaimed. If ye would see sinners saved, if ye would see God's elect gathered in, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith

and love which is in Christ Jesus."

III. And now, very briefly, in the third place, LET ME WARN YOU OF TWO DANGERS.

One is, that you will be very much tempted to give up the form of sound words that you hold, on account of the opposition you will meet with. I do not prophesy that you will have corporeal persecution, though I know there are some poor creatures here that have to endure that from ungodly husbands, and such like; but you will all of you, in some measure, if you hold the truth, meet with the persecution of the tongue. You will be laughed at: your doctrine will be held up to ridicule, exhibited in a grotesque manner; you will be caricatured in all that you believe, and you will be sometimes tempted to say, "No I do not believe that," though all the while you do. Or if you do not positively say it, you will at times be led to turn a little, because the laughter you cannot stand, and the scoff of the worldly-wise is rather too hard for you. Oh! my beloved, let me warn you against being thus drawn aside. "Hold fast the form of sound words" in the midst of all ridicule. But the greatest obstacle you will have is a sort of slight and cunning, trying to pervert you to the belief, that your doctrine is the same with one which is just the very opposite. The enemy will try to persuade you that something he holds is quite harmless, though opposed to what you hold; and he will say, "You do not want to be broaching these things, that must bring forth controversy; there is a way of squaring your sentiments with mine." And you know we all like to be thought so liberal! The greatest pride in the world now is to be thought liberal in sentiment; and some of us would run a hundred miles, rather than be called a bigot or an Antinomian. I beseech you, be not drawn aside by those who are so ready to subvert your faith, not by openly attacking it, but by insidiously undermining every doctrine, saying, this does not signify, and that does not signify, while all the while they are trying to pull down every castle and fortress wherewith God has guarded his truth and his Church.

IV. And now, in the last place, I am to tell you of THE GREAT HOLDFASTS, WHEREBY YOU ARE TO HOLD FAST THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

If I might be allowed to mention one or two before coming to those in the

text, I should say, in the first place, if you want to hold fast the truth, seek to get an understanding of it. A man cannot hold a thing fast, unless he has a good understanding of it. I never want you to have the faith of the collier who was asked what he believed; he said he believed what the Church believed. "Well, but what does the Church believe?" He said the Church believed what he believed, and he believed what the Church believed; and so it went all the way round. We do not want you to have that faith. It may be a very pertinacious faith, a very obstinate faith, but it is a very foolish faith. We want you to understand things, to get a true knowledge of them. The reason why men forsake truth for error is, that they have not really understood that truth; in nine cases out of ten they have not embraced it with enlightened minds. Let me exhort you, parents, as much as lieth in you, to give your children sound instruction in the great doctrines of the gospel of Christ. I believe that what Irving once said is a great truth. He said, "In these modern times you boast and glory, and you think yourselves to be in a high and noble condition, because you have your Sabbath-schools and British-schools, and all kinds of schools for teaching youth. I tell you," he said, "that philanthropic and great as these are, they are the ensigns of your disgrace; they show that your land is not a land where parents teach their children at home. They show you more is a want of parental instruction; and though they be blessed things, these Sabbath-schools, they are indications of something wrong, for it we all taught our children there would be no need of strangers to say to our children 'Know the Lord.'"

I trust you will never give up that excellent puritanical habit of catechising your children at home. Any father or mother who entirely gives up a child to the teaching of another has made a mistake. There is no teacher who wishes to absolve a parent from what he ought to do himself. He is an assistant, but he was never intended to be a substitute. Teach your children; bring up your old catechisms again, for they are after all blessed means of instruction, and the next generation shall outstrip those that have gone before it; for the reason why many of you are weak in the faith is this, you did not receive instruction in your youth in the great things of the gospel of Christ. If you had, you would have been so grounded, and settled, and firm in the faith, that nothing could by any means have moved you. I beseech you, then, understand truth,

and then you will be more likely to hold fast by it.

But, then, Christian men, above all things, if you would hold fast the truth, pray yourselves right into it. The way to get a doctrine is to pray till you get it. An old divine says, "I have lost many things I learned in the house of God, but I never lost anything I ever learned in the closet." That which a man learns on his knees, with his Bible open, he will never forget. Well, have you ever bowed your knees, and said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law?" If you have seen that wondrous thing you will never forget it. He that prays himself into a truth, will never be got out of it by the very devil himself, though he were to put on the garb of an angel of light. Pray yourselves into the truth.

But the two great holdfasts are here given - faith and love. If ye would hold the truth fast, put your faith in Jesus Christ, and have an ardent love towards him.

Believe the truth. Do not pretend to believe it, but believe it thoroughly. And he who does believe it, and fixes his faith first in Christ, and then in all Christ says, will not be likely to let it go. Why, we do not believe religion, most of us. We pretend to believe it, but we do not believe it with all our heart and all our soul, with all our might and all our strength - not with that "faith which is in Christ Jesus;" for if we did, come storms, come trials, like Luther of old, we should not flinch because of persecution, but stand fast in the evil day, having our faith fixed upon a rock.

And then the second holdfast is love. Love Christ and love Christ's truth because it is Christ's truth, for Christ's sake, and if you love the truth you will not let it go. It is very hard to turn a man away from the truth he loves. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot argue with you about it, but I cannot give it up: I love it, and cannot live without it; it is a part of myself, woven into my very nature; and though my opponent says that bread is not bread, and I cannot prove that it is, yet I know I go and eat it; it is wonderfully like it to me, and it takes away my hunger. He says that stream is not a pure stream; I cannot prove that it is, but I go and drink of it, and find it the river of the water of life to my soul." And he tells me that my gospel is not a true one: well, it comforts me, it sustains me in my trials, it helps

me to conquer sin and to keep down my evil passions, and brings me near to God, and if my gospel be not a true one, I wonder what sort of thing a true one is: mine is wonderfully like it, and I cannot suppose that a true gospel would produce better effects. That is the best thing to do, to believe the Word, to have so full a belief in it, that the enemy cannot pull you away. He may try to do it, but you will say, -

"Amidst temptations sharp and long,  
My soul to the same refuge flies;  
Faith is my anchor, firm and strong  
When tempests blow or billows rise."

Hold on then, Christian, to "faith and love which are by Christ Jesus" - two blessed holdfasts, wherewith we grasp the truth.

And now, brethren and sisters. I pray that my Master will enable you to see the importance of what I have uttered. Perhaps you may not think it so important now, especially those of you who are young; but there are some here, the fathers of this church, who will tell you that the older they grow and the longer they live, the more they find truth to be valuable. They may perhaps in their youth have had a little radicalism in them with regard to truth, but they are conservative in their regard to the truth, we began to be conservative as soon as we believed it, and held it fast and never let it go. I think the chief fault of the present day is, that in seeking to be liberal we do not hold the truth firmly enough. I met some time ago with the case of an eminent minister in the gospel, a brother whom I respect and esteem, who preached a sermon from the text, "Prove all things." A young man was there who was professedly a believer in Christianity; but such was the style in which the subject was handled, that after hearing that sermon he went home and bought some infidel works, and the consequence is, that he has become entirely apostate even from virtue itself, and has forsaken everything that he once held to be true. I say, send your anchor right down, young Christian, and let whatever may come against you, hold on still by that truth; and you may yet even then "prove all things." But while you are doing it, remember to "hold fast that which is good." Do not "prove all things" by giving up that which is good to do it.

Now such of you as know not the Lord, if you ever are saved, let me tell you that the most likely place for you to meet with salvation is under a pure gospel ministry. Therefore there is a lesson for you. Attend where the gospel is preached.

Again: the most likely way for you ever to receive God's grace is to believe God's truths. Never kick against God's doctrines, but receive them. And I have one thing to say to thee this morning, if in thy heart, poor sinner, thou canst say, "I believe God's gospel to be a glorious gospel," thou art not far from something else. If thou canst say, "I submit to all its demands, I believe God just if he destroys me, and if he saves me, it will be of his sovereign mercy only," then, sinner, there are good hopes of thee; thou hast proceeded some way on the road to heaven. If thou canst but do one thing more, and say, "Though he slay me yet I trust in him," and if thou canst come to the cross of Christ, and say, "Jesus, I love thy gospel and I love thy truth; if I perish, I will perish believing all thy truth, I will perish clasping thy cross; if I die, I will die owning that thou art a just and gracious God, and still in my poor way, holding fast the form of sound words," I tell thee, poor soul, God will never damn thee. If thou dost believe in Jesus Christ, and holdest fast his words, he will look upon thee in love, he will say, "Poor soul! though he does not know that these truths are his, yet he thinks them precious; though he dares not hope that they belong to him, yet he will fight for them; though he does not know that he is really a soldier of the cross, chosen of me ere time began, yet see how valiantly he strives for me;" and the Lord will say, "Poor soul, thou lovest the things that thou thinkest are not thine own - I will make thee rejoice in them as thine own, by my grace; thou lovest election, though thou thinkest thou art not elect - that is an evidence that thou art mine." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved."

And now, my brethren, stand fast, I beseech you. If my tears, if my bended knees, if my cries, yea, if my blood could prevail with you to lay to heart what I have said this morning, here should be tears, and cries, and blood too - if I could but make you all hold fast in these evil, perilous times. Hold fast, ah! with the tenacity of the dying hand of the sinking mariner - "Hold fast," I beseech you, "the form of sound words, which

thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

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## **Found By Jesus, And Finding Jesus**

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. - John 1:43-45

For a soul to come to Jesus, is the grandest event in its history. It is spiritually dead till that day; but it then begins to live, and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree, because it affects all the man's past career; it sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ, that very day his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away. Is not that a grand day in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that henceforth it can be said of them, "They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord"? I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history, because all the past is changed by it; and as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live



in the light instead of being dead in the darkness; he begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery; he is started on the way to heaven, instead of continuing on the road to hell. He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind; either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ; it is a real, total, radical change. With many, it is a most joyous alteration; they feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up, so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, and leaping, and praising God; do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right again; and thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Saviour. Oh! happy, happy day, when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul, and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about; the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults; there may be infirmities and shortcomings; but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through his servant Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, he so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life, and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The cross of Christ has broken its back, and broken its neck, too, and die it must. Henceforth the man is bound for holiness, and bound for heaven.

Now, dear friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you; but if there are any of you who have never come to the Saviour, I wish that this might be the night when you should find him. I am but a poor lame preacher; you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching; yet I think that if I had lost my legs, and had

always to lie on my back, I would like even then to preach Christ crucified, and to—

"Tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour I have found."

I do pray that some of you to-night, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Saviour, and then it shall be a happy day indeed for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion, and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, the convert's description of it: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." That is Philip's description of it: "We have found Jesus." It was a true description, but it was not all the truth; so, in the second place, we will notice the Holy Spirit's description of it: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ; but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however; although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, "We have found...Jesus," and what he says is perfectly true.

If any one of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ, by your personally making a discovery of him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search after Christ; but if there be a search after him, we may be certain of this one thing, that there will first be a consciousness of needing him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found him; but, before that, Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah. When he looked round about on the world, and on the church,

he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of him. The people need him, the church needs him, the world needs him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I want him; I have urgent need of him." Dear hearer, do you feel that you need a Saviour? You never will seek him until you do feel your need of him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother, to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you. You do need a Saviour; that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for him.

Wanting a Messiah, Philip read the Scriptures concerning him. He speaks about Moses and the prophets, and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear hearers, if you want to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures more, with the definite object of finding the Saviour! Probably, the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all; or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored; but they do not take down the Holy Book, and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness here! Oh, that I might find Christ here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing,—

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears,  
I fly to thee, my Lord,  
And not a glimpse of hope appears  
But in thy written Word.  
The volume of my Father's grace  
Does all my griefs assuage;  
Here I behold my Saviour's face  
Almost in every page."

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ, will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up, to attract his

attention, as though it were set on fire, and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great sacrifice on Calvary, and speaking to his heart of divine love and mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be,—in the pages of Scripture,—and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus.

But then Philip also gave himself to prayer. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers; what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God; it is asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What waggon-loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers; but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the throne of grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing,—

"Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear,  
My requests vouchsafe to hear;  
Hear my never-ceasing cry;  
Give me Christ, or else I die.

"Lord, deny me what Thou wilt,  
Only ease me of my guilt;  
Suppliant at Thy feet I lie,  
Give me Christ, or else I die.

"Thou dost freely save the lost!  
Only in Thy grace I trust:  
With my earnest suit comply;  
Give me Christ, or else I die.

"Thou hast promised to forgive  
All who in Thy Son believe;  
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie;  
Give me Christ, or else I die."

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down, and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by thy Holy Spirit; bring me to know him, bring me this day to find him as my own Saviour!"

It is certain, also, that Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself. One of the things that every man, who would find the Saviour, must do, is to make sure of his right to come and take the Saviour. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Saviour?" My dear friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Saviour, if he wills to do so. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question; the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is you who cast out the Saviour, not the Saviour who casts you out. The bolt to the door is on the inside; it is you who have bolted it, and it is you who must undo the bolt, and invite the Saviour to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in; wherever there is a soul that wants him, he comes at once; therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come. Is he not bidden to come? We are told to preach the gospel to every creature, and he who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Saviour?" Well, what you have to do is practically this, accept him. If you were sick, and the doctor stood before you, with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken, and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it. "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ; take him, accept him, receive him. Remember the twelfth verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That is it, you see, receive him, believe on his name.

"But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ; but for your soul's salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. "Oh, but I must lead a holy life!" Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ; but in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart, and to get a new heart, you have to receive Christ. He will change you, he will renew you, he will make you a new creature in himself. What you have to do is to receive him, and to believe on his name. O my dear hearers, I do trust that I am speaking to some this evening who will understand what I am saying. I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the truth as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man's eyes, and yet he will not see even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to bring anything to Christ; you are to come to him just as you are, and he will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, "We have found Jesus." That is the convert's description, and a very good one, too: "We have found Jesus."

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY GHOST'S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again; here they are: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus; Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip.

Now, notice, that this is the previous work; it came before Philip's own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear friends, I recollect very well that, after I had found the Lord, I did not at first fully understand the doctrines of grace. I had heard them preached; but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I should have been very much puzzled with the doctrine of election, if anybody had spoken to me about it; but I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus, and I knew that I was renewed in heart, and

in one moment the revelation came to me, "All this is the work of God." The instant I saw that truth, I said to myself, "Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been wrought in me?" I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of sovereign distinguishing grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us, and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose; and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the glory. What a revelation it was to me! I saw the doctrines of grace immediately; and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Saviour, and who prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same truth that the Lord revealed to me. Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Saviour if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of divine things? What influence was it which wrought upon you, and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and heaven, and hell? Surely it was God the Holy Ghost going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy.

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense; then, who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ, came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good seed in your soul; it was he who made you feel your need of him.

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Saviour of sinners, you saw his fitness to meet your case, and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend; but no one ever does understand spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have spoken of that matter already. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer; you had often had great mouthfuls of words, that was all; but now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit, and the anguish of your heart, as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces, and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who wrought mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus, and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God, and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table; and I should have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table, and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with his mighty magnet of grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God, and their faith in Christ, are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own; but there is a divine force that is at work upon them, producing these results. It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip. This was the previous work.

And, dear friends, this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how it is put: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." O my blessed Lord, how he will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for him, and he never wastes a day. "The day following Jesus would go forth, and findeth Philip." Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth, and find some of you! You are to-night in a place where he has found a good many; I pray that he may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out to-night; but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here; to its own self it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to him it was a diamond of the first water. O my Master, find some more of thy jewels to-



night! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found thee!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, it is very effectual work. He said to Philip, "Follow me." I will gladly end my sermon just here if my Master will preach to some of you his two-worded sermon, "Follow me," "Follow me," "FOLLOW ME." "Come, poor soul, you do not know the way! 'Follow me.' You want some one to go before you, to be your leader. 'Follow me.' You want some one to be your shelter, your companion, your all. 'Follow me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers; Christ says to you, "Follow me." That is what you have to do, young man. You have been reading those rubbishy modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them. Jesus says, "Follow me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk; let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow me." The crucified Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your atonement. The risen Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your life. The Saviour on the throne says, "Follow me." Take him for your joy. The Saviour coming in glory hereafter says, "Follow me." Take him to be your hope. "Follow me," "Follow me," that is the text for tonight, and that is the sermon, too. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me," and Philip followed him directly; and he not only followed Christ himself, but he began immediately to try to get others to follow him.

Please to notice also that Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist; but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother; Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Saviour just said to him, "Follow me," and he followed him. Dear friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and says to you, "Follow me," and you follow him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all. If you have come to him, if you have trusted in him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for in fact there are none. "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ, and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God." I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things, and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality, there does not exist any in practical life. I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's supper at the close of this service; but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh!" say you, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case, there is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true. You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Saviour, it will be because the Saviour first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning,\*—to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, were all of Bethsaida: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear

hearers, because there are numbers of you, who are here to-night, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh!" say you, "we never were there in all our lives." Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of his mighty works; and you remember that, when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the gospel for many years, and have seen the power of the grace of God in your families, and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Saviour. But, as there were these three men, Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, who were of Bethsaida,—and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place,—why should not you come to Christ? Why should not you become members of his Church, and, if it be the Lord's will, preachers of his Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you, who have come here to-night, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master. To-night, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, ere yet the harvest shall be past, and the summer shall be ended, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Receive Christ, trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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## **The Fourfold Treasure**

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. - 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

We meet somewhere in the Old Testament with the expression "salt without prescribing how much." Beyond all question the name, person, and work of Jesus are the salt and savor of every true gospel ministry, and we cannot have too much of them. Alas! that in so many ministries there is such a lack of this first dainty of the feast, this essence of all soul-satisfying doctrine. We may preach Christ without prescribing how much, only the more we extol him the better. It would be impossible to sin by excess in preaching Christ crucified. It was an ancient precept, "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt;" let it stand as an ordinance of the sanctuary now: "With all thy sermonisings and discoursings thou shalt ever mingle the name of Jesus Christ, thou shalt ever seek to magnify the alpha and omega of the plan of redemption." The apostle in the first chapter of this epistle was anxious to speak to the Corinthians about their divisions and other serious faults; but he could not confine himself to that unpleasant theme; as naturally as possible his heart bounded over the mountains of division to his Lord and Master. Divisions did but remind him of the great uniting one who has made all his people one, and human follies did but drive him nearer to the infallible Christ who is the wisdom of God. Though Paul had to write many sharp things to those ancient Plymouth Brethren at Corinth, yet how sweetly did he prevent all bitterness by dipping his pen in the honeyed ink of love to the Lord Jesus, and admiration of his person and work! Let us, dear friends, if we have to preach, preach Christ crucified; and if we are private persons, let us in our household life, and in all our conversation, make his name to be as ointment poured forth. Let your life be Christ living in you. May you be

like Asher, of whom it is said, he dipped his foot in oil may you be so anointed with the Spirit of your Lord that wherever you put down your foot, you may leave an impression of grace. The balmy south wind bears token of having passed over sunny lands; may the ordinary bent and current of your life bear evidence in it that you have communed with Jesus.

To-night we have before us a text which is extraordinarily comprehensive, and contains infinitely more of meaning than mind shall grasp, or tongue shall utter at this hour. Considering it carefully, let us observe, first, that the apostle here attributes the fact that we are in Christ Jesus to the Lord alone. He shows that there is a connection between our very being as Christians, and the love and grace of God in Christ. "Of him" (that is of God) "are ye in Christ Jesus." So we will first speak about our spiritual existence. Then Paul goes on to write of our spiritual wealth, which he sums up under four heads: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; but which indeed, I might say, he sums up under one head, for he declares that Christ is made of God unto us all these four things: and then he closes the chapter by telling us where our glorying ought to go—it should return to the source of our spiritual existence and heavenly wealth. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

I. To begin, then, where God began with us—OUR SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE.

"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." Different translators have read this passage in divers ways. "Of him," they think properly should be "Through him:" that is, "Through God we are in Christ Jesus." Are you this day united to Christ—a stone in that building, of which he is both foundation and topstone—a limb of that mystical body, of which he is the head? Then you did not get there of yourself. No stone in that wall leaped into its place; no member of that body was its own creator. You come to be in union with Christ through God the Father. You were ordained unto this grace by his own purpose, the purpose of the Infinite Jehovah, who chose you, or ever the earth was. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The first cause of your union with Christ lies in the purpose of God who gave you grace in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world. And as to the purpose, so to the power of God is your union with

Christ to be attributed. He brought you into Christ; you were a stranger, he brought you near; you were an enemy, he reconciled you. You had never come to Christ to seek for mercy if first of all the Spirit of God had not appeared to you to show you your need, and to lead you to cry for the mercy that you needed. Through God's operation as well as through God's decree you are this day in Christ Jesus. It will do your souls good, my brethren, to think of this very common-place truth. Many days have passed since your conversion, it may be, but do not forget what a high day the day of your new birth was; and do not cease to give glory to that mighty power which brought you out of darkness into marvellous light. You did not convert yourself; if you did, you still have need to be converted again. Your regeneration was not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth; if it were so, let me tell you the sooner you are rid of it the better. The only true regeneration is of the will of God and by the operation of the Holy Ghost. "By the grace of God I am what I am." He "has begotten us again unto a lively hope." "He that hath wrought us to the selfsame thing is God." "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." Through the operation and will and purpose of God are you this day a member of Christ's body and one with Jesus. Give all the glory, then, to the Lord alone.

But suppose we read it as we have it in the text, and then we shall not have an allusion to the source of our spiritual life, but to the dignity of it. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus." Being in Christ you are of God. Not of the earth earthy now, not of Satan, not of the bondage of the law, not of the powers of evil, but of God are you; God's husbandry, God's people, God's children, God's beloved ones. "Ye are of God," little children, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness." On you hath God's light shone, to you hath God's life come, in you God's love is made manifest, and in you shall God's glory be fully revealed. What a dignity is this to be "of God!" Some have thought it a great thing to have it said, "These are they which are of the prince's household," and others have been yet more boastful when they have been pointed at as parts of an imperial court; but you are of the divine family, descended from him who only hath immortality. "they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels." "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Of God, are you, every one of you who are in Christ Jesus: ye are Christ's, and

Christ is God's. The Creator, the Upholder, the Sublime, the Invisible, the Infinite, the Eternal claims you. You have a part and lot with him, and you are herein uplifted to the highest degree of exaltation because you are in Christ.

Here, then, you have the dignity of the Christ life—it is of God, as its source is through God.

But note the essence of the Christ life. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus." You have no life before the Lord, except as you are in Christ Jesus. Apart from him, you are as the branch that is severed from the vine—dead, withered, useless, obnoxious, rotten. Men gather these branches, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. A ghastly sight it must be on the battle-field, to see on all sides arms, legs, and various portions of limbs torn away from the bodies to which they belonged, and scattered in hideous disorder! Once of the utmost service, these severed limbs are useless now. Every one knows that they are dead, for they cannot live divided from the vital regions: even thus if you and I could be separated from Christ, our vital head, death—spiritual death—must be the inevitable result. Our life hinges upon union to our Lord. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Out of Christ we abide in death, but in Christ we live, and we are of God. Our spiritual being, and the fact that our spiritual being is an exalted one, both hang upon this—that we are in Christ. Beloved Christian friends, I can congratulate you upon your being able to know that you are in Christ, and that so you are of God; but I must not speak so broadly to all this congregation. I must rather put a grave enquiry, and ask each of my hearers: Are you all in Christ Jesus? could the apostle write to you, and say: "Of God are you in Christ Jesus." Have you ever been the subject of a work of God, putting you into Christ Jesus?" Are you now of God in Christ Jesus so as to be depending for everything upon him, dwelling in him, and he in you; feeling his life within you, and that your life is hid with him in God? Beloved hearer, there is no joy in this world like union with Christ. The more we can feel it, the happier we are, whatever our circumstances may be. But if you are without Christ, you are without hope. Joy comes not where Jesus comes not. No Savior, then no peace in life or death. Oh remember, beloved hearer, that you will soon die. Where, where will you look for consolation

in your last moments? Your soul will soon have to fly through tracks unknown, and face the burning throne of judgment. What will you do then, without the hand of love to guide you and the righteousness of Christ to cover you? He who wraps himself about with Christ's matchless robe can say -

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
While through thy blood absolved I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

But he that hath no Savior, it were better for him that he had never been born. That day is cursed, and hath no blessing, on which he first saw the light. Jesus Christ is willing to receive you if you desire to come to him. Noah's ark was shut, but not until the flood came, it was open till then; Christ is the ark of the covenant, and the door is not shut yet. Let not this, however, cause you to delay, for the flood will rise, and the rains will fall, and then to those who shall knock at the door, it will be said, "Too late! too late! Ye cannot enter now."

Of him, beloved believers in Christ, are ye in Christ Jesus. All you are, even to your bare existence as Christians, you have to trace to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

II. Now let us turn to the second part of our subject, and contemplate OUR SPIRITUAL WEALTH. Christ Jesus is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Here are four things—only it is to be noticed that in the original Greek the second and third have a peculiar connecting link, which the others have not. The wisdom stands alone, and the redemption, but the righteousness and sanctification have a special link, as though we should be taught that they always go together, that they should always be considered as united—a warning to modern theology, which so often divideth what God hath joined together.



Let us take the first blessing first, asking to be partakers of it at this very moment. Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom. You noticed when we read the chapter that the apostle had been speaking of some other wisdom which he treated somewhat roughly. It had set itself up in opposition to the cross of Christ, and the apostle handled it with no gentle handling. There have always been those in the world who have conceived that wisdom would come to them as the result of the exercise of their own thoughts assisted by culture; that is to say, they hoped to know divine truth by their own thoughts and the additional light arising from the thoughts of other men. They fancied that wisdom would rise out of the human mind, and would not need to be taught us from above. There were those in Paul's days who were always ruminating, considering, contemplating with themselves, and then disputing, dialoguing, and conversing with others. These were the philosophers of the time. They looked for wisdom through man, and expected to find it in the shallow brain of a poor son of Adam. They so believed that they themselves were wise; that though they affected modesty and did not call themselves "the Sophoi, or wise;" but "the Philosophoi," or lovers of wisdom, yet for all that, in their innermost hearts they esteemed themselves to be an inner circle of instructed persons, and they looked upon the rest of mankind as the unilluminated and the ignorant. They had found a treasure which they kept to themselves, and virtually said to their fellow-men, "You are almost without exception hopelessly ignorant." Now, the apostle, instead of pointing to his own brain, or pointing to the statue of Socrates or Solon, says Jesus Christ is made of God unto us wisdom. We look no more for wisdom from the thoughts that spring of human mind, but to Christ himself; we do not expect wisdom to come to us through the culture that is of man, but we expect to be made wise through sitting at our Master's feet and accepting him as wisdom from God himself. Now, as it was in the apostle's day, so is it very much at this present. There are those who will have it that the gospel—the simple gospel—such as might have been preached by John Bunyan or Whitfield, or Wesley, and others, was very well for the many, and for the dark times in which they lived—the great mass of mankind would be helped and improved by it; but there is wanted, according to the wiseacres of this intensely luminous century, a more progressive theology, far in advance of the Evangelism now so generally ridiculed. Men of mind, gentlemen of profound thought, are to

teach us doctrines that were unknown to our fathers; we are to go on improving in our knowledge of divine truth till we leave Peter and Paul, and those other old dogmatists far behind. Nobody knows how wise we are to become. Brethren, our thoughts loathe this; we hate this cant about progress and deep thought; we only wish we could know as much of Christ as the olden preachers did. We are afraid that instead of getting into greater light through the thinkings of men, the speculations and contemplations of the scribes, ancient and modern, and the discoveries of the intellectual and eclectic, have made darkness worse, and have quenched some of the light that was in the world. Again has it been fulfilled: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" It seemeth to me to be greater wisdom to believe what Christ hath said than to believe what my deepest thoughts have discovered; and though I have thought long upon a subject, and turned it over and over, and think I know more of it than another man, yet, in one simple word of Christ there is more wisdom than in all my thoughts and ruminatings. I am never to look to myself for wisdom, and to fancy that I am the creator of truth or the revealer of it; but ever to go to him, my Lord, my teacher, my all, and to believe that the highest culture, the best results of the highest education are to be found by sitting at his feet, and the best results of the deepest meditation, too, are to be gained in lying down in the green pastures, beside the still waters, where he, as the good Shepherd, leads me. Brethren, when we read that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, let us recollect what wisdom is. Wisdom is, I suppose, the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the more fools for what they know. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom. Now, that man is wise in three respects who has Christ for his wisdom. Christ's teaching will make him wise of thought, and wise of heart. All you want to know of God, of sin, of life, of death, of eternity, of predestination, of man's responsibility, Christ has either personally, or by his Spirit in the word of God, taught you. Anything that you find out for yourself, anything over and above revelation, is folly, but whatever he has taught is wisdom; and he has so taught it that if you learn it in the spirit in which he would have you learn it, it will not be dry, dead doctrine to

you, but spirit and life; and his teaching will endow you with wisdom as well as knowledge. Scholars at the cross-foot let us always be. Never let us go to any other school than Schola crucis, for the learners of the cross are the favourites of wisdom. Let Corpus Christi be the college in which we study. To know Jesus, and the power of his resurrection, this is wisdom.

But, in addition to profiting by our Lord's instruction, the Christian learns wisdom through his Master's example. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" How shall I be made wise in action? Policy says, "Adopt this expedient and the other;" and the mass of mankind at this age are guided by the policy of the hour; but policy is seeming wisdom and real folly. Remember it is always wisest to act in any condition as Jesus would have acted, supposing him to have been in that condition. Never did he temporise. Principlo guided him, not fashion nor personal advantage. You shall never be a fool if you follow Christ, except in the estimation of fools; and who wishes to be wise in a fool's esteem? But sometimes it may be said: "To do as Christ would have done would involve me in present difficulty or loss." It is true; but there is no man that loseth aught in this life for Christ's sake who shall remain a loser, for he shall receive tenfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. The wisest action is not always the most pecuniarily profitable. It is wise sometimes for men to be poor, ay, even to lose their lives. Truest wisdom—not sham wisdom, not temporary wisdom—you shall manifest by following the example of Christ, though it lead you to prison or to death. His teachings and his example, together, will give you the wisdom which cometh from above.

Above all, if you have the Redeemer's presence, he will be made of God unto you wisdom in a very remarkable sense. Never forget or doubt that Jesus is still with his people. They who know how to enter into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, find him still at the mercy-seat. He feedeth among the lilies, and they who know the lilies know where to find him; and those who live with him, and catch his spirit, have their garments perfumed as his are with myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. These may be thought to be mad by some, and others may call them fanatical enthusiasts; but these are the wisest of mankind. O happy men that live at the gates of heaven while yet on earth, that sit at the feet of the blessed in

the heavenly places in Christ Jesus while they are toiling along through the pilgrimage of this life! This is to be wise, to have Christ's teaching, Christ's example and above all, Christ's presence; so may the poorest find the Lord Jesus made of God unto them wisdom.

Pause just a minute. Let none of us ever be so foolish as to suppose that when we have received Jesus and his gospel, we have occasion to blush when we are in the company of the very wisest of the present day. Carry a bold face when you confront the brazen faced philosophy which insults your Lord. The man who does not believe the Bible does not know so much as thou dost. Blush not, though with mimic wisdom the unbeliever tries to laugh or argue thee down. He who knows; not Christ, though he propounds wonderful theories as to the creation of mankind and the formation of the world, and though he has a glib tongue, is only an educated fool, a learned idiot, who thinks his own rushlight brighter than God's own sun. "Ah I but he has been to college, and he has a degree, and he is esteemed by men; for he has written books that nobody can comprehend." "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" and I do not care even if he be a Solon, if he has said that there is no God, he is a fool. Do not blush, then, if you find yourself in his company, do not make yourself the blushing one because the fool is there. Self-conceit were to be avoided and loathed; but this is not self-conceit, but a holy courage in a case which demands of you to be courageous. To know Christ is the best of all philosophy, the highest of all sciences. Angels desire to look into this; but I do not know that they care a fig for half the sciences so valued among men. If you know Christ you never need be afraid of being ashamed and confounded whatever company you may be in. If you stood in a senate of emperors, or amidst a parliament of philosophers, and only told them of the God that came in human flesh, and loved, and lived, and died to redeem mankind, you would have told them a greater mystery and a profounder secret than reason could discover. Be not ashamed, then, amid the intellectual pride of this boastful age.

At the same time let me remind you of another evil: do not seek to complete your wisdom at any other source: be satisfied that in keeping close to Christ you have the highest and truest wisdom. As I would not have you cowed before the pretender, neither would I have you envy him,

or seek to supplement the wisdom that is in Christ Jesus by the wisdom that is of man. Are you so foolish, having begun with Jesus, will you end with a German neologian, or a French wit, or a Puseyite dreamer? Have you taken Christ's word to be your guide, and will you go and tack on to that some decree of Convocation, some rubric of a church, some minute of Conference, or other invention of human brain and fallen fancy? God forbid! Array yourself solely in this armor of gold, and go forth and gleam in the sun, and angels themselves shall marvel at you as they see your brightness. "Jesus Christ is made of God unto you wisdom."

It is high time for us to proceed to review the next blessing. He is made of God unto us righteousness. This was a great want of ours, for naturally we were unrighteous, and to this hour in ourselves we are the same. Righteous we must be to be acceptable with God, but righteous we certainly are not personally, and by merit. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we are unable to stand before the great King; but there is one who says: "Take away his filthy garments from him," and that same Deliverer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, is made of God unto us righteousness. You know how we usually speak of this as a double work. His blood cleanseth us from all guilt; by it pardon is bestowed upon the believer. He that looks to Christ is absolved from all sin—completely so. Then, in addition to that cleansing, which we call pardon, there is the clothing, the arraying in the righteousness of Christ—in a word, there is justification by faith. The doctrine of imputed righteousness seems to me to be firmly established in the word of God. Yet I have sometimes fancied I have heard a little too much stress put upon the word "imputed," and scarcely enough upon the word "righteousness;" for though I know that righteousness is imputed to us, yet I believe it is not all the truth that we are righteous by imputation. It is true, most true, but there is something true beyond it. Not only is Christ's righteousness imputed to me, but it is mine actually, for Christ is mine. He who believes in Jesus, has Jesus Christ to be his own Christ, and the righteousness of Christ belongs to that believer, and is his. We are not merely imputedly righteous, but the righteousness of our substitute is legally, actually, truly our righteousness. I am not now speaking of nature—that would have to do with sanctification—but I am speaking of repute before God. He reckons us to be righteous in Christ, and he does not reckon wrongly; the

imputation is not a legal fiction or a charitable error. We are righteous. Depend upon it, God's imputation is not like human imputation, which makes a thing to be what it is not: we are in Christ made actually righteous, because we are one with him. Do you think that there is an unrighteous member of Christ's body? God forbid! Do you think Christ mystical to be a building with an unholy stone in it? Is Christ a vine with branches, which bear deadly fruit? As he is, so are we also in this respect. His salt has seasoned the whole lump. In the mystical body, every member is made righteous before God, because joined to the living head. Here is an actual righteousness given to us through the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord. He is made of God unto us righteousness. Consider this, O believer—you are to-night righteous before God. You are a sinner in yourself worthy to be condemned, but God does not condemn you, nor ever will he do so, for before the eye of his justice you are arrayed in perfect righteousness. Your sin is not upon you: it was laid upon the Scapegoat's head of old. All your iniquities were made to meet upon the head of the Crucified Savior: he bore your transgressions in his own body on the tree. Where are your sins now? You may ask the question without fear, for they have ceased to be. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "He hath cast our iniquities into the depths of the sea." Glory be to his name, there is no sin in existence against a believer. Is it not written: "He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin [what stronger expression can there be?], and brought in everlasting righteousness"? And that is true of you to-night, Christian, as true of you to-night as it will be when you are in heaven. You are not so sanctified to-night as you will be in the glory land, but you are as righteous as you can be even there. In God's sight you are as much "accepted in the Beloved," as you will be when you stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire. You are beloved of God, and dear to him and justified, so that even to-night you can say: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" You cannot lift up a louder boast than that, even when you shall see your Savior, and shall be like him because you see him as he is. By faith this righteousness is yours at this present moment, and will always be yours without a change; yours when your spirit is cast down, as much as when your joys abound. You are accepted not because of anything in yourself, but because you stand in the Lord your

righteousness.

I remarked some time ago that the next blessing in our text is pinned on to this one. I need not say much about that fact, but just note it. Righteousness and sanctification must always go together, and though they are two different things, or else there would not have been two different words, yet they blend into each other most remarkably, hence the Greek joins the two words by a close link. Our sanctification is all in Christ; that is to say, it is because we are in Christ that we have the basis of sanctification, which consists in being set apart. A thing was sanctified of old, under the law, when it was set apart for God's service. We were sanctified in Christ Jesus when we were set apart by the divine Spirit to be the Lord's own peculiar people for ever. Election is the basis of sanctification. Moreover, the power by which we are sanctified comes to us entirely by virtue of our union with Christ. The Holy Spirit who sanctifies us through the truth, works in us by virtue of our union with Jesus. That which becomes holy in us is the new life. The old nature never changes into a holy thing; the carnal mind is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be. The old man is not sent to the hospital to be healed, but to the cross to be crucified. It is not transformed and improved, but doomed to die and to be buried. The ordinance of baptism, which is placed at the outset of Christ life, is meant to show, by our immersion in the liquid tomb, that it is by death and burial that we pass into life by the power of resurrection. If any man be in Christ, he is not an old creature mended up: he is a new creature. "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Now, it is because this new life is the great, the true matter of sanctification, and because it comes to us by virtue of our oneness with Christ, that Jesus Christ is made to us the power and the life by which we are sanctified. Beloved, let your hearts add another meaning: let Jesus always be the motive for your sanctification. Is it not a strange thing that some professors should look to Christ alone for pardon and justification, and run away to Moses when they desire sanctification? For instance, you will hear persons preach this doctrine: "The Christian is to be holy, because if he be not holy he will fall from grace and perish." Do you not hear the crack of the old legal whip in all that? What is that but the yoke of that covenant which none of our fathers were able to bear? It is the bondage of Egypt, not the freedom of

the children of God. Christ talks not so, nor his gospel. Think not to make thyself holy by motives of that kind. They are not right motives for a child of God. How then should we urge the child of God to holiness? Should it not be in this way: "Thou art God's child: walk worthy of him who is thy Father"? His love to thee will never cease. He cannot cast thee away: he is faithful and never changes, therefore love him in return. This is a motive fit for the child of the free woman, and it moves his heart. The child of the bond woman is driven by the whip, but the child of the free woman is drawn by cords of love. "The love of Christ constraineth us;" not fear of hell, but love of Christ; not fear that God will cast us away, for that he cannot do, but the joy that we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation constrains us to cling to him with all our heart and soul, for ever and ever. Rest assured, if motives fetched from the gospel will not kill sin, motives fetched from the law never will. If you cannot be purged at Calvary, you certainly cannot be cleansed at Sinai. If "the water and the blood, from the riven side which flowed," are not sufficient to purify thee, no blood of bulls or of goats—I mean, no argument from the Jewish law, or hope of salvation by your own efforts—will ever furnish motives sufficiently strong to cast out sin. Let your reasons for being holy be found in Christ, for he is made of God unto you sanctification! I have ever found, and I bear my witness to it, that the more entirely for the future as well as for the present, I lean upon my Lord, the more conscious I am of my own emptiness and unworthiness; and the more completely I rest my whole salvation upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, the more carefully do I walk in my daily life. I have always found that self-righteous thoughts very soon lead to sinful actions; but that, on the other hand, the very faith which leads to assurance, and makes the heart rest in the faithfulness of God in Christ, purifies the soul. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Jesus, the Savior, saves us from our sins, and is made of God to us "sanctification."

Now the last item of our boundless wealth catalogued in the text is "redemption." Somebody says: "That ought to have come first; because redemption, surely, is the first blessing that we enjoy." Ay, but it is the last as well. It is the alpha blessing, I grant you that—but it is the omega blessing too. You are not yet redeemed altogether. By price you are—for he that redeemed you on the tree did not leave unpaid a penny of your



ransom; but you are not yet altogether redeemed by power. In a measure, you are set free by divine power; for you have been brought up out of the Egypt of your sin, you have been delivered from the galling bondage of your corruption, and led through the Red Sea, to be fed upon the heavenly manna; but you are not altogether redeemed by power as yet. There are links of the old chains yet to be snapped from off you, and there is a bondage still about you from which you are ere long to be delivered. You are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." You will fall asleep, rejoicing that you were redeemed; but you will not, even when you die, have received the full redemption. When will that come—the full redemption? Only at the second advent of the Lord Jesus; for when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, then the bodies of his saints, which have long been lying in the prison-house of the sepulcher, shall be redeemed by a glorious redemption from the power of death. "I know that my redeemer liveth." The bodies of the saints shall come again from the land of the enemy. Then their body, soul, and spirit—their entire manhood, which Christ hath bought, shall be altogether free from the reign of the enemy. Then will redemption be completed. Remember the saints in heaven without us cannot be made perfect, that is to say, they wait till we arrive among them, and when all the rest of the chosen ones shall be gathered in, and the fullness of time has come, then shall the bodies of the dead arise; and then, in body and soul made perfect, the year of the redeemed shall have fully come. "Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Here, then, is my joy, that Christ is my redemption. My soul is free from slavery, but my poor trembling and much suffering body feels the chains of death. Weakened by pain, my body shall in all probability bow before the stroke of death's sword. Unless the Lord soon come, it must be the portion of this frame to feed the worm and mingle with the dust: but, O my body, thou art redeemed, and thou shalt rise in power and incorruption; thou shalt yet adore the Lord without weariness, and without pain shalt thou serve him day and night in his temple. Even thou, O my weary body; even thou shalt be made glorious like unto the Lord himself: Thou shalt rise and live in the brightness of his presence.

All, then, that you can possibly want, O Christian, is in Christ. You cannot conceive a need which Jesus does not supply. "Wisdom, righteousness,

sanctification, redemption," you have all in him. Some gather a flower here; some gather another there; some will go farther, and pluck another there; and some will go yet beyond to grasp a fourth; but when we win Christ we have a posse; we have all sweet flowers in one.

"All human beauties, all divine,  
In my Beloved meet and shine  
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest one,  
That eyes have seen or angels known."

But we cannot stay on this tempting subject, though even amid my present pain I would fain talk on by the hour together; and therefore I must finish with the last point; and on that only a word.

You see then, brethren, our very existence as Christians, and all that we possess as Christians, we get from God by Jesus Christ; let all our glory then be unto him. What insanity it is to boast in any but in our Lord Jesus! How foolish are they that are proud of the beauty of their flesh-worms' meat at the best! How foolish are they who are proud of their wisdom! The wisdom of which a man is proud, is but folly in a thin disguise. How foolish are they that are vain of their wealth! He must be a poor man who can think much of gold. He must be a beggar indeed who counts a piece of dirt a treasure. They that know Christ, always value these things at their right estimate, and that is low indeed. If any glory—and I suppose it is natural to us to glory, there is a boasting bump on all our heads—let us glory in the Lord; and here is a wide field and ample sea-room. Now, put out every stitch of canvas, run up the topgallants, seek as stiff a breeze as you will, there is no fear of running on a lee shore here, or striking a rock, or drifting on a quicksand! O men, O angels, O cherubim, O seraphim, boast in Jesus Christ! Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption is he, therefore ye may boast and boast, and boast again! You will never exaggerate. You cannot exceed his worth, or reach the tithe of it. You can never go beyond the truth, you do not even reach beyond the skirts of his garments. So glorious is God that all the angels' harps cannot sound forth half his glory. So blessed is Christ that the orchestra of the countless multitudes of the redeemed, though it continue for ever and for ever its pealing music, can never reach to the majesty of his name or the glory of his work. "Give unto the Lord, O ye

mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." Let time and space become great mouths for song; let the infinite roll up its waves; let all creatures lift up their voices in praise of him that liveth and was dead; but chiefly, O my soul, since to him thou owest in a double sense thine existence, give thy praise to him from whom all blessing comes. Give thou the homage of thine intellect to him who is thy wisdom. Let thy conscience and love of rectitude adore him who has made thee righteous. Give the tribute of thy soul to him who sanctifies thee; let thy sanctified nature consecrate itself continually; and to him that hath redeemed thee give thou never-ceasing praise. I wish it were possible for me to rise to the height of my text, but my wings flag; I cannot ascend as the eagle, and face the full blaze of the sun; I can but mount a little as the lark, and sing my song, and then return to my nest. God grant you to know the Lord Jesus in his fullness in your personal experience.

O you to whom Christ is no wisdom, how foolish are you! O you to whom he is no righteousness, you are condemned sinners! O you to whom he is no sanctification, the fire of God's wrath will consume you! O you to whom he is no redemption, you are slaves in hopeless bondage! God deliver you! May you be led to put your trust in Jesus even now.

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## Fragrant Graces

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. - Song 1:12

This passage may be read in several ways. Literally, when Christ tabled among men, when he did eat and drink with them, being found in fashion as a man, the loving spirit broke the alabaster box of precious ointment on his head while the king was sitting at his table. Three times did the Church thus anoint her Lord, once his head and twice his feet, as if she remembered his threefold office, and the threefold anointing which he had received of God the Father to confirm and strengthen him. So she rendered him the threefold anointing of her grateful love, breaking the alabaster box, and pouring the precious ointment upon his head and upon his feet. Beloved, let us imitate the example of those who have gone before. What! though we cannot, as the weeping penitent, wash his feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head, like that gracious woman, we may reckon nothing, of fair adornments, or fond endowments, if we can but serve his cause or honour his person. Let us be willing to "pour contempt on all our pride," and "nail our glory to his cross." Have you anything tonight that is dear to you? Resign it to him. Have you any costly thing like an alabaster box hidden away? Give it to the King; he is worthy, and when you have fellowship with him at his table, let your gifts be brought forth. Offer unto the King thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most High.

But the King is gone from earth. He is seated at his table in heaven, eating bread in the kingdom of God. Surrounded now not by publicans and harlots, but by cherubim and seraphim, not by mocking crowds, but by adoring hosts, the King sits at his table, and entertains the glorious company of the faithful, the Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. He fought before he could rest. On earth he struggled with his enemies, and it was not till he had triumphed over all, that he sat down at the table on high. There sit, thou King of kings, there sit until thy

last enemy shall be made thy footstool. What can we do, brethren, while Christ sits at the table above? These hands cannot reach him; these eyes cannot see him; but our prayers, like sweet perfume, set burning here on earth, can rise in smoke to the place where the King sitteth at his table, and our spikenard can diffuse a perfume even in heaven itself. Do you want to reach Christ? Your prayers can do it. Would you now adore him; would you now set forth your love? With mingled prayer and praise, like the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, your incense can come up acceptably before the Lord.

And, brethren, the day is coming when the King shall sit at this table in royal state. Lo, he cometh! Lo, he cometh. Let the Church never forget that. The first advent is her faith; the second advent is her hope. The first advent with the cross lays the foundation; the second advent with the crown brings forth the topstone. The former was ushered in with sighs; the latter shall be hailed with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And when the King, manifested and recognized in his sovereignty over all lands, shall sit at his table with his Church, then, in that blessed Millennium, the graces of Christians shall give forth their odours of sweet savour.

We have thus read the text in three ways, and there is a volume in each; but we turn over another page, for we want to read it in relation to the spiritual presence of Christ as he doth now reveal himself to his people. "When the King sitteth at his table"—that is, when we enjoy the presence of Christ—"my spikenard giveth forth the smell thereof." Then our graces are in active exercise, and yield a perfume agreeable to our own soul and acceptable before God.

In the train of reflection I shall now attempt to follow, my manner must be hurried; and should it seem feeble, brethren, I cannot help it. If you get fellowship with Christ, I care little for the merits of my sermon, or the perils of your criticism. One thing alone I crave, "Let him kiss us with the kisses of his mouth"; then shall my soul be well content, and so will yours be also. The first observation we make shall be this:—

**EVERY BELIEVER HAS GRACE IN POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES.**

The text implies that when the King is not present the spikenard yields no smell, but the spikenard is there for all that. The spouse speaks of her spikenard as though she had it, and only wanted to have the King come and sit at the table to make its presence known and felt. Ah! well, believer, there is grace in thy heart, if thou be a child of God, when thou canst not see it thyself; when thy doubts have so covered up all thy hopes, that thou sayest, "I am cast out from his presence"; yet for all that, grace may be there. When the old oak has lost its last leaf by the howling blasts of winter; when the sap is frozen up in the veins, and you cannot, though you search to the uttermost bough, find so much as the slightest sign of verdant existence, still even then the substance is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. And so with every believer, though his sap seems frozen, and his life almost dead, yet if once planted, it is there; the eternal life is there when he cannot discover it himself. Do you know—if not, I pray you may never know experimentally—that there are many things that keep a Christian's spikenard from being poured out. Alas! there is our sin. Ah! shameful, cruel sin! to rob my Master of his glory! But when we fall into sin, of course, our graces become weak and yield no fragrance to God. And too, there is our unbelief, which puts a heavy stone on all our graces, and blows out the heat which was burning the frankincense, so that no altar- smoke arises towards heaven. And often, it may be, it is our bitterness of spirit, for when our mind is cast down we hang our harps upon the willows, so that they give forth no sweet music unto God. And, above all, if Christ be absent, if through neglect or by any other means our fellowship with him is suspended, grace is there—but oh! it cannot be seen. There is no comfort springing from it. But, beloved, though we mention this to begin with, we rather choose to pass on and observe that:

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II. GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO A CHRISTIAN TO BE THUS HIDDEN, BUT IT IS INTENDED THAT, LIKE SPIKENARD, IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN EXERCISE.

If I understand a Christian aright, he should be a man readily discerned. You do not need to write upon a box that contains spikenard, with the lid open, the word "Spikenard." You will know it is there; your nostrils would

tell you. If a man should fill his pockets with dust, he might walk where he would, and though he should scatter it in the air, few would notice it; but let him go into a room with his pockets full of musk, and let him drop a particle about, he is soon discovered, because the musk speaks for itself. Now true grace, like spikenard or any other perfume, should speak for itself. You know our Saviour compares Christians to lights. There is a crowd of people standing yonder; I cannot see those who are in the shadow, but there is one man whose face I can see well, and that is the man who holds the torch. Its flames light up his face, so that we can catch every feature readily. So, whoever is not discovered, the Christian should be obvious at once. "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee." Not only should the Christian be perceptible, but grace has been given to him that it might be in exercise. What is faith, unless it is believing? What is love, unless it is embracing? What is patience, unless it is enduring? To what purpose is knowledge, unless it is revealing truth? What are any of those sweet graces which the Master gives us, unless they yield their perfume? I fear we do not enough gaze upon that face covered with the bloody sweat, for if we did, as sure as the King was thus in our thoughts sitting at his table, we should be more like him; we should love him better; we should live more passionately for him, and should spend and be spent, that we might promote his glory. I just note this point, and then pass on, that believers' graces, like spikenard, are meant to give forth their smell. But here is the pith of our whole subject, though we have little time to linger upon it:—

### III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN'S GRACES CAN BE PUT INTO EXERCISE IS THAT HE MUST HAVE THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER.

He is called "the King." I am told that the Hebrew word is very emphatic, as if it said, "The King"—the King of kings, the greatest of all Kings. He must be such to us—absolute Master of our hearts, Lord of our soul's domain, the unrivalled One in our estimation, to whom we render obedience with alacrity. We must have him as King, or we shall not have his presence to revive our graces. And when the King communes with his people, it is said to be at "his table," not at ours. Specially may this apply to the table of communion. It is not the Baptists' table; it is not my table;

it is his table, because if there is anything good on it, remember, he spread it; nay, there is nothing on the table unless he himself be there. There is no food to the child of God unless Christ's body be the flesh, and Christ's blood the wine. We must have Christ. It must be emphatically his table by his being present, by his spreading it, his presiding at it, or else we have not his presence at all. I find the Hebrew word here signifies a "round table." I do not know whether that is intended which I understand by it—perhaps it is—it suggests to me a blessed equality with all his disciples; sitting at his round table, as if there were scarce a head, but he was one of themselves, so close the communion he holds with them sitting at the table; so dear his fellowship, sitting like one of themselves, made like unto his brethren in all things at his round table.

Well, now, we say that when Christ comes into the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, or any other ordinance, straightway our graces are vigorous. How often have we resolved that we would live nearer to Christ! Yet, though we have resolved, and re-resolved, I fear it has all ended with resolving. Peradventure we have prayed over our resolutions, and for a little season we have sought it very earnestly, but our earnestness soon expired, like every other fire that is of human kindling, and we made but little progress. Be not disheartened, my beloved in the Lord: I tell thee, whether thou art able to believe it or not, that if thy heart be this night cold as the centre of an iceberg, yet if Christ shall come to thee, thy soul shall be as coals of juniper, that have a most vehement flame. Though to thy own apprehension thou seemest to be dead as the bones in a cemetery, yet if Jesus come to thee, thou shalt forthwith be as full of life as the seraphs who are as flames of fire. Why think you he will not come to you? Do you not remember how he did melt you when first he manifested himself to your soul? You were as vile then as you are now; you were certainly as ruined then as you are now; you had no more to merit his esteem then than you have now; you were as far off from him then as you are now—I might say even further off. But lo! he came to you when you did not seek him; he came in the sovereignty of his grace and the sweetness of his mercy when you despised him. Wherefore, then, should he not come to you now? Oh! breathe the prayer, tenderly and hopefully breathe the prayer, "Draw me," and you will soon find power to run, and when all your passions and powers are fled, the King will



speedily bring you into his chamber. Dark as your present state may be, there are sure signs of breaking day. I want you, brethren, to believe and to expect that you shall hold this night with Christ the richest, sweetest fellowship that ever mortal was privileged to enjoy, and that of a sudden. I know your cares—forget them. I know your sins—bring them to his feet. I know the wandering of your heart—ask him to tether you to his cross with the same cords that bound him to the pillar of his flagellation. I know your brain is perplexed, and your thoughts flying hither and thither, distracted with many cares—put on the thorn-crown, and let that be the antidote of all your manifold disquietudes. Methinks Jesus is putting in his hand by the hole of the door. Are not your bowels moved for him? Rise up and welcome him; and as the bread is broken, and the wine is passed round, come, and eat and drink of him, and be not strange to him. "Let not conscience make you linger"; let not doubts and fears hold you back from fellowship with him who loved you or ever the earth was, but do rest your unworthy head upon his blessed bosom, and talk with him, even though the only word you may be able to say may be, "Lord, is it I?" Do seek fellowship with him, as one who ignores every thought, feeling, or fact besides. So may it please him to manifest himself to you and to me as he doth not to the world.

If you that have never had fellowship with Christ think I am talking nonsense, I do not marvel. But let me tell you, if you had ever known what fellowship with Christ means, you would pawn your eyes, and barter your right arms, and give your estates away as trifles for the priceless favour. Princes would sell their crowns, and peers would renounce their dignities, to have five minutes' fellowship with Christ. I will vouch for that. Why, I have had more joy in my Lord and Master in the space of the ticking of a clock than could be crammed into a lifetime of sensual delights, of the pleasures of taste, of the fascinations of literature. There is a depth, a matchless depth, in Jesu's love. There is a luscious sweetness in the fellowship with him. You must eat, or you will never know the flavour of it. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good! Behold how ready he still is to welcome sinners. Trust him and live. Feed on him, and grow strong. Commune with him, and be happy. May every one of you who shall sit at the table have the nearest approach to Jesus that you ever had! Like two streams that, after flowing side by side, at length unite, so may Christ and

our soul melt into one, even as Isis melts into Thames, till only one life shall flow, so that the life we live in the flesh shall be no more ours, but Christ that liveth in us. Amen.

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## **Free Grace**

Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. - Ezekiel 36:32

There are two sins of man that are bred in the bone, and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is self-exaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians, and those who understand best the gospel of Christ, find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature, instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God alone. Over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God's work from first to last, and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error - that we are to save ourselves, or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation - always rises up, and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God. Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son - Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar, to wife, and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God's promise; but instead of Ishmael's helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham's heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. "Cast out," said the Scripture, "the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free

woman." Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise, and we set to work ourselves to do something, and what do we do? sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham's heart to send Ishmael away? Ah! and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of grace. Oh, beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting Philosophic rules and principles which we think will effect the Divine work. We shall but mar it; we shall bring grief into our own spirits. But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help, and strength, and grace, and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort, and to God's glory. That error, then, I say is in our bone, and will always dwell with us, and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. "Not for your sakes do I this." He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. "I will take you from among the heathen." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." "I will give you a new heart." "I will put my Spirit within you." It is all of God: therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine, and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone, is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely. You will find the most abandoned drunkard pride himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world, exalt what they imagine to be a virtue - the fact that they do not profess to have any; and they think themselves to be extremely excellent, because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile. Somehow the human mind clings to human merit; it always will hold to it, and when

you take away everything upon which you think it could rely, in less than a moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit, is like the spider, it bears its support in its own bowels, and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another, you may take the thread from one place, and you will find it clinging to your finger, and when you seek to brush it down with one hand you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of; it is ever ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust. It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak, and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian, and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious truth, and a giving up to the power and grace of God, who will never save us, unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to expound at large the doctrine contained in this text; in the next place I shall endeavour to show its force and truthfulness; and then in the third place I shall seek God's Holy Spirit to apply the useful, practical lessons which are to be drawn from it.

I. I shall endeavour to EXPOUND THIS TEXT. "Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord God." The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God, and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God - the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them; they were swept from their starry seats in Heaven, and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them; but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment. The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously; at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be

much blacker than the sin of mankind. However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels, and suffered them forever to expiate their offences in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale; the election of manhood, and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know, and which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I been put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? Have they not the greatest mental strength? If they had been redeemed, would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves? Those bright beings - Lucifer, son of the morning, and those stars that walked in his train - if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who doeth as He wills with His own, and giveth no account of His matters, but who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay, took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham, and chose men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? certainly not in man. "Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways."

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it; but when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it. Come, then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved, and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God's bosom. The reason why this day the gospel is preached to you and not the heathen far away, is not because, as a race, we are superior to the heathen; it is not because we deserve more at God's hands; His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love. There is not reason in us why we should have the gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today, some of us have received the gospel, and have been changed by it, and have

become the heirs of light and immortality, whereas others are left still to be the heirs of wrath. But there is no reason in us why we should have been taken and others left.

"There was nothing in us to merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight.  
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' we ever must sing,  
Because it seem'd good in thy sight."

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that, long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion; and there and then foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin, and deserve His anger, determined, in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children, and should be brought to Heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts. to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall; all without the slightest claim upon His mercy; all, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of any one, and His choice of all His people, are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will, and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do; for thus saith the text: "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!"

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world, and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father hath chosen. Now come ye to the cross of Christ; bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite, that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us.

The little good that is in us - the no good that is in us - for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the cross, ye merit-mongers, ye that delight in your own works; and answer this question: Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from Heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree, and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world's guilt? You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude, and by its many years of working; but you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty, and bowed Him to the death of the cross: that is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind, as impossibility can be. No; from the cross comes the cry - "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

After Christ's death, there comes, in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father hath chosen, and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls "out of darkness into marvelous light." Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any, merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men, and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men, and let them march in review, and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, "I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this - nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men." For, look ye here. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, "Come forth and live," it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it

must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us. Therefore, know ye this, men and brethren, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God; and if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further: this truth, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus; they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" they are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh, and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people - His own free sovereign grace. If, my brother, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian; it is simply and only because of God's mercy. He is not moved to anything He does for you by anything .that you do for Him; His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept.

"Nor death, nor Hell shall e'er remove  
His favourites from His breast;  
In the dear bosom of His love  
They must forever rest."

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because he in his sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And to conclude my exposition of this text. This shall hold good in Heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white. Our hands shall soon bear the palm; our ears shall be delighted with celestial



melodies, and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God's glory. But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to Heaven shall be His own love, and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it; we must labour, but the wage at the days' end shall be a wage of grace, and not a debt. We must honour God here, looking for the recompense of the reward; but that recompense will not be given on a legal ground, because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God had loved us, for no reason that was in us. When you and I and each of us shall enter Heaven, our song shall be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory;" and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true; we shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing, and that we were nothing, but that God did it all - that we had nothing in us to be the motive of his doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself; therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honour forever and ever.

Now, this, I take it, is the meaning of the text; distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there It stands. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." His truth we must preach, and this we must proclaim. Salvation is "not of men, neither by man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood," nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God, and God alone.

II. And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.

Consider a moment man's character. It will humble us, and it will tend to confirm this truth in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God, and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin, and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm - every one of them. The public cry is everywhere - "This man must die; the laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigour. He who beareth not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die; he richly

deserves it." You look through his character: you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender; he has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, "The case is hopeless with this man; his crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretence of excuse, or any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch; let him die!" Now, if her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight, that the only reason that can move her to spare that man, must be her own love, her own compassion? For, as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man's character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin. Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God. Ah! my hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended; but there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience, and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved. My hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, It has been because providence has stayed your hand, Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel that the vileness of your imagination and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt, and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you, and have gone over your head. Now, man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it, because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse, and you feel it. Oh! bless His dear name, that He has devised this way, whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you. I want you to go back to Newgate again to this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by her Majesty in person. She goes to him, and she says to him, "Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you; you deserve it not; but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you

repent you shall have mercy at my hands." Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her - curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her, and utter blasphemies, and imprecate curses upon her head. She retires; she is gone; but so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, she continually sends messengers, and these go to him, and they say, "If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy; not because you deserve it, but because her Majesty is compassionate, and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?" Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case - suppose he turns upon his seat and says, "I don't care whether I am hanged or not; I'll take my chance along with other people; I shall take no notice of you." And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned, and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows. Now, if her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, "Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love; she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die." And now what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? and has He not said to you, "Sinner! come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool." And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience - cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word, and railed against His ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you, and his message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And what will you do. Why, if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message - despise it. It will glance off from you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail, and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes; but must be from His own infinite love; it cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His gospel, trodden under foot the blood of Jesus, and have refused to be

saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace, and free grace alone.

But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin, and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where others are confined, and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart; he utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him, and endeavours to make others as vile as himself. Now, what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others; and if he be spared, is it not as plain as a pike - staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign. And now look you here: is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but lead others into sin? I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation. Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children's souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches, and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious, and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you. O my hearer, is not this thy case? Does not thy heart confess it? And does not the tear flow down thy cheek? Remember, then, this must be true: if God shall save thee, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in thee, for thou deservedst now to die, and if He spare thee it must be sovereign love and sovereign grace.

I will just use one other illustration, and then, I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Every one can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and

the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection; we are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black; and great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man. Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a tribe of devils living, that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them. Well, now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If, then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man's love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save men must be God's own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable - "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." God sees us, abandoned, evil, wicked, and deserving His wrath; if He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it - nothing whatever in us.

III. And now, having thus preached this doctrine, and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION. And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labour with your hearts!

First, since this doctrine is true, how humble a Christian man ought to be. If thou be saved, thou hast had nought to do with it; God has done it. If thou be saved, thou hast not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which thou hast received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them. I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long, and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society, and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul's good, it broke her heart. What should a man of God care about her? she was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her? Ah! but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against thee, and yet thou hast loved me, unworthy me!

How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before Thee in speechless gratitude. Remember, my dear brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been, to this day, hardened in heart, without God, and without Christ, had not free grace saved you. Can you be proud then? - proud of mercy which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you? - proud of grace which has been given you against your will, until your will was changed by sovereign grace? And think again. All the mercy you have you once refused, Christ supps with you; be not proud of His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked, and you refused - when He came to the door and said, "My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night; open to me, my beloved;" and you barred it in His face and would not let Him enter. Be not proud, then, of what thou hast, when thou rememberest that thou didst once reject Him. Does God embrace Thee in His arms of love? Remember, once thou liftedst up thine hand of rebellion against Him. Is thy name written in His book? Ah! there was a time when, if it had been in thy power, thou wouldst have erased the sacred lines that contained thine own salvation. Can we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson: let us learn another.

This doctrine is true, and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest gratitude. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh! I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate; I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother's tears shed over me in vain, and a father's admonition lost upon me, and yet I found myself saved by grace, and I could only say, "Lord, I bless Thee that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit I had never been saved. If thou hadst waited till there was something good in me, thou wouldst have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of hell, for good in man there never would have been, unless thou hadst first put it there." And then I thought immediately, "Oh! how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!" Ah! let me try if I cannot. O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have

nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you; He will not save you, if you have anything to recommend you, for His says, "Not for you sake do I this." Go to Christ with earrings in your ears, and jewels upon you; wash your face, and array yourself with gold and silver, and go before Him and say, "Lord, save me; I have washed myself and clothed myself; save me!" "Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this." Go to Him again, and say, "Lord, I have put a rope about my neck, and sackcloth about my loins; see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need; now save me!" "No," saith He, "I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes, and now I will not save you because of your rags; I will save you for nothing about you; if I do save you, it will be from something in my heart, not from anything you feel. Get ye gone!" But if today you go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved - there is one in Heaven; Lord, I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer; Lord, I deserve it, and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if thou wouldst save me I should make but a poor Christian, after all; I fear that my future works will be no honour to Thee - I wish they could be, but thy grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But, Lord, thou I have nothing to bring, and nothing to say for myself, I do say this: I have heard that thou hast come into the world to save sinners - O Lord, save me!

'I the chief of sinners am.'

I confess I do not feel this as I ought, I do not mourn it as I ought; I have no repentance to recommend me; nay, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe thy promise as I ought; but oh! I cling to this text. Lord, thou hast said thou wilt not do it for my sake. I thank Thee thou hast said that. Thou couldst not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why thou shouldst. Lord, I claim thy gracious promise. 'Be merciful to me, a sinner.'" Ah! you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you; it is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your churches regularly, and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath, or never swore an oath, or did anything wrong, this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots, and drunkards, and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are. Ah! well,

this is your text - "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You are "whole" - you are; you "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Go your way. Christ came to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it, and perish in the doing of it. But I feel that the same gospel that suits a harlot suits me, and that that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved. Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty - some more, some less, but all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy, and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust, and sigh out again, "Lord have mercy upon us for whom Jesus died."

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Sinner, come now; come now, I beseech thee; I entreat thee, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come, now, receive His mercy; now bend your willing necks to His yoke; and then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love, and at last to sing in Heaven the song of the redeemed - "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory forever. Amen."

"O thou great eternal Jesus,  
High and mighty Prince of Peace,  
How Thy wonders shine resplendent,  
In the wonders of Thy grace:  
Thy rich gospel scorns conditions,  
Breathes salvation free as air;  
Only breathes triumphant mercy,  
Baffling guilt, and all despair.  
"O the grandeur of the gospel,  
How it sounds the cleansing blood;  
Shows the bowels of a Saviour,  
Shows the tender heart of God.



Only treats of love eternal,  
Swells the all-abounding grace,  
Nothing knows but life and pardon,  
Full redemption, endless peace."

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## **A Free Grace Promise**

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. - Joel 2:32

Vengeance was in full career. The armies of divine justice had been called forth for war: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war." They had invaded and devastated the land, and turned the land from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. All faces gathered blackness: the people were "much pained" The sun itself was dim, the moon was dark, and the stars withdrew themselves: the earth quaked, and the heavens trembled. At such a dreadful time, when we might least have expected it, between the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning, was heard this gentle word, "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Let us carefully read the passage: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." In the worst times that can ever happen, there is still salvation for men. When day turns to night, and life becomes death, and the staff of life is broken, and the hope of man has fled, there still remains in God, in the person of his dear Son, deliverance to all those who will call upon the name of the Lord. We do

not know what is to happen: reading the roll of the future, we prophesy dark things; but still this light shall always shine between the rifts of the cloud-wrack: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

This passage was selected by the apostle at Pentecost to be set in its place as a sort of morning star of gospel times. When the Spirit was poured out upon the servants and the handmaids, and sons and daughters began to prophesy, it was clear that the wondrous time had come, which had been foretold so long before. Then Peter, as he preached his memorable sermon, told the people, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"; thus giving a fuller and yet more evangelical meaning to the word "delivered." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" from sin, death and hell—shall, in fact, be so delivered as to be, in divine language, "saved"—saved from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin, saved from the wrath to come. These gospel times are still the happy days in which "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In the Year of Grace we have reached a day and an hour in which "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To you at this moment is this salvation sent. The dispensation of immediate acceptance proclaimed at Pentecost has never ceased: its fulness of blessing has grown rather than diminished. The sacred promise stands in all its certainty, fulness, and freeness: it has lost none of all its breadth and length: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I have nothing to do to-night but to tell you over again the old, old story of infinite mercy come to meet infinite sin—of free grace come to lead free will into a better line of things—of God himself appearing to undo man's ruin wrought by man, and to lift him up by a great deliverance. May the Holy Spirit graciously aid me while I shall talk to you very simply, thus:—

I. First, THERE IS SOMETHING ALWAYS WANTED. That something is deliverance, or "salvation." It is always wanted. It is the requisite of man, wherever man is found. As long as there are men on the face of the earth, there will always be a need of salvation. I could wish that some of you had the instructive schooling which I received last Tuesday, when I was sitting to see enquirers. I had a very happy time in seeing a very large number of

persons who had joyfully put their trust in Christ; but among them were some who could not trust—poor hearts, conscious of sin, though they did not think they were. These seemed bound hand and foot, shut up in the prison of despair, and darkened in heart. I tell you, I felt dismayed as they baffled me: I felt a fool as they refused to be comforted. I could do nothing for them so far as argument and persuasion were concerned. I could pray with them: I could also set them praying, and they did pray: but they were cases in which, unless the arm of God were revealed, I was as powerless with them as when a man stands weeping over the body of his dead wife, and would restore her to life even at the cost of his own life, and yet he could produce neither hearing nor motion. Dear friends, while we mingle only with those who are saved, we forget how much need there is still of a divine salvation. If we could go through London, into its dens and slums, we should think very differently of human need from what we do when we simply come from our own quiet domestic circle, and step into our pew and hear a sermon. The world is still sick and dying. The world is still corrupting and rotting. The world is a ship in which the water is rising fast, and the vessel is going down into the deep of destruction. God's salvation is wanted as much to-day as when the spirit preached it in Noah's day to the spirits in prison. God must step in, and bring deliverance, or there remains no hope.

Some want deliverance from present trouble. If you are in this need to-night through very sore distress, I invite you to take my text as your guide, and believe that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Depend upon it, in any form of distress, physical, mental, or whatever it may be, prayer is wonderfully available. "Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." If you are so down at the heel that your foot is on the bare pavement; if you have come to this place in bodily sickness, and feel as if you should die on the seat in which you sit; if there be no physician to help you, and no friend to stretch out a generous hand, call upon God, I beseech you. You have come to the end of men; you are now at the beginning of God. See whether your Maker will forget you. See whether the great, generous heart of God does not still beat tenderly towards the sorrowful and the afflicted. If I saw you lying wounded on a battle-field, bleeding to death, I would say, "Call upon God." If I knew that you had

not a house to go to, but must walk these streets all night, I would say, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I will take the text in the broadest sense, and bid you, nay, command you, to test your good and gracious God in the day of your calamity.

This is true whenever you come into a position of deep personal distress, even though it should not be of a physical kind. When you do not know how to act, but are bewildered and at your wits' end, when wave of trouble has followed wave of trouble till you are like the sailor in the storm who reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man; if now you cannot help yourself, because your spirit sinks and your mind fails, call upon God, call upon God, call upon God! Lost child in the wood, with the night fog thickening about you, ready to lie down and die, call upon your Father! Call upon God, thou distracted one; for "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." In the last great day when all secrets are known, it will seem ridiculous that ever persons took to writing tales and romances; for the real stories of what God has done for those who cry to him are infinitely more surprising. If men and women could but tell in simple, natural language how God has come to their rescue in the hour of imminent distress, they would set the harps of heaven a-ringing with new melodies, and the hearts of saints on earth aglowing with new love to God for his wonderful kindness to the children of men. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! Oh that we could abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness to ourselves in the night of our weeping!

The text holds good concerning deliverance from future troubles. What is to happen in the amazing future we do not know. Some try to startle and alarm you with prophecies of what will soon happen; concerning whom I would warn you to be well upon your guard. Take small heed of what they say. Whatever is to happen according to the Word of God—if the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—if God shall show great wonders in the heavens, and the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, yet remember that though you will then assuredly want deliverance, deliverance will still be near at hand. The text seems put in a startling connection in order to advise us that when the worst and most terrible convulsions shall occur, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the

Lord shall be saved." The star Wormwood may fall, but we shall be saved if we call upon the name of the Lord. Plagues may be poured out, trumpets may sound, and judgments may follow one another as quickly as the plagues of Egypt, but "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." When the need of deliverance shall apparently increase, the abundance of salvation shall increase with it. Fear not the direst of all wars, the bitterest of all famines, the deadliest of all plagues; for still, if we call upon the Lord, he is pledged to deliver us. This word of promise meets the most terrible of possibilities with a sure salvation.

Yes, and when you come to die, when to you the sun has turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, this text ensures deliverance in the last dread hour. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. Amid the pains of death, and the gloom of departure, you shall enjoy a glorious visitation, which shall turn darkness into light, and sorrow into joy. When you wake up amid the realities of the eternal future there will be nothing for you to dread in resurrection, or in judgment, or in the yawning mouth of hell. If you have called upon the name of the Lord, you shall still be delivered. Though the unpardoned are thrust down to the depth of woe, and the righteous scarcely are saved, yet you who have called upon the name of the Lord must be delivered. Stands the promise firm, whatever may be hidden in the great roll of the future; God cannot deny himself, he will deliver those who call upon his name.

What is wanted, then, is salvation; and I do think, beloved brethren, that you and I who preach the Word, and long to save souls, must very often go over this grand old truth about salvation to the guilty, deliverance to all who call upon the name of the Lord. Sometimes we talk to friends about the higher life, about attaining to very high degrees of sanctity; and all this is very proper and very good; but still the great fundamental truth is, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." We urge our friends to be sound in doctrine, and to know what they do know, and to understand the revealed will of God; and very proper is this also; but still, first and foremost, this is the elementary, all-important truth—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To this old foundation truth we come back for comfort. I sometimes rejoice in God, and joy in the God of my salvation, and spread my wings and mount

up into communion with the heavenlies; but still there are other seasons when I hide my head in darkness, and then I am very glad of such a broad, gracious promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I find that my sweetest, happiest, safest state, is just as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner, to call upon the name of the Lord, and take mercy at his hands as one who deserves nothing but his wrath, while I dare hang the weight of my soul on such a sure promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Get where you may, however high your experience; be what you may, however great your usefulness, you will always want to come back to the same ground upon which the poorest and weakest of hearts must stand, and claim to be saved by almighty grace, through simply calling upon the name of the Lord.

Thus have I said enough upon what is always wanted—this deliverance, this salvation.

II. Now, secondly, let us attentively observe THE WAY IN WHICH THIS DELIVERANCE IS TO BE HAD. Help us, blessed Spirit, in this our meditation. It is to be had, according to the text, by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Is not the most obvious sense of this language, prayer? Are we not brought to the Lord by a prayer which trusts in God—by a prayer which asks God to give the deliverance that is needed, and expects to have it from the Lord, as a gift of grace? It amounts to much the same thing as that other word, "Believe and live"; for how shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? And if they have heard, yet vain is their calling if they have not believed as well as heard. But to "call on the name of the Lord," is briefly to pray a believing prayer; to cry to God for his help, and to leave yourself in his hands. This is very simple, is it not? There is no cumbersome machinery here, nothing complex and mysterious. No priestly help is wanted, except the help of that great High Priest, who intercedes for us within the veil. A poor, broken heart pours its distress into the ear of God, and calls upon him to fulfil his promise of help in the time of need—that is all. Thank God, nothing more is mentioned in our text. The promise is—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

What a suitable way of salvation it is to those who feel that they can do nothing! Ah, dear hearts! if we had to preach to them a very difficult and elaborate salvation, they would perish. They have not the mind, some of them, to follow our directions if they were at all intricate; and they have not enough hope to venture upon anything that looks at all difficult. But if it be true that "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," this method is simple and available, and they catch at it. He can pray to God who can do nothing else. Thank God, he need not want to do anything else; for if he can call for help, he gets deliverance, and, in that deliverance, he gets all that he will ever want between this place and heaven. He has called upon the name of the Lord, and all that is deficient in him will be supplied for time and for eternity. He will be delivered, not only now, but throughout all the future of his life, until he sees the face of God in glory everlasting.

The text, however, contains within it a measure of specific instruction: the prayer must be to the true God. "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." There is something distinctive here; for one would call on Baal, another would call on Ashtaroth, and a fourth on Moloch; but these would not be saved. The promise is special: "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." You know that triune name, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"—call upon it. You know how the name of Jehovah is set forth most conspicuously in the person of the Lord Jesus—call upon him. Call upon the true God. Call upon no idol, call on no Virgin Mary, no saint, dead or living. Call on no image. Call on no impression of your mind! Call upon the living God—call upon him who reveals himself in the Bible—call upon him who manifests himself in the person of his dear Son; for whosoever shall call upon this God shall be saved. You may call upon the idols, but these will not hear you: "Ears have they, but they hear not. Eyes have they, but they see not." You may not call upon men, for they are all sinners like yourselves. Priests cannot help their most zealous admirers; but, "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." Mind, then, it is not the mere repetition of a prayer as a sort of charm, or a piece of religious witchcraft, but you must make a direct address to God, an appeal to the Most High to help you in your time of need. In presenting true prayer to the true God you shall be

delivered.

Moreover, the prayer should be intelligently presented. We read, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord." Now, by the word "name" we understand the person, the character of the Lord. The more, then, you know about the Lord, and the better you know his name, the more intelligently will you call upon that name. If you know his power, you will call upon that power to help you. If you know his mercy, you will call upon him in his grace to save you. If you know his wisdom, you feel that he knows your difficulties, and can help you through them. If you understand his immutability, you will call upon him, as the same God who has saved other sinners, to come and save you. It will be well, therefore, for you to study the Scriptures much, and to pray the Lord to manifest himself to you that you may know him; since, in proportion to your acquaintance with him, will you with greater confidence be able to call upon his name. But, little as you may know, call on him according to the little you do know. Cast yourself upon him, whether your trouble tonight be external or internal; but especially if it be internal, if it be the trouble of sin, if it be the burden of guilt, if it be a load of horror and fear because of wrath to come, call upon the name of the Lord, for you shall be delivered. There stands his promise. It is not, "He may be delivered," but he "shall be." Note well the everlasting "shall" of God—irrevocable, unalterable, unquestionable, irresistible. His promise stands eternally the same. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This way of salvation, by calling upon the name of the Lord, glorifies God. He asks nothing of you but that you ask everything of him. You are the beggar, and he is the benefactor. You are in the trouble, and he is the Deliverer. All you have to do is to trust him, and beg of him. This is easy enough. This puts the matter into the hands of the Lord, and takes it out of your hands. Do you not like the plan? Put it in practice immediately! It will prove itself gloriously effectual.

Dear friends, I speak to some whom I know to be now present, who are under severe trial. You dare not look up. You seem to be given up; at any rate you have given yourself up; and yet, I pray you, call upon the name of the Lord. You cannot perish praying; no one has ever done so. If you



could perish praying, you would be a new wonder in the universe. A praying soul in hell is an utter impossibility. A man calling on God and rejected of God!—the supposition is not to be endured. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." God himself must lie, he must quit his nature, forfeit his claim to mercy, destroy his character of love, if he were to let a poor sinner call upon his name, and yet refuse to hear him. There will come a day, but that is not now—there will come a day in the next state when he will say, "I called, but ye refused" ; but it is not so now. While there is life there is hope. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," but call upon God at once; for this warrant of grace runneth through all the regions of mortality, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I recollect a time when, if I had heard a sermon on this subject, putting it plainly to me, I should have leaped into comfort and light in a single moment. Is it not such a time with you? I thought, I must do something, I must be something, I must in some way prepare myself for the mercy of God. I did not know that a calling upon God, a trusting myself in his hand, an invocation of his sacred name, would bring me to Christ, the Saviour. But so it stands, and happy, indeed, was I when I found it out. Heaven is given away. Salvation may be had for the asking. I hope that many a captive heart here will at once leap to loose his chains, and cry, "It is even so. If God has said it, it must be true. There it is in his own Word. I have called upon him, and I must be delivered."

III. Now I come to notice, in the third place, THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THIS PROMISE AND THIS DELIVERANCE WILL BE GIVEN. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

According to the connection, the people had been greatly afflicted—afflicted beyond all precedent, afflicted to the very brink of despair; but the Lord said, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Go down to the hospital. You may select, if you please, the hospital which deals with the effects of vice. In that house of misery you may stand at each bed and say, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." You may then hasten every door of every cell, yes, even at the grating of the condemned cell, if there lie men and women there given up to death, and you may with safety say to each one,

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

I know what the Pharisees will say—"If you preach this, men will go on in sin." It has always been so, that the great mercy of God has been turned by some into a reason for continuing in sin; but God (and this is the wonder of it) has never restricted his mercy because of that. It must have been a terrible provocation of Almighty grace when men have perverted his mercy into an excuse for sin, but the Lord has never even taken the edges off from his mercy because men have misused it: he has still made it stand out bright and clear: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Still he cries, "Turn and live." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Undimmed is that brave sun that shineth on the foulest dunghills of vice. Trust Christ, and live. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be pardoned; yea, you shall be rescued from the bondage of your sin, and be made a new creature, a child of God, a member of the family of his grace. The most afflicted, and the most afflicted by sin, are met with by this gracious promise, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Yes, but there were some, according to Joel, who had the Spirit of God poured out upon them. What about them? Were they saved by that? Oh no! Those who had the Spirit of God so that they dreamed dreams and saw visions, yet had to come to the palace of mercy by this same gate of believing prayer—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Ah, poor souls! you say, to yourselves, "if we were deacons of churches, if we were pastors, oh, then we should be saved!" You do not know anything about it: church officers are no more saved by their office than you are by being without office. We owe nothing to our official position in this matter of salvation: in fact, we may owe our damnation to our official standing unless we look well to our ways. We have no preference over you plain folks. I do assure you, I am quite happy to take your hand, whoever you may be, and come to Christ on the same footing as yourself.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Often, when I have been cheering up a poor sinner, and urging him to believe in Christ, I have thought, "Well, if he will not drink this cup of comfort, I will even drink it up myself." I assure you, I need it as much as those to whom I carry it. I have been as big a sinner as any of you, and therefore I take the promise to myself. The divine cordial shall not be lost: I will accept it. I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and faint, and sick, and full of sin, and I trusted him on my own account, and found peace—peace on the same ground as my text sets before all of you. If I drink of this consolation, you may drink it too. The miracle of this cup is that fifty may drink, and yet it is just as full as ever. There is no restriction in the word "Whosoever." You maidens that have the Spirit of God upon you, and you old men that dream, it is neither the Spirit of God nor the dreaming that will save you; but your calling on the sacred name. It is, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Also, there were some upon whom the Spirit of God did not fall. They did not speak with tongues, nor prophesy the future, nor work miracles; but though they did none of these marvels, yet it stood true to them—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What though no supernatural gift was bestowed, though they saw no vision and could not speak with tongues, they called upon the name of the Lord, and they were saved. There is the same way of salvation for the little as well as for the great, for the poorest and most obscure as well as for those that are strong in faith, and lead the hosts of God to the battle.

But some were terribly afraid. I should think that a good many must have been sadly alarmed when there were in the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood: but, afraid as they were, if they called upon the name of the Lord, they were delivered. Now, Mrs. Much-afraid, what do you say to that? Mr. Ready-to-halt, did I hear your crutches sounding in the aisle just now, or was it an umbrella? Never mind, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved. You that are so feeble in mind, so weak, so wounded that you hardly dare to trust, still it is written for your sakes also, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Ah!" says another, "but I am worse than that. I have no good feelings. I

would give all that I have to own a broken heart. I wish I could even feel despair, but I am hard as a stone." I have been told that sorrowful story many times, and it almost always happens that those who most mourn their want of feeling are those who feel most acutely. Their hearts are like hell-hardened steel, so they say; but it is not true. But if it were true, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Do you think that the Lord wants you to give yourself a new heart first, and that then he will save you? My dear soul, you are saved when you have a new heart, and you do not want him to save you then, since you are saved. "Oh, but I must get good feelings!" Must you? Where are you going for them? Are you to rake the dunghill of your depraved nature to find good feelings there? Come without any good feeling. Come just as you are. Come, you that are like a frozen iceberg, that have nothing about you whatever, but that which chills and repels; come and call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. "Wonders of grace to God belong." It is not a small gospel that he has sent us to preach to small sinners, but ours is a great gospel for great sinners. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Ah, well!" says one, "I cannot think it is meant for me, for I am nobody." Nobody, are you there? I have a great love for nobodies. I am worried with somebodies, and the worst somebody in the world is my own somebody. How I wish I could always turn my own somebody out, and keep company with none but nobodies! Then I should make Jesus everybody. Nobody, where are you? You are the very person that I am sent to look after. If there is nothing of you, there shall be all the more of Christ. If you are not only empty, but cracked and broken; if you are done for, destroyed, ruined, utterly crushed and broken, to you is this word of salvation sent:—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I have set the gate wide open. If it were the wrong track, all the sheep would go through; but as it is the right road, I may set the gate open as long as I will, but yet the sheep will shun it, unless thou, Great Shepherd, shall go around the field to-night, and lead them in. Take up in thine own arms some sheep that thou hast purchased long ago with thy dear heart's blood—take him upon thy gracious shoulders, rejoicing as thou doest it,

and place him within the field where the good pasture grows.

IV. I want you to dwell for a minute upon THE BLESSING ITSELF. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I need not say much about it because I have already expounded it. It is a very good rule, when a man makes you a promise, to understand it in the narrowest sense. It is fair to him that you should do so. Let him interpret it liberally, if he pleases; but he is actually bound to give you no more than the bare terms of his promise will imply.

Now, it is a rule which all God's people may well practise, always to understand God's promises in the largest possible sense. If the words will bear a bigger construction than at the first sight they naturally suggest to you, you may put the larger construction upon them. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think." God never draws a line in his promise, that he may go barely up to it; but it is with the great God as it was with his dear Son, who, though he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet spent the greater part of his time in Galilee, which was called, "Galilee of the Gentiles"; and went to the very verge of Canaan to find out a Canaanitish woman, that he might give her a blessing. Thou mayest put the biggest and most liberal sense, then, on such a text as this, for Peter did so. The New Testament is wont to give a broader sense to Old Testament words; and it does so most rightly, for God loves us to treat his words with the breadth of faith.

Come, then, if you are the subject of the judgments of God; if you believe that God's hand has visited you on account of sin, call upon him, and he will deliver you both from the judgment, and from the guilt that brought the judgment—from the sin, and from that which follows the sin. He will help you to escape. Try him now, I pray you.

And if your case should be different: if you are a child of God and you are in trouble, and that trouble eats into your spirit, and causes you daily wear of spirit and tear of heart—call upon the Lord. He can take away from you the fret and the trouble too. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." You may have to bear the trouble, but it shall be so transformed as to be rather a blessing than an evil, and you shall fall in love with your cross, since the nature of it has been changed.

If sin be the great cause of your present trouble, and that sin has brought you into bondage to evil habits, if you have been a drunkard and do not know how to learn sobriety, if you have been unchaste and have become entangled in vicious connections; call upon God, and he can break you away from the sin, and set you free from all its entanglements. He can cut you loose to-night with the great sword of his grace, and make you a free man. I tell you that, though you should be like a poor sheep between the jaws of a lion, ready to be devoured immediately by the monster, God can come and pluck you out from between the lion's jaws. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Only call upon the name of the Lord! Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered.

Yes, and I repeat what I said just now. If you have come under the power of disease, if you are near to die, if already death has written his name legibly upon your body, and you are afraid of death and hell; yet call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered at this last moment. Even now, when the pit gapes wide for you, and like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, you are ready to go down alive into it, call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered.

If I were telling you what I had made up, or hammered out of my own brain, I could not expect you to believe me; but, as this Book is inspired, and as Joel spoke in the name of God, and as the apostles spoke in the name of Jehovah, this is the very truth of the God that made the heavens and the earth. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

V. In conclusion, I must remind you of one mournful thought. Let me warn you **OF THE SADLY COMMON NEGLECT OF THIS BLESSING.** You would think that everybody would call upon the name of the Lord; but read the text, "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said." It shall be there as the Lord hath said. Will they not have it then? Notice! "And in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." It seems to shrivel me up altogether, that word "remnant." What! Will they not come? Are they madmen? Will they not come? No, only a remnant; and even that remnant will not call upon the name of the Lord until first God calls them by his grace. This is almost as great a

wonder as the love which so graciously invites them. Could even devils behave worse? If they were invited to call upon God, and be saved, would they refuse?

Unhappy business! The way is plain, but "few there be that find it." After all the preaching, and all the invitation, and the illimitable breadth of the promise, yet all that are saved are contained "in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Is not our text a generous invitation; the setting open of the door, yea, the lifting of the door from off its hinges, that it never might be shut? And yet "broad is the gate, and wide is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." There they come, streams of them, hurrying impatiently, rushing down to death and hell—yes, eagerly panting, hurrying, dashing against one another to descend to that awful gulf from which there is no return! No missionaries are wanted, no ministers are needed to plead with men to go to hell. No books of persuasion are wanted to urge them to rush onward to eternal ruin. They hurry to be lost: they are eager to be destroyed. As when the wild bisons of the prairie hasten onward in their madness, until they come to a great gulf, and then rush down headlong, a cataract of life leaping to death, so is it with the sons of men! They choose their own delusions, and covet their own damnations, and that without end. This is all that sovereign mercy rescues after all—a remnant, and that remnant only because the arm of the Lord is revealed, and a miraculous power exerted upon their wills. This is the misery of it, that the guilty are not willing to be parted from their sins. They will not seek that which alone is their life, their joy, their salvation. They prefer hell to heaven, sin to holiness. Never spake the Master a word which observation more clearly proves than when he said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You will attend your chapels, but you will not call on the Lord. Jesus cries, "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; but ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You will do anything rather than come to Jesus. You stop short of calling upon him. O my dear hearers, do not let it be so with you! Many of you are saved; I beseech you intercede for those who are not saved. Oh, that the unconverted among you may be moved to pray. Before you leave this place, breathe an earnest prayer to God, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I need to be saved. Save me. I call

upon thy name." Join with me in prayer at this moment, I entreat you. Join with me while I put words into your mouths, and speak them on your behalf—"Lord, I am guilty. I deserve thy wrath. Lord I cannot save myself. Lord, I would have a new heart and a right spirit, but what can I do? Lord, I can do nothing, come and work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure.

"Thou alone hast power, I know,  
To save a wretch like me;  
To whom, or whither should I go  
If I should turn from thee?"

But I now do from my very soul call upon thy name. Trembling, yet believing, I cast myself wholly upon thee, O Lord. I trust the blood and righteousness of thy dear Son; I trust thy mercy, and thy love, and thy power, as they are revealed in him. I dare to lay hold upon this word of thine, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Lord, save me to-night, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

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## **Free Will - A Slave**

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. - John 5:40

This is one of the great guns of the Arminians, mounted upon the top of their walls, and often discharged with terrible noise against the poor Christians called Calvinists. I intend to spike the gun this morning, or, rather, to turn it on the enemy, for it was never theirs; it was never cast at their foundry at all, but was intended to teach the very opposite doctrine to that which they assert. Usually, when the text is taken, the divisions are: First, that man has a will. Secondly, that he is entirely free. Thirdly, that men must make themselves willing to come to Christ, otherwise they will not be saved. Now, we shall have no such divisions; but we will



endeavour to take a more calm look at the text; and not, because there happen to be the words "will," or "will not" in it, run away with the conclusion that it teaches the doctrine of free-will. It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free-will is nonsense. Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in, but free-will is simply ridiculous. The will is well known by all to be directed by the understanding, to be moved by motives, to be guided by other parts of the soul, and to be a secondary thing. Philosophy and religion both discard at once the very thought of free-will; and I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, "If any man doth ascribe aught of salvation, even the very least, to the free-will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright." It may seem a harsh sentiment; but he who in his soul believes that man does of his own free-will turn to God, cannot have been taught of God, for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us, that we have neither will nor power, but that he gives both; that he is "Alpha and Omega" in the salvation of men.

Our four points, this morning, shall be: First - that every man is dead, because it says: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Secondly - that there is life in Jesus Christ: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Thirdly - that there is life in Christ Jesus for every one that comes for it: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life;" implying that all who go will have life. And fourthly - the gist of the text lies here, that no man by nature ever will come to Christ, for the text says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." So far from asserting that men of their own wills ever do such a thing, it boldly and flatly denies it, and says, "Ye WILL NOT come to me, that ye might have life." Why, beloved, I am almost ready to exclaim, Have all free-willers no knowledge that they dare to run in the teeth of inspiration? Have all those that deny the doctrine of grace no sense? Have they so departed from God that they wrest this to prove free-will; whereas the text says, "Ye WILL NOT come to me that ye might have life."

I. First, then, our text implies THAT MEN BY NATURE ARE DEAD. No being needs to go after life if he has life in himself. The text speaks very

strongly when it says, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Though it saith it not in words, yet it doth in effect affirm that men need a life more than they have themselves. My hearers, we are all dead unless we have been begotten unto a lively hope. First, we are all of us, by nature, legally dead - "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death," said God to Adam; and though Adam did not die in that moment naturally, he died legally; that is to say death was recorded against him. As soon as, at the Old Bailey, the judge puts on the black cap and pronounces the sentence, the man is reckoned to be dead at law. Though perhaps a month may intervene before he is brought on the scaffold to endure the sentence of the law, yet the law looks upon him as a dead man. It is impossible for him to transact anything. He cannot inherit, he cannot bequeath; he is nothing - he is a dead man. The country considers him not as being alive in it at all. There is an election - he is not asked for his vote because he is considered as dead. He is shut up in his condemned cell, and he is dead. Ah! and ye ungodly sinners who have never had life in Christ, ye are alive this morning, by reprieve, but do ye know that ye are legally dead; that God considers you as such, that in the day when your father Adam touched the fruit, and when you yourselves did sin, God, the Eternal Judge, put on the black cap and condemned you? You talk mightily of your own standing, and goodness, and morality - where is it? Scripture saith, ye are "condemned already." Ye are not to wait to be condemned at the judgment-day - that will be the execution of the sentence - ye are "condemned already." In the moment ye sinned; your names were all written in the black book of justice; every one was then sentenced by God to death, unless he found a substitute, in the person of Christ, for his sins. What would you think if you were to go into the Old Bailey, and see the condemned culprit sitting in his cell, laughing and merry? You would say, "The man is a fool, for he is condemned, and is to be executed; yet how merry he is." Ah! and how foolish is the worldly man, who, while sentence is recorded against him, lives in merriment and mirth! Do you think the sentence of God is of no effect? Thinkest thou that thy sin which is written with an iron pen on the rocks for ever hath no horrors in it? God hath said thou art condemned already. If thou wouldst but feel this, it would mingle bitters in thy sweet cups of joy; thy dances would be stopped, thy laughter quenched in sighing, if thou wouldst recollect that thou art condemned already. We ought all to weep,

if we lay this to our souls: that by nature we have no life in God's sight; we are actually, positively condemned; death is recorded against us, and we are considered in ourselves now, in God's sight, as much dead as if we were actually cast into hell; we are condemned here by sin, we do not yet suffer the penalty of it, but it is written against us, and we are legally dead, nor can we find life unless we find legal life in the person of Christ, of which more by-and-by.

But, besides being legally dead, we are also spiritually dead. For not only did the sentence pass in the book, but it passed in the heart; it entered the conscience; it operated on the soul, on the judgment, on the imagination, and on everything. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was not only fulfilled by the sentence recorded, but by something which took place in Adam. Just as, in a certain moment, when this body shall die, the blood stops, the pulse ceases, the breath no longer comes from the lungs, so in the day that Adam did eat that fruit his soul died; his imagination lost its mighty power to climb into celestial things and see heaven, his will lost its power always to choose that which is good, his judgment lost all ability to judge between right and wrong decidedly and infallibly, though something was retained in conscience; his memory became tainted, liable to hold evil things, and let righteous things glide away; every power of him ceased as to its moral vitality. Goodness was the vitality of his powers - that departed. Virtue, holiness, integrity, these were the life of man; but when these departed man became dead. And now, every man, so far as spiritual things are concerned, is "dead in trespasses and sins" spiritually. Nor is the soul less dead in a carnal man, than the body is when committed to the grave; it is actually and positively dead - not by a metaphor, for Paul speaketh not in metaphor, when he affirms, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." But my hearers, again, I would I could preach to your hearts concerning this subject. It was bad enough when I described death as having been recorded; but now I speak of it as having actually taken place in your hearts. Ye are not what ye once were; ye are not what ye were in Adam, not what ye were created. Man was made pure and holy. Ye are not the perfect creatures of which some boast; ye are altogether fallen, ye have gone out of the way, ye have become corrupt and filthy. Oh! listen not to the siren song of those who tell you of your moral dignity, and your

mighty elevation in matters of salvation. Ye are not perfect; that great word, "ruin," is written on your heart; and death is stamped upon your spirit. Do not conceive, O moral man, that thou wilt be able to stand before God in thy morality, for thou art nothing but a carcass embalmed in legality, a corpse arrayed in some fine robes, but still corrupt in God's sight. And think not, O thou possessor of natural religion! that thou mayest by thine own might and power make thyself acceptable to God. Why, man! thou art dead! and thou mayest array the dead as gloriously as thou pleasest, but still it would be a solemn mockery. There lieth queen Cleopatra - put the crown upon her head, deck her in royal robes, let her sit in state; but what a cold chill runs through you when you pass by her. She is fair now, even in her death - but how horrible it is to stand by the side even of a dead queen, celebrated for her majestic beauty! So you may be glorious in your beauty, fair, and amiable, and lovely; you put the crown of honesty upon your head, and wear about you all the garments of uprightness, but unless God has quickened thee, O man! unless the Spirit has had dealings with thy soul, thou art in God's sight as obnoxious as the chilly corpse is to thyself. Thou wouldst not choose to live with a corpse sitting at thy table; nor doth God love that thou shouldst be in his sight. He is angry with thee every day, for thou art in sin - thou art in death. Oh! believe this; take it to thy soul; appropriate it, for it is most true that thou art dead, spiritually as well as legally.

The third kind of death is the consummation of the other two. It is eternal death. It is the execution of the legal sentence; it is the consummation of the spiritual death. Eternal death is the death of the soul; it takes place after the body has been laid in the grave, after the soul has departed from it. If legal death be terrible, it is because of its consequences; and if spiritual death be dreadful, it is because of that which shall succeed it. The two deaths of which we have spoken are the roots, and that death which is to come is the flower thereof. Oh! had I words that I might this morning attempt to depict to you what eternal death is. The soul has come before its Maker; the book has been opened; the sentence has been uttered; "Depart ye cursed" has shaken the universe, and made the very spheres dim with the frown of the Creator; the soul has departed to the depths where it is to dwell with others in eternal death. Oh! how horrible is its position now. Its bed is a bed of flame; the sights it sees are

murdering ones that affright its spirit;. the sounds it hears are shrieks, and wails, and moans, and groans; all that its body knows is the infliction of miserable pain! It has the possession of unutterable woe, of unmitigated misery. The soul looks up. Hope is extinct - it is gone. It looks downward in dread and fear; remorse hath possessed its soul. It looks on the right hand - and the adamantine walls of fate keep it within its limits of torture. It looks on the left - and there the rampart of blazing fire forbids the scaling ladder of e'en a dreamy speculation of escape. It looks within and seeks for consolation there, but a gnawing worm hath entered into the soul. It looks about it - it has no friends to aid, no comforters, but tormentors in abundance. It knoweth nought of hope of deliverance; it hath heard the everlasting key of destiny turning in its awful wards, and it hath seen God take that key and hurl it down into the depth of eternity never to be found again. It hopeth not; it knoweth no escape; it guessth not of deliverance; it pants for death, but death is too much its foe to be there; it longs that non-existence would swallow it up, but this eternal death is worse than annihilation. It pants for extermination as the laborer for his Sabbath; it longs that it might be swallowed up in nothingness just as would the galley slave long for freedom, but it cometh not - it is eternally dead. When eternity shall have rolled round multitudes of its everlasting cycles it shall still be dead. Forever knoweth no end; eternity cannot be spelled except in eternity. Still the soul seeth written o'er its head, "Thou art damned forever." It heareth howlings that are to be perpetual; it seeth flames which are unquenchable; it knoweth pains that are unmitigated; it hears a sentence that rolls not like the thunder of earth which soon is hushed - but onward, onward, onward, shaking the echoes of eternity - making thousands of years shake again with the horrid thunder of its dreadful sound - "Depart! depart! depart! ye cursed!" This is the eternal death.

II. Secondly, IN CHRIST JESUS THERE IS LIFE, for he says: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." There is no life in God the Father for a sinner; there is no life in God the Spirit for a sinner apart from Jesus. The life of a sinner is in Christ. If you take the Father apart from the Son, though he loves his elect, and decrees that they shall live, yet life is only in his Son. If you take God the Spirit apart from Jesus Christ, though it is the Spirit that gives us spiritual life, yet it is life in Christ, life in the Son.

We dare not, and cannot apply in the first place, either to God the Father, or to God the Holy Ghost for spiritual life. The first thing we are led to do when God brings us out of Egypt is to eat the Passover - the very first thing. The first means whereby we get life is by feeding upon the flesh and blood of the Son of God; living in him, trusting on him, believing in his grace and power. Our second thought was - there is life in Christ. We will show you there are three kinds of life in Christ, as there are three kinds of death.

First there is legal life in Christ. Just as every man by nature considered in Adam had a sentence of condemnation passed on him in the moment of Adam's sin, and more especially in the moment of his own first transgression, so I, if I be a believer, and you, if you trust in Christ, have had a legal sentence of acquittal passed on us through what Jesus Christ has done. O condemned sinner! Thou mayest be sitting this morning condemned like the prisoner in Newgate; but ere this day has passed away thou mayest be as clear from guilt as the angels above. There is such a thing as legal life in Christ, and, blessed be God! some of us enjoy it. We know our sins are pardoned because Christ suffered punishment for them; we know that we never can be punished ourselves, for Christ suffered in our stead. The Passover is slain for us; the lintel and door-post have been sprinkled, and the destroying angel can never touch us. For us there is no hell, although it blaze with terrible flame. Let Tophet be prepared of old, let its pile be wood and much smoke, we never can come there - Christ died for us, in our stead. What if there be racks of horrid torture? What if there be a sentence producing most horrible reverberations of thundering sounds? Yet neither rack, nor dungeon, nor thunder, are for us! In Christ Jesus we are now delivered. "There is therefore NOW no condemnation unto us who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Sinner! Art thou legally condemned this morning? Dost thou feel that? Then, let me tell thee that faith in Christ will give thee a knowledge of thy legal acquittal. Beloved, it is no fancy that we are condemned for our sins, it is a reality. So, it is no fancy we are acquitted, it is a reality. A man about to be hanged, if he received a full pardon would feel it a great reality. He would say, "I have a full pardon; I cannot be touched now."

That is just how I feel.

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,  
The Saviour's blood's my full discharge,  
At his dear feet content I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay.

Brethren, we have gained legal life in Christ, and such legal life that we cannot lose it. The sentence has gone against us once - now it has gone out for us. It is written, "THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION," and that now will do as well for me in fifty years as it does now. Whatever time we live it will still be written, "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Then, secondly, there is spiritual life in Christ Jesus. As the man is spiritually dead, God has spiritual life for him, for there is not a need which is not supplied by Jesus, there is not an emptiness in the heart which Christ cannot fill; there is not a desolation which he cannot people, there is not a desert which he cannot make to blossom as the rose. O ye dead sinners! spiritually dead, there is life in Christ Jesus, for we have seen - yes! these eyes have seen - the dead live again; we have known the man whose soul was utterly corrupt, by the power of God seek after righteousness; we have known the man whose views were carnal, whose lusts were mighty, whose passions were strong, suddenly, by irresistible might from heaven, consecrate himself to Christ, and become a child of Jesus. We know that there is life in Christ Jesus, of a spiritual order; yea, more, we ourselves, in our own persons, have felt that there is spiritual life. Well can we remember when we sat in the house of prayer, as dead as the very seat on which we sat. We had listened for a long, long while to the sound of the gospel, but no effect followed, when suddenly, as if our ears had been opened by the fingers of some mighty angel, a sound entered into our heart. We thought we heard Jesus saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." An irresistible hand put itself on our heart and crushed a prayer out of it. We never had a prayer before like that. We cried, "O God! have mercy upon me a sinner." Some of us for months felt a hand pressing us as if we had been grasped in a vice, and our souls bled drops of anguish. That misery was a sign of coming life. Persons when they are being drowned do not feel the pain so much as while they are

being restored. Oh! we recollect those pains, those groans, that living strife that our soul had when it came to Christ. Ah! we can recollect the giving of our spiritual life as easily as could a man his restoration from the grave. We can suppose Lazarus to have remembered his resurrection, though not all the circumstances of it. So we, although we have forgotten a great deal, do recollect our giving ourselves to Christ. We can say to every sinner, however dead, there is life in Christ Jesus, though you may be rotten and corrupt in your grave. He who hath raised Lazarus hath raised us; and he can say, even to you, "Lazarus! come forth."

In the third place, there is eternal life in Christ Jesus. And, oh! if eternal death be terrible, eternal life is blessed; for he has said, "Where I am there shall my people be." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given unto me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." Now, any Arminian that would preach from that text must buy a pair of India rubber lips, for I am sure he would need to stretch his mouth amazingly; he would never be able to speak the whole truth without winding about in a most mysterious manner. Eternal life - not a life which they are to lose, but eternal life. If I lost life in Adam I gained it in Christ; if I lost myself for ever I find myself for ever in Jesus Christ. Eternal life! Oh blessed thought! Our eyes will sparkle with joy and our souls bum with ecstasy in the thought that we have eternal life. Be quenched ye stars! let God put his finger on you - but my soul will live in bliss and joy. Put out thine eye O sun! - but mine eye shall "see the king in his beauty" when thine eye shall no more make the green earth laugh. And moon, be thou turned into blood! - but my blood shall ne'er be turned to nothingness; this spirit shall exist when thou hast ceased to be. And thou great world! thou mayest all subside, just as a moment's foam subsides upon the wave that bears it - but I have eternal life. O time! thou mayest see giant mountains dead and hidden in their graves; thou mayest see the stars like figs too ripe, falling from the tree, but thou shalt never, never see my spirit dead.

III. This brings us to the third point: that ETERNAL LIFE IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO COME FOR IT. There never was a man who came to Christ for eternal life, for legal life, for spiritual life, who had not already received it, in some sense, and it was manifested to him that he had received it soon



after he came. Let us take one or two texts - "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto him." Every man who comes to Christ will find that Christ is able to save him - not able to save him a little, to deliver him from a little sin, to keep him from a little trial, to carry him a little way and then drop him - but able to save him to the uttermost extent of his sin, unto the uttermost length of his trials, the uttermost depths of his sorrows, unto the uttermost duration of his existence. Christ says to every one who comes to him, "Come, poor sinner, thou needst not ask whether I have power to save. I will not ask thee how far thou hast gone into sin; I am able to save thee to the uttermost." And there is no one on earth can go beyond God's "uttermost."

Now another text: "Him that cometh to me, [mark the promises are nearly always to the coming ones] I will in no wise cast out." Every man that comes shall find the door of Christ's house opened - and the door of his heart too. Every man that comes - I say it in the broadest sense - shall find that Christ has mercy for him. The greatest absurdity in the world is to want to have a wider gospel than that recorded in Scripture. I preach that every man who believes shall be saved - that every man who comes shall find mercy. People ask me, "But suppose a man should come who was not chosen, would he be saved?" You go and suppose nonsense and I am not going to give you an answer. If a man is not chosen he will never come. When he does come it is a sure proof that he was chosen. Says one, "Suppose any one should go to Christ who had not been called of the Spirit." Stop, my brother, that is a supposition thou hast no right to make, for such a thing cannot happen; you only say it to entangle me, and you will not do that just yet. I say every man who comes to Christ shall be saved. I can say that as a Calvinist, or as a hyper-Calvinist, as plainly as you can say it. I have no narrower gospel than you have; only my gospel is on a solid foundation, whereas yours is built upon nothing but sand and rottenness. "Every man that cometh shall be saved, for no man cometh to me except the Father draw him." "But," says one, "suppose all the world should come, would Christ receive them?" Certainly, if all came; but then they won't come. I tell you all that come - aye, if they were as bad as devils, Christ would receive them; if they had all sin and filthiness running into their hearts as into a common sewer for the whole world, Christ would receive them. Another says, "I want to know about the rest

of the people. May I go out and tell them - Jesus Christ died for every one of you? May I say - there is righteousness for everyone of you, there is life for every one of you?" No; you may not. You may say - there is life for every man that comes. But if you say there is life for one of those that do not believe, you utter a dangerous lie. If you tell them Jesus Christ was punished for their sins, and yet they will be lost, you tell a wilful falsehood. To think that God could punish Christ and then punish them - I wonder at your daring to have the impudence to say so! A good man was once preaching that there were harps and crowns in heaven for all his congregation; and then he wound up in a most solemn manner: "My dear friends, there are many for whom these things are prepared who will not get there." In fact, he made such a pitiful tale, as indeed he might do; but I tell you who he ought to have wept for - he ought to have wept for the angels of heaven and all the saints, because that would spoil heaven thoroughly. You know when you meet at Christmas, if you have lost your brother David and his seat is empty, you say: "Well, we always enjoyed Christmas, but there is a drawback to it now - poor David is dead and buried!" Think of the angels saying: "Ah! this is a beautiful heaven, but we don't like to see all those crowns up there with cobwebs on; we cannot endure that uninhabited street: we cannot behold yon empty thrones." And then, poor souls, they might begin talking to one another, and say, "we are none of us safe here for the promise was - "I give unto my sheep eternal life," and there is a lot of them in hell that God gave eternal life to; there is a number that Christ shed his blood for burning in the pit, and if they may be sent there, so may we. If we cannot trust one promise we cannot another." So heaven would lose its foundation, and fall. Away with your nonsensical gospel! God gives us a safe and solid one, built on covenant doings and covenant relationship, on eternal purposes and sure fulfillments.

IV. This brings us to the fourth point, THAT BY NATURE NO MAN WILL COME TO CHRIST, for the text says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." I assert on Scripture authority from my text, that ye will not come unto Christ, that ye might have life. I tell you, I might preach to you for ever, I might borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but ye will not come unto Christ. I might beg of you on my knees, with tears in my eyes, and show you the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven,

the sufficiency of Christ, and your own lost condition, but you would none of you come unto Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you. It is true of all men in their natural condition that they will not come unto Christ. But, methinks I hear another of these babblers asking a question: "But could they not come if they liked?" My friend, I will reply to thee another time. That is not the question this morning. I am talking about whether they will, not whether they can. You will notice whenever you talk about free-will, the poor Arminian, in two seconds begins to talk about power, and he mixes up two subjects that should be kept apart. We will not take two subjects at once; we decline fighting two at the same time, if you please. Another day we will preach from this text - "No man can come except the Father draw him." But it is only the will we are talking of now; and it is certain that men will not come unto Christ, that they might have life. We might prove this from many texts of Scripture, but we will take one parable. You remember the parable where a certain king had a feast for his son, and bade a great number to come; the oxen and fatlings were killed, and he sent his messengers bidding many to the supper. Did they go to the feast? Ah, no; but they all, with one accord, began to make excuse. One said he had married a wife, and therefore he could not come, whereas he might have brought her with him. Another had bought a yoke of oxen, and went to prove them; but the feast was in the night-time, and he could not prove his oxen in the dark. Another had bought a piece of land, and wanted to see it; but I should not think he went to see it with a lantern. So they all made excuses and would not come. Well the king was determined to have the feast; so he said, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and" invite them - stop! not invite - "compel them to come in;" for even the ragged fellows in the hedges would never have come unless they were compelled. Take another parable: - A certain man had a vineyard; at the appointed season he sent one of his servants for his rent. What did they do to him? They beat that servant. He sent another; and they stoned him. He sent another and they killed him. And, at last, he said, "I will send them my son, they will reverence him." But what did they do? They said, "This is the heir, let us kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard." So they did. It is the same with all men by nature. The Son of God came, yet men rejected him. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." It would take too much time to mention any more Scripture proofs. We will,

however, refer to the great doctrine of the fall. Any one who believes that man's will is entirely free, and that he can be saved by it, does not believe the fall. As I sometimes tell you, few preachers of religion do believe thoroughly the doctrine of the fall, or else they think that when Adam fell down he broke his little finger, and did not break his neck and ruin his race. Why, beloved, the fall broke man up entirely. It did not leave one power unimpaired; they were all shattered, and debased, and tarnished; like some mighty temple, the pillars might be there, the shaft, and the column, and the pilaster might be there; but they were all broken, though some of them retain their form and position. The conscience of man sometimes retains much of its tenderness - still it has fallen. The will, too, is not exempt. What though it is "the Lord Mayor of Mansoul," as Bunyan calls it? - the Lord Mayor goes wrong. The Lord Will-be-will was continually doing wrong. Your fallen nature was put out of order; your will, amongst other things, has clean gone astray from God. But I tell you what will be the best proof of that; it is the great fact that you never did meet a Christian in your life who ever said he came to Christ without Christ coming to him. You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say; but you never heard an Arminian prayer - for the saints in prayer appear as one in word, and deed and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free-will: there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, "Lord, I thank thee I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not - that is the difference between me and them." That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that. Ah! when they are preaching and talking very slowly, there may be wrong doctrine; but when they come to pray, the true thing slips out; they cannot help it. If a man talks very slowly, he may speak in a fine

manner; but when he comes to talk fast, the old brogue of his country, where he was born, slips out. I ask you again, did you ever meet a Christian man who said, "I came to Christ without the power of the Spirit?" If you ever did meet such a man, you need have no hesitation in saying, "My dear sir, I quite believe it - and I believe you went away again without the power of the Spirit, and that you know nothing about the matter, and are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Do I hear one Christian man saying, "I sought Jesus before he sought me; I went to the Spirit, and the Spirit did not come to me"? No, beloved; we are obliged, each one of us, to put our hands to our hearts and say -

"Grace taught my soul to pray,  
And made my eyes to o'erflow;  
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,  
And will not let me go."

Is there one here - a solitary one - man or woman, young or old, who can say, "I sought God before he sought me?" No; even you who are a little Arminian, will sing -

"O yes! I do love Jesus -  
Because he first loved me."

Then, one more question. Do we not find, even after we have come to Christ, our soul is not free, but is kept by Christ? Do we not find times, even now, when to will is not present with us? There is a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds. Now, if those who are spiritually alive feel that their will is contrary to God, what shall we say of the man who is "dead in trespasses and sins"? It would be a marvelous absurdity to put the two on a level; and it would be still more absurd to put the dead before the living. No; the text is true, experience has branded it into our hearts. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Now, we must tell you the reasons why men will not come unto Christ. The first is, because no man by nature thinks he wants Christ. By nature man conceives that he does not need Christ; he thinks that he has a robe of righteousness of his own, that he is well-dressed, that he is not naked,

that he needs not Christ's blood to wash him, that he is not black or crimson, and needs no grace to purify him. No man knows his need until God shows it to him; and until the Holy Spirit reveals the necessity of pardon, no man will seek pardon. I may preach Christ for ever, but unless you feel you want Christ you will never come to him. A doctor may have a good shop, but nobody will buy his medicines until he feels he wants them.

The next reason is, because men do not like Christ's way of saving them. One says, "I do not like it because he makes me holy; I cannot drink or swear if he saved me." Another says, "It requires me to be so precise and puritanical, and I like a little more license." Another does not like it because it is so humbling; he does not like it because the "gate of heaven" is not quite high enough for his head, and he does not like stooping. That is the chief reason ye will not come to Christ, because ye cannot get to him with your heads straight up in the air; for Christ makes you stoop when you come. Another does not like it to be grace from first to last. "Oh!" he says, "If I might have a little honor." But when he hears it is all Christ or no Christ, a whole Christ or no Christ, he says, "I shall not come," and turns on his heel and goes away. Ah! proud sinners, ye will not come unto Christ. Ah! ignorant sinners, ye will not come unto Christ, because ye know nothing of him. And that is the third reason.

Men do not know his worth, for if they did they would come unto him. Why did not sailors go to America before Columbus went? Because they did not believe there was an America. Columbus had faith, therefore he went. He who hath faith in Christ goes to him. But you don't know Jesus; many of you never saw his beauteous face; you never saw how applicable his blood is to a sinner, how great is his atonement; and how all-sufficient are his merits. Therefore, "ye will not come to him."

And oh! my hearers, my last thought is a solemn one. I have preached that ye will not come. But some will say, "it is their sin that they do not come." IT IS SO. You will not come, but then your will is a sinful will. Some think that we "sew pillows to all armholes" when we preach this doctrine, but we don't. We do not set this down as being part of man's original nature, but as belonging to his fallen nature. It is sin that has brought you into this condition that you will not come. If you had not

fallen, you would come to Christ the moment he was preached to you; but you do not come because of your sinfulness and crime. People excuse themselves because they have bad hearts. That is the most flimsy excuse in the world. Do not robbery and thieving come from a bad heart? Suppose a thief should say to a judge, "I could not help it, I had a bad heart." What would the judge say? "You rascal! why, if your heart is bad, I'll make the sentence heavier, for you are a villain indeed. Your excuse is nothing." The Almighty shall "laugh at them, and shall have them in derision." We do not preach this doctrine to excuse you, but to humble you. The possession of a bad nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity. It is a sin that will always be charged on men; when they will not come unto Christ it is sin that keeps them away. He who does not preach that, I fear is not faithful to God and his conscience. Go home, then, with this thought; "I am by nature so perverse that I will not come unto Christ, and that wicked perversity of my nature is my sin. I deserve to be sent to hell for it." And if the thought does not humble you, the Spirit using it, no other can. This morning I have not preached human nature up, but I have preached it down. God humble us all. Amen.

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## **A Free Salvation**

Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. - Isaiah 55:1

You see, I have something to sell this evening, I have to invite you to come and buy that which, in the gospel will this night be proclaimed. Now, it is usual when persons have anything to sell, to exhibit the article, to describe its character, and speak of its excellencies, for until persons are made aware of the nature of that which you exhibit, it is not likely that they will be prepared to buy it. That shall be my first business this

evening Then the man who has aught to sell, in the next place, endeavors to bring those who hear him up to the price at which he desires to sell. My business tonight is to bring you down to the price—"Come buy wine and milk without money and without price." I shall then conclude by addressing a few sentences of earnest persuasion to those who despise that glorious salvation which it is our privilege to preach, and turn away from those generous stipulations—"without money and without price."

I. In the first place, then, I have to preach, to-night, WINE AND MILK—"Come buy wine and milk." There we have a description of the gospel—wine that maketh glad the heart of man; milk, the one thing and the only thing in the world which contains all the essentials of life. The strongest man might live on milk, for in it there is everything which is needed for the human frame—for bone, for sinew, for nerve, for muscle, for flesh—all is there. There you have a double description. The gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man, and the deeper he drinks into the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become. That religion which teaches misery to be a duty, is false upon the very face of it, for God, when he made the world, studied the happiness of his creatures. You cannot help thinking, as you see everything around you, that God has sedulously, with the most strict attention, sought ways of pleasing man. He has not just given us our absolute necessities, he has given us more, not simply the useful, but even the ornamental. The flowers in the hedgerow, the stars in the sky, the beauties of nature, the hill and the valley—all these things were intended not merely because we needed them, but because God would show us how he loved us, and how anxious he was that we should be happy. Now, it is not likely that the God who made a happy world would send a miserable salvation. He who is a happy Creator will be a happy Redeemer, and those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, can bear witness that the ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." And if this life were all, if death were the burial of all our life, and if the shroud were the winding-sheet of eternity, still to be a Christian would be a bright and happy thing for it lights up this valley of tears, and fills the wells in the valley of Baca to the brim with streams of love and joy. The gospel then, is like wine. It is like milk, too, for there is everything in the gospel that you want. Do you want



something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the gospel—"a very present help in time of trouble." Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace all-sufficient for everything that God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something to light up the eye of your hope? Oh! there are joy-flashes in the gospel that may make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss. Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the gospel there is that that can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There is no passion, no affection, no thought, no wish, no power which the gospel has not filled to the very brim. The gospel was evidently meant for manhood; it is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head; there is love for the heart; there is guidance for the foot. There is milk and wine, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think there is another meaning in the two words "milk and wine." Wine, you know, is a rich thing, something that requires much time to manufacture. There has to be vintage and fermentation and preservation before wine can come to its full flavour. Now, the gospel is like that, it is an extraordinary thing for feast days; it gives a man power to use a vintage of thought, a fermentation of action, and a preservation of experience, till a man's piety comes forth like the sparkling wine that makes the heart leap with gladness. There is that, I say, in religion, that makes it an extraordinary thing, a thing for rare occasions, to be brought out when princes sit at the table. But milk is an ordinary thing; you get it every day, anywhere. If you just run out into the farm yard there it is; there is no preparation required. it is ready to the hand. it is an ordinary thing. So is it with the gospel: it is a thing for every day. I love the gospel on Sunday, but, blessed be God, it is a Monday gospel too. The gospel is a thing for the chapel, and it is a thing for the church, there it is like wine. But it is a thing for the farm yard, it is a thing which you may observe behind the plough, and hum behind the counter. The religion of Christ is a thing that will go with you into your shop, on to the Exchange, into the market, everywhere. It is like milk—an everyday dish—a thing which we may always have, and upon which we may always feast. Oh! thank heaven, there is wine for that high day when we shall see the Saviour face to face; there is wine for that dread day when we shall ford the stream of Jordan—wine that shall remove our fears and bid us sing in the midst of

the dark billows of Death: but thanks be unto him, there is milk too—milk for everyday occurrences, for every-day actions, milk for us to drink as long as we live, and milk to cherish us till the last great day shall come.

Now, I think I have explained the figure in my text; but still some will say, "What is the gospel?" Well, the gospel, as I take it, can be looked at in various ways, but I will put it to night as this—the gospel is the preaching of a full, free, present, everlasting pardon to sinners through Jesus Christ's atoning blood. If I understand the gospel at all, it has in it a great deal more than this; but still this is the substance of it. I have to preach to night the great fact that while all have sinned, Christ hath died, and to all penitents who now confess their sins and put their trust in Christ, there is a full, free pardon—free in this respect, that you have nothing to do in order to get it. The meanest sin-stricken sinner has simply to pour out his plaintive griefs before God; that is all he asks. There is no fitness needed;

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"All the fitness he requireth,  
Is to feel your need of him:  
This he gives you;  
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

There is no need to pass through years of penance, of hard labor, and of trial; the gospel is as free as the air you breathe. You do not pay for breathing; you do not pay for seeing the sunlight, nor for the water that flows in the river as you stoop to drink it in your thirst. So the gospel is free; nothing is to be done in order to get it. No merits need be brought in order to obtain it. There is free pardon for the chief of sinners through Jesus Christ's blood. But I said it was a full pardon, and so it is. When Christ does anything he never does it by halves. He is willing this night to blot out every sin and cleanse every iniquity of every soul present who is now prepared by God's grace to seek his mercy. If now, sinner, God hath put it in thine heart to seek him, the pardon which he is prepared to give thee, is a full one; not a pardon for a part of your sins, but for all at once: -

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast,  
And, oh! my soul with wonder view,

For sins to come here's pardon too."

Here is pardon for your drunkenness, pardon for your oaths, pardon for your lust, pardon for your rebellion against heaven; for the sins of your youth and the sins of your old age, for the sins of the sanctuary and the sins of the brothel, or the tavern. Here is pardon for all sin, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But again, the pardon we have to preach is a present pardon. If you feel your need of a Saviour, if now you are enabled to believe in Christ, you shall be pardoned now. Those who have ordinary hopes say they hope to be pardoned when they come to die. But, beloved, that is not the religion we preach. If you will now make confession of sin, now seek the Lord, you shall be pardoned now. It is possible for a man to have come in here with all his sins hanging about his neck like a millstone, enough to sink him lower than the lowest hell, and yet to go out of this door with every sin blotted out. If now he is enabled to believe on him, he may this night receive perfect pardon from the hand of God. The pardon of a sinner is not a thing done when he is dying, it is done when he is living—done now. And there be some here I trust, and they not a few, who can rejoice to night in the fact that they are pardoned. Oh! Is it not a magnificent thing for a man to be able to tread God's earth with this for a song in his mouth, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am pardoned?" I think it is one of the sweetest songs in all the world—scarcely less sweet than that of the cherubim before the throne -

"Oh. how sweet to view the flowing  
Of his soul redeeming blood!  
With divine assurance knowing,  
He has made my peace with God."

Oh! what would you give for such a salvation as this, ye mourning souls? It is preached to you without money and without price, and I am bidden to cry "Ho! ho! Every one that thirsteth; if you feel your need of Christ, if you are now ready to confess your sins, come and take it freely without money and without price." But the best remains for the last. The pardon which is proclaimed to-night, is not only a free, and full, and present, but it is a pardon that will last for ever. If the Queen pardons any one—grants a free pardon—it is impossible that man should be punished for the same

offense. Very often, however, the Queen grants a reprieve that is not a full pardon. There are cases in which persons are so far pardoned, that they are not executed for the crime, but confined during Her Majesty's pleasure. Now, our Lord never does that; he makes a clean sweep of it: there is not one sin that he allows to remain. When he does wash a soul, he washes it whiter than the driven snow. God doth things perfectly. But the best of it is, that what he does once is done for ever. This is the very glory of the gospel. If you get pardon to-night, you are saved now, but you never shall be condemned. If a man believeth in Christ with all his heart, his salvation is secure beyond hazard; and I always look upon this as the very jewel of the crown of salvation, that it be irreversible. If I commit my soul into the hands of God,

"His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of his sheep.  
All that his heavenly father gave  
His hands securely keep.

Not death or hell shall e'er divide  
His fav'rites from his breast;  
In the dear bosom of their God  
They must for ever rest."

God does not make you his child to-day, and turn you out to-morrow; he does not forgive you to-day, and then punish you the next day. As true as God is God, if thou gettest thy pardon to-night Christian, the earth may melt away just as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever; the great universe may pass away and be like the hoar-frost before the morning sun; but thou never canst be condemned. As long as God is God, he who has got his pardon signed and sealed, is beyond the reach of harm. I would not preach any other—I dare not. It would not be worth your receiving, it would not be worth my taking the trouble to preach; but this is worth any man's having indeed, for it is a sure investment. He Who puts himself into the hands of Christ has a sure keeper, come what may—and there may come strong temptations and strong affections, and there may come strong pains and hard duties, but he that hath helped us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too. Oh! to be pardoned once, with the certain assurance that

we shall be pardoned for ever, beyond the hazard of being cast away!

And now again, I will just preach this salvation, for this is the wine and milk which is proclaimed without money and without price. Beloved, all this is to be gained by faith in Christ—whosoever believeth in him who died upon the tree, and groaned away his life for us—shall never come into condemnation: he is passed from death unto life, and the love of God abideth in him.

II. And now, having thus exhibited the article, my next business is to BRING THE BIDDERS UP TO THE AUCTION BOX AND SELL IT. My difficulty is to bring you down to my price, as old Rowland said. He was preaching in a fair, and he heard a man selling his goods. "Ah!" said he, "as for those people over there, their difficulty is to bring people up to their price; whereas, my difficulty is to bring you down to my price."

Now, here is a gospel fully preached, without money and without price. Here comes some one up to the sacred desk, transformed for the moment into an auction box, and he cries, "I want to buy." What will you give for it? He holds out his hands, and he has such a handful; he has to lift up his very lap with more, for he can hardly hold all his good works. He has Ave-Marias and Paternosters without number, and all kinds of crossings with holy water, and bendings of the knee, and prostrations before the altar, and reverence of the host, and attending at the mass, and so on. In French, they call the mass the messe, and a mess it is and no mistake, but there are a great many people who trust in it; and when they come before God, they bring all these things as the ground of their reliance.

And so, Sir Romanist, you are coming to get salvation are you? and you have brought all this with you. Friend, I am sorry for thee, but thou must go away from the box with all thy performances, for it is "without money and without price," and until thou art prepared to come empty handed thou canst never have it. If thou hast anything of thine own thou canst not receive it. "But," says he, "I am no heretic. Am I not true to the Pope? Do I not make confession and get absolution, and pay my shilling?" Do you my friend? Then because you pay your shilling for it, it is good for nothing, for that which is good for something you can have "without money and without price." The light we pay for is a sickly thing, but that

which we get from heaven for nothing, is the rich healthy light which makes the heart glad. So the pardon that comes from Christ is "without money and without price."

Then another comes up and says "I am glad you have served the Romanist like that. I hate the Church of Rome, I am a true Protestant, and desire to be saved." What have you brought, sir? "Oh, I have brought no Ave-Marias, no Paternosters; I abhor the names; I do not like those Latin names, not I. But I say the collect every Sunday; I am very attentive to my prayers I go to church almost as soon as the doors are open," or (if he is a Dissenter) "I go to chapel three times on the Sabbath. and I attend the prayer-meetings and beside that, I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. I had rather pay twenty-one shillings than nineteen. I would not like to hurt anybody. I do not tread upon a worm if I can help it, I am always liberal, and assist the poor when I can. I may make a little slip just now and then. I may turn aside a little; still, if I am not saved I do not know who will be. I am as good as my neighbors, and I think, sir, I certainly ought to be saved, for I have very few sins, and what few there are do not hurt other people; they hurt me more than any one else. Besides, they are mere trifles; only one or two days in the year I break loose, and a man must have a little amusement after all. I assure you I am one of the best, most honest, and sober, and religious people going." Well, my friend, I am sorry to hear you quarrelling with the Romanist, for I do not like to see twin brothers disagree. You are both of the same kith and kin, believe me, for the essence of Popery is salvation by works and ceremonies. You do not practice his works and ceremonies, but then you hope to be saved by your own, and you are just as bad as he. I will send you away; there is no salvation for you, for it is "without money and without price;" and as long as you bring these fine good works of yours you cannot have it. Mark, I do not find any fault with them, they are good enough in their place, but they won't do here to-night, and they won't do at the judgment bar of God. Practise those things as much as you like, they are good in their place. but still, in the matter of salvation you must leave them out, and come for it as poor guilty sinners and take it "without money and without price." Says one, "Do you find fault with good works?" Not at all. Suppose I see a man building a house, and he were fool enough to lay the foundation with chimney-pots. If I should say, "My dear man, I

do not like these chimney-pots to be put into the foundation," you would not say I found fault with the chimney-pots, but that I found fault with the man for putting them in the wrong place. Let him put good solid masonry at the bottom, and then when the house is built he may put on as many chimney-pots as he likes. So with good works and ceremonies they will not do for a foundation. The foundation must be built of more solid stuff. Our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, and when we have built a foundation with that, we may have as many good works as we like—the more the better. But for a foundation, good works are fickle and feeble things, and he that useth them will see his house totter to the ground.

But see another man. He is a long way off, and he says, "Sir, I am afraid to come; I could not come and make a bid for the salvation. Sir, I've got no larnin', I'm no scholar I can't read a book, I wish I could. My children go to Sunday-school; I wish there was such a thing in my time, I can't read, and its no use my hoping to go to heaven. I goes to church sometimes, but oh dear! it's no good; the man uses such long words I can't understand'em, and I goes to chapel sometimes, but I can't make it out. I knows a little of the hymns my child says, about

'Gentle Jesus meek and mild,'—and

'Oh! that will be joyful, when we meet to part no more.'

I wish they would preach like that, and then, maybe, I could make it out. But I'm no scholar, sir, and I don't think I can be saved." O my dear friend, you need not stand over there at the back. Come along with you. It wants no scholarship to go to heaven. The more you know the better it will be for you on earth no doubt, but it will be of no particular use to you in heaven. If you can "read your title clear to mansions in the skies," if you know enough to know yourself a lost sinner, and Christ a great Saviour, that is all you want to know to get to heaven. There is many a man in heaven that never read a letter on earth—many a man that could not, if his life depended on it, have signed his name, but was obliged to write a cross as "Tom Stiles's mark" and there he is among the brightest. Peter himself has not a brighter place than manly poor ignorant souls who looked to Jesus Christ, and were enlightened. I will tell you something to comfort you. Don't you know that Christ said, the poor had

the gospel preached to them and besides that, he said, "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." What does that mean, but that we must believe the gospel like little children? A little child has not much learning: he just believes what he is told, and that is what you are to do. You are to believe what God tells you. He says, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That is no hard thing, is it? You can believe that; and if you can, if you are destitute of all human knowledge, you shall without doubt, know hereafter what you know not now.

Now, I see a man come up to the stall, and he says, "Well, I will have salvation sir, I have made in my will provisions for the building of a church or two, and a few almshouses, I always devote a part of my substance to the cause of God; I always relieve the poor, and such-like; I have a pretty good share of money, and I take care not to hoard it up; I am generous and liberal, I try to set up poor trades-people, and so forth. Won't that carry me to heaven?" Well, I like you very much, and I wish there were more of your sort. There is nothing like generosity and liberality certainly, where it is exhibited towards the sick and the poor, the destitute and the ignorant, and in the cause of God; but if you bring these things as your hope of heaven, my dear friend, I must undeceive you. You cannot buy heaven with gold. Why, they pave the streets up there with it. Are we not told in the book of Revelation, that the streets of the city were all of pure gold like unto transparent glass. Why, if you had twenty thousand pounds you could not buy a flag-stone with it. Baron Rothschild could not buy a foot of heaven if he spent all his money for it. It is too precious a place to be bought with gold and silver. If all the wealth of the Indies could be shot out in order to buy one glimpse of heaven, it would be useless. There is no man that could get so much as a distant peep within its pearly gates for all the gold that heart could conceive or covetousness desire. It is given away for nothing. Christ will never sell it—never—because there is nothing that can be brought at all equal to its value. What Christ bought with blood you cannot buy with gold. He redeemed us not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his precious blood; and there is no other price that can ever be allowed. Ah! my rich friend, you are just on a level with your poorest laborer. You may wear broadcloth, and he fustian, yet he has as good an



opportunity of being saved as you. Ah! my lady, satin has no preference in heaven above calico or cotton.

"None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude."

Wealth makes distinction on earth, but no distinction at the cross of Christ. You must all come alike to the footstool of Jesus, or else not come at all. I knew a minister who told me he was once sent for to the dying bed of a Roman who was very well to do in the world, and she said, "Mr. Baxter, do you think when I get to heaven Betsy my servant will be there?" "Well," he said, "I don't know much about you, but Betsy will be there; for if I know any one who is a pious girl, it is she." "Well," said the lady, "don't you think there will be a little distinction? for I never could find it in my heart to sit down with a girl of that sort, she has no taste, no education, and I could not endure it. I think there ought to be a little difference." "Ah! you need not trouble yourself, madam," said he, "there will be a great distinction between you and Betsy, if you die in the temper in which you now are; but the distinction will be on the wrong side; for you will see her in Abraham's bosom, but you yourself will be cast out. As long as you have such pride in your heart, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven." He spoke to her very plainly, and she was mightily offended. But I believe she preferred to be found out of heaven to submitting to sit with her servant Betsy. Let us respect rank and title here, if you please: but when we preach the gospel we know no such thing. If I preached to a congregation of kings, I would preach just the same gospel that I would preach to a congregation of clodhoppers. The king on his throne, and the queen in her palace, have no gospel different from you and me. However humble and obscure we may be there stands the gate of heaven wide open; there is the king's royal highway for us. The highway is as much for the poor man as for the rich man; so is the kingdom of heaven—"without money and without price."

Now I hear my friend the Calvinist over there say, "Well, I like that, but still I think I can come, and though I can say with you, -

'nothing in my hands I bring,  
simply to thy cross I cling.'

Yet I can say this—I have had a deep experience, sir, I have been led to see the plague of my own heart, and I have felt a great deal. When I come to Christ I rely a great deal upon my feelings. I do not think you are right in calling all kinds of sinners to come to Christ, but you are right in calling me, for I am one of the right sort. I am one of the publican sort; I am pharisaical enough to think that; I think that I most certainly have a special commission to come, for I have such an experience that if I were to write my biography, you would say, 'This is a good experience; this man has a right to come to Christ.' " Well, friend, I am sorry to upset you, but I shall be compelled to do so. If you bring your experience to Christ when you come to him, you are as bad as the Romanist who brings his masses and Ave-Marias. I like your experience very well, if it be the work of God's grace in your heart, but if you bring it when you come to Christ, you put that before Christ, and it is an Anti-Christ. Away with it! away with it! When we have been preaching to poor sinners and tried to describe their state by nature and their feelings, I have been afraid after all, that we were fostering a spirit of self righteousness, and teaching our hearers to think that they must get certain feelings, before they can come to Christ. Let me just, if I can, preach the gospel in the broadest way possible, and that is the most truthful way. Christ wants your feelings no more than he does your money, and that is, not at all. If you want good experience you must come to Christ: -

"All the fitness he requireth, is to feel your need of him."

Yes, but stop -

"This he gives you, 'tis his Spirit's rising beam."

You are to come to Christ to get everything. You are not to say, "Well, I will believe first, and then come." No; go to Christ for faith. You must look to the cross even to get a sense of sin. We do not feel our sins so much before we see the cross, but we feel them most afterwards. We look to Christ first; then repentance flows from both our streaming eyes. Remember, if you go anywhere else to find a Saviour, you are on the wrong track. If you try to bring anything to Christ, to use a homely proverb, it is like bringing coals to Newcastle. He has plenty—he does not want any of yours, and what is more, as soon as he sees anything in your

hands he will turn you straight away. He will have nothing to do with you until you can say -

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
simply to thy cross I cling."

I have heard of a negro who was convinced of sin, and at the same time his master was under conviction. The negro found peace with God, but the master was a long time seeking without any hope; and at last he said, "I cannot make out how it is that you found comfort so soon, and I cannot get it at all." So the negro after asking his master to excuse his speaking plainly, said, "Massa, I tink it is just dis. When Jesus say, 'Come along,' he say, 'I give you a righteousness dat cover you from head to foot.' I, poor negro, looks down at myself, covered all over wid filthy rags, and I say, 'Lord, clothe me, I am naked,'—and off go my rags. Now, massa, you not so bad as dat. When he say, 'Come along,' to you, you look at your coat, and you say, 'Well, it wants a little mending, but I fink it will wear a little longer. Dere is a great hole here, but a little darning and stitching will do it up again.' So, massa, you keep your old coat; you keep on darning and stitching, and you never get comfort. But if you would take it off, you would get comfort at once." That is just it, we will be trying to get something before we come to Christ.

Now I dare say in this congregation I have a hundred different phases of this singular fatuity of man—the desire to bring something to Christ. "Oh," says one "I would come to Christ, but I have been too great a sinner." Self again, sir; your being a great sinner has nothing to do with that. Christ is a great Saviour; and however great your sin, his mercy is greater than that. He invites you simply as a sinner. Be you big or little, he bids you come to him and take his salvation "without money and without price." Another says, "Ah! but I do not feel it enough." Self again. He does not ask you about your feelings he simply says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, sir, I cannot pray." Self again. You are not to be saved by your prayers; you are to be saved by Christ, and your business is simply to look to Christ. he will help you to pray afterwards. You must begin at the right end by clinging only to his cross and trusting there. "But," says another "if I felt as So-and-so did." Self again. What business have you to talk so? Christ is where you are to

look, not to self. "Yes," you say, "I think he would receive anybody but me." Please, who gave you any leave to think at all in the matter? Does he not say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out?" Why, you are thinking your soul into eternal ruin. Give up thinking, and believe. Are your thoughts as God's thoughts? Remember, his thoughts are as much higher than yours as heaven is higher than earth "But," says one, "I have sought him and I have not found him." Dear friend, can you truly say that you have come to Christ with nothing in your hand, and have looked alone to him, and yet he has cast you away? Do you dare to say that? No, if God's Word be true, and you are true, you cannot say that. Ah! I remember how that struck my heart when I heard my mother say it once. I had been some years seeking Christ, and I never could believe he would save me. She said she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never heard—she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ, and Christ had rejected him. "And," said she, "I do not believe that God would permit any man to live to say that." Well, I thought I could say it; I thought I had sought him, and he had cast me away, and I determined I would say it, even if it destroyed my soul: I would speak what I thought was the truth. But, I said to myself, "I will try once more" and I went to the Master, with nothing of my own, casting myself simply on his mercy; and I believed that he died for me:—and I have never said that, and blessed be his holy name, I know I never shall. Nor will you. Oh, do try him.

"Make but a trial of his love;  
Experience will decide  
How blest are they, and only they,  
Who in his love confide."

If you will come down to this price, and take Christ for nothing, just as he is, "without money and without price," you shall not find him a hard Master.

III. Now, I have to use a FEW ARGUMENTS with you, and may God apply them to your hearts! I would first speak to some of you who never think about these things at all. You have come here to hear the Word today, because it is preached in a strange place; otherwise you might not have been in the house of God at all. Very seldom you vex yourselves with

religious questions; you do not ask yourselves many questions about it, because you feel it would be an awkward thing for you if you were to think much of religion, you feel there would be a necessity for a change of life in you, for thoughts about religion and your present habits would not suit well together. My dear friends, bear with me a moment if I press you very much home. Did you ever hear of the ostrich? When the hunter pursues it, the poor silly bird flies away as fast as it can, and when it sees that there is no way of escape, what do you suppose it does? It buries its head in the sand, and then thinks it is safe, because it shuts its eyes and cannot see. Is not that just what you are doing? Conscience won't let you rest, and what you are trying to do is to bury it. You bury your head in the sand; you do not like to think. Ah! if we could bring men to think, what a wonderful thing we should have done! That is one of the things, sinner, that, without Christ, you dare not do. Do you think? We have heard of men afraid to be alone half an hour because of thoughts too terrible for them. I challenge any of you without God, to spend one hour on that heath, or in this balcony, or in your own house at home, and just chew these thoughts, masticate them—"I am an enemy to God, my sins are not forgiven; if I die to-night, I am damned to all eternity; I have never sought Christ, and never found him to be mine." I defy you to keep at that an hour. You dare not, you would be afraid of your shadow. The only way sinners can be happy is by thoughtlessness. They say, "Cover it up; bury my dead out of my sight." They put such thoughts away. Now is this wise? Is there anything in religion? If not, it will be consistent in you to deny it; but if this Bible is true, if you have a soul that is to live for ever, is it rational, is it sensible, is it prudent, to be neglecting your eternal soul? If you suffered your bodies to starve, you would not want much argument, would you, to induce you to eat? But here is your soul perishing, and yet no mortal tongue can persuade you to attend to that. Ah! is it not strange that men are going to live for ever in eternity, and yet they have never provided for it. I have heard of a certain king who had a fool in his court, who made a great many merry jests, and the king gave him a stick, and said, "Keep that till you find a bigger fool than yourself." At last the king came to die, and when he lay a-dying, the jester came to him and said, "Master, what is the matter?" "I am going to die" said the king. "Going to die—where's that?" "I am going to die, man, don't laugh at me now." "How long are you going to be there?" "Well, where I am going I shall live

for ever." "Have you got a house there?" "No." "Have you made any preparation for the journey?" "No." "Have you got any provision whatever, as you are going to live there such a long time?" "No." "There, take the stick; fool as I am, I have made preparation. I am not such a fool as to have to live in a place where I have not got a house." Christ has prepared for his people a mansion in heaven. There was much wisdom in the jester's language. Let me speak to you, even though it be in his language, but very seriously. If men are to live for ever in heaven, is it not a strange, wild, frantic freak of intolerant madness, that they never think of the world to come. To-day they think, but for ever—they put that away. Time, and its poor baubles and its toys do fill the heart; but eternity—that hill without a summit, that sea without a shore, that river without an end, over which they are to sail for ever—they never think of that. Will you pause a moment and recollect that you have to sail for ever, and you must sail o'er the burning waves of hell, or else o'er sparkling streams of glory. Which shall it be with you? You will have to consider this soon. Before many days, and months, and years are gone, God will say to you "Prepare to meet thy God," and it may be that the summons shall come to you. Then you are in the death struggle when the stream of Jordan is chilling your blood, and your heart is sunken within you by reason of fear. And what will you do then? What wilt thou do in the swellings of sin in the day when thou art spoiled? What shalt thou do when God shall bring thee into judgment?

And I have now the pleasing task of closing by addressing men of another character: Ah! friend; you are not careless. You have many thoughts, and they pain you; but, although you would be glad to get rid of them, you would be afraid to do so. You can say, "Oh! I do feel it were well for me if I could rejoice in Christ—I do feel I should be happy if I could be converted." Friend, I am glad to hear thee say so. Where God has put the work of an impressed heart, I do not think he will leave it till he has finished. Now, I want to speak to you very seriously to-night, but for a minute. You do feel your need of a Saviour. Remember, Christ died for you. Believe that—will you? There he hangs upon his cross, dying; look into his face, it is full of love, it is melting with forgiveness; his lips are moving, and he says, "Father forgive them." Will you look to him? Can you hear him say it, and yet turn away? All he asks you is simply to look,

and that look will save you. You do feel your need of a Saviour; you know you are a sinner. Why tarry? Do not say you are unworthy. Remember, he died for the unworthy. Do not say he will not save you. Remember, he died for the devil's castaways; the very dram and scum of the world Christ has redeemed. Look at him. Can you look at him and not believe him? Can you see the blood streaming from his shoulders, and trickling from his hands and side, and not believe him? Oh! by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, I entreat you to believe on the Lord Jesus; for thus is it written, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus, and is baptized, shall be saved."

Once when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by: she was in the outer ring of the circle, and she asked the coachman, what all the people were there for. He replied, "They are going to hear Rowland Hill." Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers, and so she drew near. No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, "Come, I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine." (She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of.) "Who will buy here?" Up comes the world. "What will you give for her?" "I will give her all the pomps and vanities of this present life; she shall be a happy woman here she shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys." "You shall not have her; her soul is an everlasting thing; it is a poor price you are offering, you are only giving a little and what shall it profit her if she gain the whole world and lose her own soul? Here comes another purchaser—here is the devil. "What will you give for her." "Well" says he, "I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, she shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto; she shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear; she shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transient pleasure." Ah! Satan, what will you do for her for ever? You shall not have her, for I know what you are; you would give a paltry price for her, and then destroy her soul to all eternity. But, here comes another—I know him—it is the Lord Jesus. "What will you give for her?" Says he, "It is not what I will give, it is what I have given; I have given my life, my blood for her; I have bought her with a price, and I will give her heaven for ever and ever; I will give her grace in her heart now and glory

throughout eternity."

"O Lord, Jesus Christ," said Rowland Hill, "thou shalt have her. Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?" She was fairly caught; there was no answer that could be given. "It is done," he said, "it is done; you are the Saviour's; I have betrothed you unto him; never break that contract." And she never did. From that time forth, from being a gay and volatile woman she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the truth of the gospel in those times, and died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. I would be well pleased if I might make a match of some of you this night; if you would now say, "Lord, I will have thee," Christ is ready. If he has made you ready he is never behind hand himself. Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him. What sayest thou? wilt thou go with this man? If thou sayest "Ay," God bless thee! Christ saith "Ay" too, and thou art saved, saved now, saved for ever!

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## **The Friend Of Sinners**

He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. - Isaiah 53:12

A vague notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ's passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners' consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that he must have intended the merit of his blood and the efficacy of his passion for those



who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to him. Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the plan itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity it was intended to bless sinners. Wherefore salvation if men be not lost, and for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in grace, but how "grace" unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing? If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of grace? Build then on justice; let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners and not with the righteous. Moreover, think of the work itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, think you? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity. Why should he weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed his blood. For whom his blood? Wherefore the agony in the garden? Wherefore the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved. What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that he came into the world to save sinners. And then look at God's end in the whole work. It was to glorify himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by grace those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making his love and his mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity, that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners, or else that end and aim never could be accomplished. Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship; the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge; the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of it away; and it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God, to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there be sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's grace. A moment's

thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed, dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in his glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to pourtray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters; but if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains; let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders rejoicing; let me hear his song of mirth when he calleth upon his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost. When looks our God most like a loving and tender father? Truly he looketh blessed when he divideth his inheritance among his sons, but I never saw him so resplendent in his fatherhood as when he runneth out to meet the prodigal, throweth his arms about his neck, and kisseth him, crying— "My son that was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there be sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is he a Saviour except to the lost? How is he a physician but to the sick? How is he like the brazen serpent if he doth not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if he doth not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there be a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text; in fact it can have no meaning to them.

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in

the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, in the census of the Roman empire. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that he may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors, and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors in the scroll of fame. Ask public rumour "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for him. "This———" they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. Fame, with her lying tongue, said he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber, because he would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since he came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance; he came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." They called him mad. His warm enthusiasm, his stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places, brought upon him the accusation that he had a devil. "Thou has a devil and art mad," said they. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunkards made him their song, and the vilest thought him viler than themselves, for he was, by current rumour, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, "he was numbered with transgressors in the courts of law." The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of him, "Thou blasphemest;" and they smote him on

the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The courts civil also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water, and say, "I find no fault in him," but still, driven by the infernal clamours of an angry people, he is compelled to write, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;" and he gives him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land. Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, the whole Jewish people numbered him with transgressors; nay, they reprobated him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." See, brethren, his being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, he bears the transgressor's scourging! He is tied to the whipping-post, his back is marred and scarred; the ploughers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for he bears the felon's cross; he comes into the street bowed down with the weight of his own gibbet, which he must carry upon his raw and bleeding shoulders; he goes along to the place of doom; he comes to Calvary—the place of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected him and heaven refused him shelter, he dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors. But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eye pity? Will no man declare his innocence? None; they are all silent! Silent, did I say? 'Tis worse! All earth holds up its hands for his death; it is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue; they hoot; they laugh; they cry, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe; for he is despised and rejected of men; of all men is he accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon thy throne, wilt thou let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, "I thirst." Wilt thou permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is; heaven confirms it. He has no sin of his own, but he has the sin of his people

upon his shoulders; and God, the Eternal Judge, shows that he too considers him to be in the roll of transgressors, for he veils his face; and the Eternal Father betakes him to his hiding-place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of his Father's face, till he shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer's soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The only answer from heaven being, "I must forsake transgressors; thou art numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake thee." But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, he will be taken down ere he dies? Death is the curse for sin; it cannot come on any but transgressors; it is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver his Son at the last moment, and having tried him in the furnace, he will bring him out? Nay, not so; he must become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell; he that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor's crown of thorns, lies in the transgressor's grave. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." It is a marvellous thing, brethren, a marvellous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvellous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of men (that were a gracious act) but numbered with transgressors; numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered, not with those who earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvellous condescension; but here it is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and wonderful thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, think you, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because he could the better become their advocate. I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counsellor continually using the word "we;" he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law,

there is on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counsellor with the client; nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there himself. The trumpet sounds; the great assize is set. Come, come, ye sinners, come to the bar to be tried. There stands the man whose hands are pierced; he standeth numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it; he points to his side, his hands, his feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom he represents; he pleads his blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for he at their head hath found a ransom."

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, that he might plead with them. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out his abundant love to these prisoners he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity; but he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done aught that is wrong?" "I will not answer you that," saith he; "but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, "Art thou become like one of us? Then we will talk with thee." And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, dost thou see this? Christ puts himself as near on a level with thee as he can. He cannot be sinful as thou art, for he is God and perfect man; but he so puts his name down in the list that when the roll is called his name is called over with thine. Oh, how near doth he come to thee in thy ruined state!

Then he does this that sinners may feel their hearts drawn to him. What dost thou become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesu, Son of God, dost thou allow thyself to be numbered among lost ones that thou mightest find me? Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give thee a hearty

reception. Come in, thou loving Saviour, abide with me, and go no more out for ever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ; but who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and put down in the same list with us? Surely now we may come boldly to him, and confess our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ourselves, cometh not to condemn, but to absolve; not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors' list that we might be written in the red roll of the saints. He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; he transfers his name from yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious, for there is a transfer made between Christ and his people. All that we have goes to Christ, sin and all; and all that Christ has comes to us. His righteousness, his blood, and everything that he hath belongeth unto us.

Dear hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here; nothing else. "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, soul, can thy heart say, "Then if he was numbered with me, if he put his name down where mine stands in that terrific roll, then I will believe in him that he is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in his hands?" I conjure thee by the living God do it, man, and thy soul is saved. Oh, by him who from the highest throne in glory stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust thy soul with him. It is all he asks of thee, and this he gives thee. Blessed Master, would that thou couldst stand here, and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with you; God accounted me as if I had committed your sin, and visited me as if I had been a transgressor; trust me; cast your souls upon my perfect righteousness; wash in my cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before my Father's face."

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BARE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noon-day, that Christ dealt with sinners. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description

given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again: man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell; Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the room, place, and stead of his people; and he did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction, but really transferred from them to him. You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back; it is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies weight, and weight is the sure indicator of reality. Christ did bear sin in its fulness, vileness, and condemnation upon his own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on him, and those sins did actually and in very deed become his sins; (not that he had committed them, nor that he had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which he had consented, and for which he came in to the world,) and there lay the sins of all his people upon Christ's shoulders.

Then notice, that as he did bear them, so other texts tell us that he did bear them away. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Sin being on his head, the scape-goat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it be sought for it shall not be found; the Everlasting God seeth it no more, it hath ceased to be, for he hath finished iniquity and made an end of sin; and when there is an end of it what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but he was not long before he paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now; there is not one in God's book against his chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ hath paid the debt, then there is no debt left; it is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge; I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself I gone. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea." And yet again, "I will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thine iniquity like a thick cloud." Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain; they are gone;



no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again; there are no such things; they are gone. And so with believers' sins, they were black, thick, thick clouds; full of tempests; big with lightnings and with thunder; but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ; the thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon him, and the clouds are gone, for Christ has taken them away. "He bare the sins of many," and he bore them away for ever.

And then, beloved, you must understand that if it be so, if Christ did really bear his people's sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died. "And who are they?" you say. Why, all those who trust him. Any man whatsoever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent—

"Sons of God, redeemed by blood,  
Raise your songs to Zion's God—  
Made from condemnation free,  
Grace triumphant sing with me."

Now, do you not see that his must be for sinners? See, you black ones, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners. You see it does not say it was for sensible sinners; no, no, but sinners. It does not say, "He was numbered with awakened transgressors;" no, it is "transgressors." It does not say that he bare the sins of tender-hearted sinners; no, but "he bare the sin of many." This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ, and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away. Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. "Oh," says one, "I am a sinner, but, but—" Well, what but? If you be a sinner, you are commanded to trust Christ this morning. "Oh, but—" I

will have no "buts," sir, no "but" whatever. Are you a sinner? Yes or no. If you say "No," then I have nothing to say to you; Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. "But I have been a thief!" I suppose a thief is a sinner? "But I have been a drunkard!" A drunkard is a sinner. "But I have been an unclean liver!" You are a sinner, then. "But I have such a hard heart!" Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. "But I am unbelieving!" Well, that is a sin too. You come in under the list of sinners, and I say that such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when he came to save, for "he was numbered with transgressors," and "he bare"—not the virtues of many, not the merits of many, not the good works of many, but "the sin of many." So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer; and if you are a sinner, here is Christ, numbered with you. "Oh!" says one, "but what is faith? I want to know at once." Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

"Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one foul blot,  
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

It is as sinners, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died for us. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called; in fact, for them, and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS.  
"And made intercession for the transgressors."

He prays for his saints, but, dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for transgressors! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the gospel for many years—for many years; and he has heard it preached faithfully too. He is growing grey now; but while his head is getting white his heart is black;

he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by-and-bye, unless grace prevents—but I need not tell that story. What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying—"Lo, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" The woodman feels his axe; it is sharp and keen. "Now," says he, "I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down." But hark! There is one that maketh intercession for transgressors, hear him, hear him, "Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit well; but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down." You see there was nothing in that tree why he should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why he should plead for you, yet he does it. This very morning, perhaps, he is crying "Spare him yet a little while; let him hear the gospel again; let him be entreated once more; oh! let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel; let me have another endeavour with his hard heart; it may be, it may be that he will yield." O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, he pleads for their forgiveness. They are nailing him to the cross; the wretches are driving iron through his hands; but even while they fasten him to the tree hear him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart; and it broke mine too, to think that I could rebel against Christ whilst he was loving me; that I could despise him while he was putting himself in my way in order to do me good. Oh! it is this that breaks a man's heart; to think that Christ should have been loving me, with the whole force of his soul, while I was despising him, and would have nothing to do with him. There is a man there who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming, and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O sinner, I would this might break thy heart, and bring thee to the Saviour.

Nor does he end there. He next prays that those for whom he intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with

you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of his intercession for transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live he does not cease to pray for them, for by his intercession they are preserved. They are tempted and tried, but hear what he says. "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy strength fail not." Yes, brethren, beloved, and this is the reason why we are not condemned, for our Apostle puts it—"Who is he that condemneth?" and the answer he gives is, "Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, who ever maketh intercession for us;" as if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell, and delivered us from condemnation. And more, our coming to glory is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners "Go home and pray; go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the gospel. The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am; I cannot plead before him, for I am a wretch undone; if I should stand in his presence he would drive me from him." Behold Jesus Christ maketh intercession for transgressors. It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes in, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, he takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of him who is the advocate of his people than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free. So, sinner, you are safe if he pleads for you. "Ah," say you, "but if he asks me what he should plead I have nothing to tell him." You know the counsellor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—"Now, just tell me the case; what can I say in your favour?" The criminal replies, "Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so," and perhaps he is able to say "Why, sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair, and I can prove an alibi, or I can do this or that." Very well; the advocate having ground to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, "Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus

Christ what he is to plead, for I have nothing to plead; the fact is I am guilty, and thoroughly guilty too, and I deserve to be punished, and must be; I have nothing to plead." Now what does our blessed Advocate say? "Oh," saith he, "but I have the plea in myself;" and up he rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read he puts in this to that accusation—"In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne." "How?" saith Justice. And he shows the nail-prints in his hands, and lays bare his side, and says, "I suffered for that sinner; I was punished with the sinner's punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of my passion and my agony, that the sinner should go his way." Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because he can appear for us, and what is more, he can find a plea for us. "Ah!" I hear you say, "but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that; I wish I had, but I have nothing to give him; if he asks any fees I have nothing; I do not deserve the love of Christ; I do not know why he should take up my cause; if he would I should be saved, but I cannot think he will, for I cannot hope to pay him." "Nay," says he, "but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully, and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you need it; not because you are not a transgressor, but because you are." That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why he will. You are full of disease. "Ah!" say you, "the physician will never look at such an arm as that;" but because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, "I will cure that." Your qualification is your disqualification, and what you think to be the reason why he never will look at you, is certainly the only reason you can plead why he should. You are nothing; you are utterly lost; you have no merit; you have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ make prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly; but I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God himself must be numbered with sinners, and smart and die for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing; hate it. If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh! pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of

the river when it was turned to blood in their sight.

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word: you know what sin means; I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence: I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ wants any preparation by you or in you before you come to him. You may come to him now; nay, more, you are commanded to come to him now, just as you are. And to every man among you to-day, and to every woman and child, I preach this gospel in the name of Jesus Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries— trust him now; God commands you. "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." As Peter said, so say I, "Repent and be converted, every one of you;" and as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." If you do not, this shall condemn you; not your sin, but your unbelief; for they that believe not are condemned already, Why, why are such condemned? Because they believe not. That is the accusation; that is the damning crime and curse. "Well," says one, "then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I'll do it." Ah! soul, do it then. Can you do it? Can you trust him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up. Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up. Do you trust him wholly? Can you say, "His blessed wounds, his flowing blood, his perfect righteousness, on these I rest. I do trust him, wholly?" Are you half afraid to say you do? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it then; do a bold thing for once! Say, "Lord, I'll trust thee, and if thou cast me away, I'll still trust thee; I bless thee that thou canst save me, and that thou wilt save me." Can you say that? I say, have you believed in him? You are saved, then; you are not in a salvable state, but you are saved; not partly, but wholly saved; not some of your sins blotted out, but all; behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But I hear one say, "It is too good to be true!" Soul, wilt thou be lost through thinking little things of Christ? "Ah!" says another, "it is too simple; if this be the gospel, we shall have all the

ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ and being saved." And glory be to God if it be so! For my part I am never afraid of big sinners being saved. I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh! no; faith in Christ would change their nature; and it will change yours too; for this is salvation: to have the nature changed, to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy. Come, soul, wilt thou trust him? I do not like you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival; but here is better music if you trust Christ, for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a brother redeemed. Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition; but here is a greater wonder than that, if you came into this place this morning in a state of nature, and go out in a state of grace, only to wait a little while, and then to reach a state of glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show; but here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture; here is food for your souls; here is that whereof if a man eateth he shall live for ever; and here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved. Outside in the street there is a drinking-fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it; you will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, "You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress." "You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket." No, no, go and drink; and when you have hold of the ladle and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—"I do not feel my thirst enough," still take a drink whether you do or not. So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and he inviteth every thirsty soul to come and drink. You need not stop and say, "Am I thirsty enough? Am I black enough?" You do want it whether you think you do or not. Come as you are; come as you are. Every fitness is legality; every preparation is a lie; every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way. You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like a boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before. Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the blackest soul out of hell, trust Christ, and that act of trust shall make you clean. This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the

hardest thing in the world to bring you to it; so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, "It is too good to be true;" or else you despise it because it is so simple; for the gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it. Oh! may the Holy Ghost lay this home to you; may he make you willing in the day of his power. I hope he has; I trust he has, so that ere we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate;—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength; my righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

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## **Fruitless Faith**

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. - James 2:17

Whatever the statement of James may be, it could never have been his intention to contradict the gospel. It could never be possible that the Holy Spirit would say one thing in one place, and another in another. Statements of Paul and of James must be reconciled, and if they were not, I would be prepared sooner to throw overboard the statement of James than that of Paul. Luther did so, I think, most unjustifiably. If you ask me, then, how I dare to say I would sooner do so, my reply is, I said I would sooner throw over James than Paul for this reason, because, at any rate, we must keep to the Master himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought never to raise any questions about differences of inspiration, since they are all equally inspired, but if such questions could be raised and were allowable, it were wisdom to stick fastest to those who cling closest to



Christ. Now the last words of the Lord Jesus, before he was taken up were these, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," and what was this gospel? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To that, then, we must always cling, but Jesus Christ has given a promise of salvation to the baptized believer, and he has said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here it is clear he promises everlasting life to all who believe in him, to all who trust in him. Now from the Master's words we will not stir, but close to his own declaration we will stand. Be assured that the gospel of your salvation as a believer, with a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, will save your soul, a simple and undiluted reliance upon the life and death, and resurrection, and merit, and person of Jesus Christ, will ensure to you everlasting life. Let nothing move you from this confidence: it hath great recompense of reward. Heaven and earth may pass away, but from this grand fundamental truth not one jot or tittle shall ever be moved. "He that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

The fact is, James and Paul are perfectly reconcilable, and they are viewing truth from different standpoints; but whatever James may mean, I am quite confident about what Paul means, and confident about the truth of the two.

A second remark. James never intended, for a moment, nor do any of his words lead us into such a belief, that there can be any merit whatever in any good works of ours. After we have done all, if we could do all, we should only have done what we were bound to do. Surely there is no merit in a man's paying what he owes; no great merit in a servant who has his wages for doing what he is paid for. The question of merit between the creature and his Creator is not to be raised; he has a right to us; he has the right of creation, the right of preservation, the right of infinite sovereignty, and, whatever he should exact of us, we should require nothing from him in return, and, having sinned as we have all, for us to talk of salvation by merit, by our own works, is worse than vanity; it is an

impertinence which God will never endure.

"Talk they of morals, O! thou bleeding Lamb,  
The best morality is love of thee."

Talk of salvation by works, and Cowper's reply seems apt:—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,  
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord."

What James does mean, however, is this, no doubt, in brief and short, that while faith saves, it is faith of a certain kind. No man is saved by persuading himself that he is saved; nobody is saved by believing Jesus Christ died for him. That may be, or may not be, true in the sense in which he understands it. In a certain sense Christ died for all men, but since it is evident that many men are lost, Christ's dying for all men is not at all a ground upon which any man may hope to be saved. Christ died for some men in another sense, in a peculiar and special sense. No man has a right to believe that Christ peculiarly and specially died for him until he has an evidence of it in casting himself upon Christ, and trusting in Jesus, and bringing forth suitable works to evince the reality of his faith. The faith that saves is not a historical faith, not a faith that simply believes a creed and certain facts: I have no doubt devils are very orthodox; I do not know which church they belong to, though there are some in all churches; there was one in Christ's Church when he was on earth, for he said one was filled with devils; and there are some in all churches. Devils believe all the facts of revelation. I do not believe they have a doubt; they have suffered too much from the hand of God to doubt his existence! They have felt too much the terror of his wrath to doubt the righteousness of his government. They are stern believers, but they are not saved; and such a faith, if it be in us, will not, cannot, save us, but will remain to all intents and purposes a dead, inoperative faith. It is a faith which produces works which saves us; the works do not save us; but a faith which does not produce works is a faith that will only deceive, and cannot lead us into heaven. Now this evening we shall first speak a few words upon:—

I. WHAT KIND OF WORKS THEY ARE WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO

## PROVE OUR FAITH IF IT BE A SAVING FAITH.

The works which are absolutely necessary are, in brief, these: First, there must be fruits meet for repentance, works of repentance. It is wrong to tell a man he must repent before he may trust Christ, but it is right to tell him that, having trusted Christ, it is not possible for him to remain impenitent. There never was in this world such a thing as an impenitent believer in Jesus Christ, and there never can be. Faith and repentance are born in a spiritual life together, and they grow up together. The moment a man believes he repents, and while he believes he both believes and repents, and until he shall have done with faith he will not have done with repenting. If thou hast believed, but hast never repented of thy sins, then beware of thy believing. If thou pretendest now to be a child of God, and if thou hast never clothed thyself in dust and ashes; if thou hast never hated the sins which once thou didst love: if thou dost not now hate them, and endeavour to be rid of them, if thou dost not humble thyself before God on account of them, as the Lord liveth, thou knowest nothing about saving faith, for faith puts a distance between us and sin; in a moment it leads us away from the distance between us and Christ; nearer to Christ, we are now far off from sin. But he that loves his sin, thinks little of his sin, goes into it with levity, talks of it sportively, speaks of sin as though it were a trifle, hath the faith of devils, but the faith of God's elect he never knew. True faith purges the soul, since the man now hunts after sin that he might find out the traitor that lurks within his nature; and though a believer is not perfect, yet the drift of faith is to make him perfect; and if it is faith to be perfected, the believer shall be perfected, and then shall he be caught up to dwell before the throne. Judge yourselves, my hearers. Have you brought forth the fruits of repentance? If not, your faith without them is dead.

Works of secret piety are also essential to true faith. Does a man say I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eye in secret with "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God, and does he hold no communion with Christ his Saviour, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in

such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate, as to say that a man is a believer with living faith who does not draw near to God in prayer, that does not live indeed under the awe and fear of the Most High God as ever present, and seeing him in all places. Judge yourselves, ye professors. Are ye neglecting prayer; have ye no secret spiritual life? If so, away with your notion about saving faith. You are not justified by such a faith as that; there is no life in it; it is not a faith that leads to the Lamb and brings salvation; if it were, it would show itself by driving you to your knees, and making you lift up your heart to the Most High.

Another set of works are those which I may call works of obedience. When a man trusts in Jesus, he accepts Jesus as his Master. He says, "Show me what thou wouldst have me to do." The Father shows what Christ would have him to do. He does not set up his own will and judgment, but he is obedient to his Master's will. I will not tonight speak of those who know not their Lord's will, who shall be beaten with few stripes, but I do fear me there are some professors who are living in wilful neglect of known Christian duties, and yet suppose themselves to be the partakers of saving faith. Now a duty may be neglected, and yet a man may be saved; but a duty persistently and wilfully neglected, may be the leak that will sink the ship, or the neglect of any one of such duties for the surrender of a true heart to Christ does not go such and such a length and then stop. Christ will save no heart upon terms and conditions; it must be an unconditional surrender to his government if thou wouldest be saved by him. Now some will draw a line here, and some will draw a line there up to this, and say, "I will be Christ's servant"; that is to say, sir, you will be your own master, for that is the English of it; but the true heart that hath really believed saith, "I will make haste, and delay not to keep thy commandments; make straight the path before my feet, for thy commandments are not grievous." "I have delighted in thy commandments more than in fine gold." Now, sons and daughters of sin, professedly, what say you to this? Have you an eye to the Master, as servants keep their eye to their mistress? Do you ever ask yourselves what would Christ have you to do? or do you live habitually in the neglect of Christ's law and will? Do you go to places where Christ would not meet you, and where you would not like to meet with him? Are some of you in

the habit of professing maxims and customs, upon which you know your Lord would never set his seal? You say you believe, you have faith in him? Ah! sirs, if it be a living faith, it will be an obedient faith.

Living faith produces what I shall call separating works. When a man believes in Jesus, he is not what he was nor will he consort with those who were once his familiars. Our Lord has said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Now Christ was not an ascetic; he ate and drank as other men do so that they even said of him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because he mingled with the rest of mankind; but was there ever a more unearthly life than the life of Christ? He seems to go through all the world a complete man in all that is necessary to manliness, but his presence is like the presence of a seraph amongst sinners. You can discover at once that he is not of their mould, nor of their spirit, only harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Now such will the believer be if his faith be genuine, but this is a sharp cut to some professors, but not a whit more sharp than the Scripture warrants. If we are of the world, what can we expect but the world's doom in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? If ye find your pleasure with the world, you shall meet your condemnation with the world; if with the world you live, with the world you shall die, and with the world you shall live again for ever, lost. Where there is no separation there is no grace. If we are conformed to this world, how dare we talk about grace being in our souls; and if there be no distinguishing difference between us and worldlings, what vanity it is, what trifling, what hypocrisy, what a delusion for us to come to the Lord's table, talking about being the Lord's sons, when we are none of his? Faith without the works which denote the difference between a believer and a worldling is a dead, unsaving faith.

Now I have not said that any believer is perfect. I have never thought so, but I have said that if a believer could be a believer altogether, and faith could have her perfect work, he would be perfect, and that in proportion as he is truly a believer, in that proportion he will bring forth fruit that shall magnify God and prove the sincerity of his faith.

One other set of works will be necessary to prove the vitality of his faith, namely, works of love. He that loves Christ feels that the love of Christ constraineth him; he endeavours to spread abroad the knowledge of

Christ; he longs to win jewels for Christ's crown; he endeavours to extend the boundaries of Christ's and Messiah's kingdom, and I will not give a farthing for the loftiest profession coupled with the most flowing words, that never shows itself in direct deeds of Christian service. If thou lovest Christ, thou canst not help serving him. If thou believest in him, there is such potency in what thou believest, such power in the grace which comes with believing, that thou must serve Christ; and if thou servest him not, thou art not his.

This proof, before we leave it, might be illustrated in various ways. We will just give one. A tree has been planted out into the ground. Now the source of life to that tree is at the root, whether it hath apples on it or not; the apples would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root. But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there is no bud, and when the summer comes there is no leafing, and no fruit-bearing, but the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is dead, and you are correct; it is dead. It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the absence of the leaves is a proof that it is dead. So, too, is it with the professor. If he hath life, that life must give fruits; if not fruits, works; if his faith has a root, but if there be no works, then depend upon it the inference that he is spiritually dead is certainly a correct one. When the telegraph cable flashed no message across to America, when they tried to telegraph again and again, but the only result following was dead earth, they felt persuaded that there was a fracture, and well they might; and when there is nothing produced in the life by the supposed grace which we have, and nothing is telegraphed to the world but "dead earth," we may rest assured that the link of connection between the soul and Christ does not exist.

I need not enlarge. We should just put it into that one sentence: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Bring forth, therefore, works meet for repentance." And now we turn to the second point with more brevity:—

## II. SOME FACTS THAT BACK UP THE DOCTRINE THAT "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD."

These facts show that it is evident to all observers that many professors of

faith without works are not saved. It would be very ludicrous, if it were not very miserable, to think of some who wrap themselves in the conceit that they are saved about whose salvation nobody but themselves can have any question. I remember a professor who used to talk of being justified by faith who was most assured about it, when he contained most beer. Such professors are not at all uncommon, sad is it to say so. They seem at the moment when their condemnation seems written on their very brow to all who know them, to be most confident that they themselves are saved. Now, brethren, if such cases are convincing and you entertain no doubt, but decide in their case, apply the same rule to yourselves, for although you may not plunge into the grosser vices, yet if you make your homes wretched by your selfishness, if you fall into constant habits of vicious temper, if you never strive against these sins, and the grace of God never leads you out of them; if you can live in private sin, and yet pacify your conscience, and remain just as you were before your pretended conversion; when you sit in judgment and pronounce the verdict on others, feel that you pronounce it upon yourself, for surely for one sin that is openly indulged in, which is manifested to you in the dissipation of your fellow-creatures, it is not hard for you to believe that any other sin, if it be constantly indulged and be loved, will do the same to you as it does to him. You know men who have not faith, but have a sort of faith, are not saved. It must be true, or else where were the Saviour's words, "Straight is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that find it"? For this is no straight gate and no narrow way, merely to be orthodox and hold a creed, and say, "I believe Jesus died for me"; but it is a very narrow gate so to believe as to become practically Christ's servants, so to trust as to give up that which Christ hates. Truths which Jesus bids us believe are all truths, which, if believed, must have an effect upon the daily life. A man cannot really believe that Jesus Christ has taken away his sin by such sufferings as those of the cross, and yet trifle with sin. A man is a liar who says, "I believe that yonder bleeding Saviour suffered on account of my sins," and yet holds good fellowship with the very sins that put Christ to death. Oh! sirs, a faith in the bleeding Saviour is a faith that craves for vengeance upon every form of sin. The Christian religion makes us believe that we are the sons of God when we trust in Christ. Will a man believe that he is really the Son of God, and then daily and wilfully go and live like a child of the devil? Do you expect to see

members of the royal court playing with beggars in the street? When a man believes himself to possess a certain station of life, that belief leads him to a certain carriage and conversation, and when I am led to believe I am elected of God, that I am redeemed by blood, that heaven is secured to me by the covenant of grace, that I am God's priest, made a king in Christ Jesus, I cannot, if I believe, unless I am more monstrous than human nature itself seems capable of being, go back to live after just the same fashion, to run in the same course as others, and live as the sons of Belial live. We see constantly in Scripture, and all the saints affirm it, that faith is linked with grace, and that where faith is the grace of God is; but how can there be the gift of God reigning in the soul, and yet a love of sin and a neglect of holiness? I cannot understand grace which abideth for ever to the inner man; and for this man to give himself up to be a slave of Satan is a thing impossible.

Faith, again, is always in connection with regeneration. Now regeneration is making of the old thing new; it is infusing a new nature into a man. The new birth is not a mere reformation, but an entire renovation and revolution: it is making the man a new creation in Christ Jesus. But how a new creature, if he has no repentance, if he has no good works, no private prayer, no charity, no holiness of any kind, regeneration will be a football for scorn. The new birth would be a thing to be ridiculed, if it did not really produce a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness. That kind of new birth which is dispensed by the Church of Rome, and also by some in the Church of England, is a kind of new birth which ought to excite the derision of all mankind, for children are said to be born again, certified to be born again, made members of Christ and children of God, and afterwards they grow up, in many cases, in most cases, let me say, to forget their baptismal vows, and live in sin as others do. Evidently it has had no effect upon them, but regeneration such as we read of in the Bible changes the nature of man, makes him hate the things he loved, and love the things he hated. This is regeneration: this is regeneration which is worth the seeking: it always comes with faith, and consequently good works must go with faith too. But we pass on to the last matter, which is this:—

III. WHAT OF THOSE MEN THAT HAVE FAITH, AND THAT HAVE NO



## GOOD WORKS?

Then what about them? Why, this about them, that their supposed faith generally makes them very careless and indifferent, and ultimately hardened and depraved men. I dread beyond measure that any one of us should have a name to live when we are dead; for an ordinary sinner who makes no profession may be converted, but it is extremely rare that a sinner who makes a profession of being what he is not is ever converted. It is a miserable thing to find a person discovering that his profession has been a lie. A man sits down, and he says, "Why, I believe," and as he walks he is careful, because he is afraid of what others might say. By and bye, he begins to indulge a little. He says, "This is not of works; I may do this, and yet get forgiveness." Then he goes a little further away. I do not say that perhaps at first he goes to the theatre, but he goes next door to it. He does not get drunk, but he likes jovial company. A little further and he gets confirmed in the belief that he is a saved one, and he gets to much confirmed in that idea that he thinks he can do just as he likes. Having sported on the brink without falling over, he thinks he will try to say, if Satan wants raw material of which to make the worst of men, he generally takes those who profess to be the best, and I have questioned whether such a valuable servant of Satan as Judas was could ever have been made of any other material than an apostate apostle. If he had not lived near to Christ, he never could have become such a traitor as he was. You must have a good knowledge of religion to be a thorough-faced hypocrite, and you must become high in Christ's Church before you can become fit tools for Satan's worst works. Oh! but why do men do this? Oh! what is the use of maintaining such a faith? I think if we do not care to get the vitality of religion, I would never burden myself with the husks of it, for such people get the chains of godliness without getting the comforts of godliness. They dare not do this, they dare not do that; if they do they feel hampered. Why don't they give up professing? and they would be at least free; they would have the sin without the millstone about their neck. Surely there can be no excuse for men who mean to perish coming to cover themselves with a mask of godliness! Why cannot they perish as they are? Why add sin to sin by insulting the Church through the cross of Christ?

When men make a profession of religion, and yet their works do not follow their faith, what about them? Why, this about them. They have dishonoured the Church, and, of all others, these are the people that make the world point to the Church and say, "Where is your religion? That is your religion, is it?" So it is when they find a man who professes to be in Christ, and yet walks not as Christ walked. These give the Church her wounds; she receives them in the house of her friends; these make the true ministers of God go to their closets with broken heart, crying out, "Oh! Lord, wherefore hast thou sent us to this people to speak and minister amongst them, that they should play the hypocrite before thee?" These are they that prevent the coming in of others, for others take knowledge of them, as they think religion is hypocrisy, and they are hindered, and, if not seriously, they get, at any rate, comfort in their sin from the iniquity of these professors. What their judgment will be when Christ appeareth it is not for my tongue to tell; in that day when, with tongue of fire, Christ shall search every heart, and call on all men to receive their judgment, what must be the lot of the base-born professor, who prostituted his profession to his own honour and gain? He sought not the glory of God. What shall be the thunder-bolt that shall pursue his guilty soul in its timorous flight to hell, and what the chains that are reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for those who are wells without water and clouds without rain? I cannot tell, and may God grant that you may never know. Oh! may we all tonight go to Christ to be our complete Saviour in very deed and truth. Then shall we be saved, and then, being saved, we shall seek to serve Christ with heart, and soul, and strength.

Lest I have missed my mark, this one illustration shall suffice, and I have done. There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot is come on board; he is standing on the deck, and he says to the captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that, if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save thy vessel. Do you promise it; do you believe in me?" They believe in him; they say they believe the pilot can save the vessel, and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," says he, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well, but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh! yes. Oh! yes, I have faith in him," he says;

"he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says have faith in him, and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast. "Now then, some of you; look alive, and reef that sail!" But he does not stir! "Why, captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." But "Oh!" says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh! no," says he; "I have great confidence in you. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you, had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued, and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot that had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works. Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.

I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him. I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized. "He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved." The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised ordinance of believers' baptism, and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh! I charge you by your soul's salvation neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason. Whatever he saith unto you, do it, for only by a child-like obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, "They that trust in him shall be saved." The Lord bless these words, for His name's sake. Amen.

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## The Fruitless Vine

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? - Ezekiel 15:1-2

The Jewish nation had arrogant ideas of themselves; when they sinned against God, they supposed that on account of the superior sanctity of their forefathers, or by reason of some special sanctity in themselves, they would be delivered, sin as they pleased. In consequence of the infinite mercy of Jehovah, which he had displayed toward them, in delivering them out of so many distresses, they gradually came to imagine that they were the favorite children of Providence, and that God could by no means ever cast them away. God, therefore, in order to humble their pride, tells them that they in themselves were nothing more than any other nation; and he asks them what there was about them to recommend them? "I have often called you a vine; I have planted you, and nurtured you in a very fruitful hill, but now you bring forth no fruit; what is there in you why I should continue you in my favor? If you imagine there is any thing about you more than about any other nation, you are mightily mistaken." "What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?"

Let us remember that these things might be said without implying that God in the least degree alters his eternal purpose toward any chosen vessel of mercy; for the Israelitish nation was not chosen to eternal salvation, as a nation, but chosen to special privileges; a type and shadow of that eternal personal election which Christ has given to his church. From his own elect church God will never withdraw his love; but from the outward and visible church he sometimes may. From his own people he never will take away his affection, but from professors, from those who merely stand in his people's external condition, and are not his children, he may, yea and he will, withdraw every token of his favor. God humbles Israel, by reminding them that they had nothing which other nations had not; that, in fact, they were a contemptible nation, not worthy to be set

side by side with the cedar of Babylon, or with the oak of Samaria; they were of no use, they were worthless, unless they brought forth fruit to him. He checks their pride and humbles them, with the parable we have here before us.

Beloved, we shall, by God's help, use this parable for ourselves, and learn two lessons from it. The first shall be a lesson of humility for saints; and the second, a lesson of searching for all who are professors.

I. First, here is A LESSON OF HUMILITY for all you who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." "What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?"

In looking upon all the various trees, we observe that the vine is distinguished among them; so that, in the old parable of Jotham, the trees waited upon the vine-tree, and said unto it, "Come thou and reign over us." But merely looking at the vine, without regard to its fruitfulness, we should not see any kingship in it over other trees. In size, form, beauty, or utility, it has not the slightest advantage. We can do nothing with the wood of the vine. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men make a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?" It is a useless plant apart from its fruitfulness. We sometimes see it in beauty, trained up by the side of our walls, and in the East it might be seen in all its luxuriance, and great care is bestowed in its training; but leave the vine to itself, and consider it apart from its fruitfulness, it is the most insignificant and despicable of all things that bear the name of trees. Now, beloved, this is for the humbling of God's people. They are called God's vine; but what are they by nature more than others? Others are as good as they; yea, some others are even greater and better than they. They, by God's goodness, have become fruitful, have been planted in a good soil; the Lord hath trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary, and they bring forth fruit to his glory. But what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit, begetting fruitfulness in them? Are they not the least among the sons of men, and the most to be despised of those that have been brought forth of women? Look upon this, believer.

"What was there in thee to merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?"

Yea, look upon thyself as thou art now. Doth not thy conscience reproach thee? Do not thy thousand wanderings stand before thee, and tell thee that thou art unworthy to be called his son? Does not the weakness of thy mental power, the frailty of thy moral power, thy continual unbelief, and thy perpetual backsliding from God, tell thee that thou art less than the least of all saints? And if he hath made thee any thing, art thou not thereby taught that it is grace, free, sovereign grace, which hath made thee to differ? Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know, that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of grace, and have not yet learned the gospel. If ever they had known the gospel, they would, on the other hand, confess that they were less than the least - the offscouring of all things - unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving, and hell-deserving, and ascribe it all to distinguishing grace, which has made them to differ; and to discriminating love, which has chosen them out from the rest of the world. Great Christian, thou wouldst have been a great sinner if God had not made thee to differ. O! thou who art valiant for truth, thou wouldst have been as valiant for the devil if grace had not laid hold of thee. A seat in heaven shall one day be thine; but a chain in hell would have been thine if grace had not changed thee. Thou canst now sing his love; but a licentious song might have been on thy lips, if grace had not washed thee in the blood of Jesus. Thou art now sanctified, thou art quickened, thou art justified; but what wouldst thou have been to-day if it had not been for the interposition of the divine hand? There is not a crime thou mightest not have committed; there is not a folly into which thou mightest not have run. Even murder itself thou mightest have committed if grace had not kept thee. Thou shalt be like the angels; but thou wouldst have been like the devil if thou hadst not been changed by grace. Therefore, never be proud; all thy garments thou hast from above; rags were thine only heritage. Be not proud, though thou hast a large estate, a wide domain of grace; thou hadst once not a single thing to call thine own, except thy sin and misery. Thou art now wrapped up in the golden righteousness of the Saviour, and accepted in the garments of the beloved; but thou wouldst have been buried under the black mountain of sin, and clothed with the filthy rags of unrighteousness, if he had not changed thee. And art thou proud? Dost thou exalt thyself? O! strange

mystery, that thou, who hast borrowed every thing, should exalt thyself; that thou, who hast nothing of thine own, but hast still to draw upon grace, shouldst be proud; a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of thy Saviour, and yet proud; one who hath a life which can only live by fresh streams of life from Jesus, and yet proud! Go, hang thy pride upon the gallows, as high as Haman; hang it there to rot, and stand thou beneath, and execrate it to all eternity; for sure of all things most to be cursed and despised is the pride of a Christian. He, of all men, has ten thousand times more reason than any other to be humble, and walk lowly with his God, and kindly and humbly toward his fellow-creatures. Let this, then, humble thee, Christian, that the vine-tree is nothing more than any other tree, save only for the fruitfulness which God has given it.

II. But now here comes A LESSON OF SEARCH. As the vine without its fruit is useless and worthless; so, too, the professor, without fruit, is useless and worthless; yea, he is the most useless thing in the wide world.

Now, let us dwell upon this point. A fruitless profession. And while I am preaching on it, let the words go round to each one, and let the minister, and let his deacons, and let his hearers all try their hearts and search their reins, and see whether they have a fruitless profession.

1. First, a fruitless professor. How do we know him? what is his character? Secondly, What is the reason he is fruitless? Thirdly, What is the estimation God holds him in? He is good for nothing at all. And, then, fourthly, What will be his end? He is to be burned with fire.

First, Where are we to find fruitless professors? Everywhere, dear friends, everywhere - down here, up there, everywhere; in pulpits and in pews. False professors are to be found in every church. Let us leave other denominations alone, then. They are to be found in this church; they are to be found in this present assembly. to whatever denomination you belong, there are some false and fruitless professors in it. How know you that you may not belong to those who bring forth no fruit? There are fruitless professors to be found in every position of the church, and in every part of society. You may find the false professor among the rich; he hath much wealth, and he is hailed with gladness by the church. God hath given him much of this world's good; and therefore, the church, forgetful

that God hath chosen the poor, giveth him honor, and what doth she get from him? She getteth but little to help her. Her poor are still neglected, and her means not in the least recruited by his riches. Or if she gain a portion of his riches, yet she getteth none of his prayers; nor is she in the least supported by his holy living, for he that hath riches often liveth in sin, and rolleth in uncleanness; and, then, weareth his profession as a uniform, wherewith to cover his guilt. Rich men have sometimes been false professors; and thy are to be found among poor men too. Full many a poor man has entered into the church, and been cordially received. He has been poor, and they have thought it a good thing that poverty and grace should go together - that grace should cheer his hovel, and make his poverty-stricken home a glad one. But then, this poor man hath turned aside to follies, and hath degraded himself with drunkenness, hath sworn, and by unworthy conduct dishonored his God; or, if not, he hath been idle, and sat still, and been of little service to the church; and so he hath been false and fruitless in his profession.

False professors are to be found in the men that lead the vanguard of God's army; the men who preach eloquently, whose opinion is law, who speak like prophets, and whose language seems to be inspired. They have brought forth the fruit of popularity, ay, and the fruit of philanthropy too, but their heart has not been right with God, therefore, the fruit, good in itself, was not fruit unto holiness; the moral benefit of their labors does not extend to everlasting life. They have not brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, seeing that they were not living branches of the living vine. Then there have been false professors in obscurity; modest people, who have said nothing, and seldom been heard of; they have glided into their pews on the Sunday morning, taken their seats, gone out, and satisfied themselves that by their presence they had fulfilled a religious duty. They have been so silent, quiet, and retired. Lazy fellows, doing nothing. You may think that all the fruitless trees grow in the hedge outside of the garden. No they don't. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it in the very center of it. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it in the very center of it. There are some false professors to be found in obscurity as well as in publicity; some among the poor as well as among the rich.

And there are false professors to be found among men that doubt a great



deal. They are always afraid they do not love Jesus, and always saying, "Ah, if I did but know I were his! -

"'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought."

Yes, and it ought to cause them anxious thought, too, if they are bringing forth no fruit and giving no "diligence to make their calling and election sure." Fruitless professors are to be found, on the other hand, among the confident men, who say, without a blush, "I know whom I have believed; I know I am a Christian, let who will doubt. I am sure and certain my sins can not destroy me, and my righteousness can not save me. I may do what I like; I know I am one of the Lord's." Ah! fruitless professor again; just as fruitless as the other man, who had all doubts and no faith, and did nothing for his Master.

And then there is the fruitless professor, who, when he is asked to pray at the prayer meeting, never does so; and who neglects family prayer. We will not say any thing about private devotion; no doubt he neglects that too: he is a fruitless one. Ah! but there may be another, who stands up and prays such an eloquent prayer for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, just as fruitless a professor as the silent one; with plenty of words, but no realities; many leaves, but no fruits; great gifts of utterance, but no gifts of consistency; able to talk well, but not to walk well; to speak piously, but not to walk humbly with his God, and serve him with gladness. I do not know your individual characters; but I know enough of you to say that your position, however honorable in the church, and your character, however fair before men, is not enough to warrant any of you in concluding at once that you are not a fruitless professor. For fruitless professors are of every character and every rank, from the highest to the lowest, from the most talented to the most illiterate, from the richest to the poorest, from the most retiring to the most conspicuous. Fruitless professors there are in every part of the church.

Now, shall I tell you who is a fruitless professor? The man who neglects private prayer, and does not walk with his God in public; that man whose carriage and conversation before God are hypocritical; who cheats in trade and robs in business, yet wraps it up, and comes out with a fair face,

like the hypocrite with a widow's house sticking in his throat, and says, "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are!" There is a man for you, who brings forth no fruit to perfection. Another one is he who lives right morally and excellently, and depends upon his works, and hopes to be saved by his righteousness; who comes before God, and asks for pardon, with a lie in his right hand, for he has brought his own self-righteousness with him. Such a man is a fruitless professor; he has brought forth no fruit. That man, again, is a fruitless professor who talks big words about high doctrine, and likes sound truth, but he does not like sound living; his pretensions are high, but not his practice. He can bear to hear it said,

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever.,"

But as for himself, he never was in Christ at all, for he neither loves nor serves his Master, but lives in sin that grace may abound. There is another fruitless vine for you.

But why need I stop to pick you out? May the Lord find you out to-night! There are many of you here, concerning whom the curse of Meroz might be uttered. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord; to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Many of you are content to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and bring forth no fruit to God; nor do you serve him - lazy Issachars, crouching down like a strong ass between two burdens; neither speaking for Christ; nor praying for Christ, nor giving to Christ, nor living to Christ; but having a name to live, while you are dead; wrapping yourselves up in a profession, while you are not living to Christ, nor consecrating your being to him. Judge ye what I say; if ye were put into the sieve this night, how many of you would come out clean in this matter? Are there not many high-flying professors here, who fly high, but who do nothing; who can talk fast, but live as slowly as you like; who, perhaps, delight in hearing the truth, but who never practice the truth in serving their God, nor living to his honor? Such as you, sirs, are the most useless and worthless of all creatures in the world! For, like the vine, you would be honorable if you were fruitful; but without fruit, as the vine is despicable, so are you good for nothing but to be cast out and burned.

2. And now I come to the second question - Why is it that these men are

fruitless, and must be cast away? The reason is, because they have no roots. Many, many professors have no roots; fine professors they are, beautiful to look at, but they have no roots whatever. Don't you remember your childish freak, when you had a little garden of your own; when you plucked some flowers, and put them in the ground, and said that was your garden; and when you went the next day, and found that all the flowers were withered and dead? Such are many professors - pretty flowers, plucked off without roots; having no adherence to the soil, drawing no sap and no nourishment from it. And therefore it is they die, and bring forth no fruit. You come to us; and say, "I wish to join the church." We question you as far as we are able; you solemnly tell us that your hearts are right with God. We baptize you, receive you into our number; but then there was no root in many of you, and after a while you die; when the sun has risen with a burning heat you perish; or if you maintain a tolerably fair profession, yet there is never any fruit upon you, because you did not get the root first; you got this notion first, and then thought you would get the root afterward. I do tremble for many young people in my church - I will not exclude my own church. They get an idea into their heads that they are converted: the work was not true, not genuine, not real; it was an excitement; it was a stir in the conscience for a while, and it will not last. But the worst of it is, that though it does not last, they last as professors. When they have been received into the church, they say, "I am sure enough!" Preach about them as long as you please, you can not get at them. They are church members, they are baptized persons, they have passed the Rubicon; what do they want more? You can do little for them. I do tremble for these. For my most hard-hearted hearers I weep before God; but for these people I need to have four eyes to weep with. For who can make an impression upon them, when they are firmly persuaded that they are right, and have had the seal of the church that they are right, though they are deceiving themselves and others, and are still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." My young friends, I do not want to check any of you in joining a church; but I do say to you, make sure work before you make a profession. I would say to as many of you as love the Lord, come forward and unite with God's people; but, I beseech you, do be sure; do "search you hearts and try your reins." Many have thought themselves converted when they were not; hundreds of thousands have had an impression, a

kind of conversion, not real, which for a while endured, but afterward it passed away as summer's dream. It was but a little while ago that I had in my house a gentleman, an excellent man, and I believe a true child of God, who told me he had been brought seriously under impression, on account of sin, through hearing a sermon of late. "But," said he, "I was baptized in my childhood. When I was but young, there was a revival in our village, in New England. Mine was the hardest heart in the village; but I was found out at last. There was scarcely a girl or boy that did not join the church, and I was at last brought under deep impression. I used to weep before God, and pray to him. I went to the minister and told him I was converted, deceived him, and was baptized." And then he went on to tell me that he had dived into the blackest crimes, and gone far away, even from the profession of religion; that after going to college he had been struck off the church-roll on account of wickedness, and that up to this time he had been an infidel, and had not so much as thought of the things of the kingdom. Take heed, many of you, that you do not get a sham religion. Many jump out of it again, when they find the world pays them better. And many there are who will just come and say they are the Lord's, and they think they are, but there is no root in them, and therefore by-and-by their impressions pass away. O we have many fruitless professors in our midst, because they do not look well to their beginnings; they did not take heed at their starting point, they did not watch well the first dawn; they thought the little farthing rushlight of their own hopes was the dawning of the Sun of righteousness; they thought the bleeding of their own conscience was a killing by the hand of God, whereas it was a deeper, and better and surer, and more entire work that they needed, than that which they received. Let us take heed, my brethren, that we do not put too much trust in our experiences, and take too much for granted while it is not yet proved in our beginnings; let us often go back and begin again; let us often go to Christ with the old cry,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;"

For remember that these bad beginnings have had a great effect in making a man fruitless.

3. And again, thirdly - What is God's estimation of fruitless professors? I

shall not ask you their own; for there are many men who are professors of religion, with whom you might make your fortune very speedily if you could buy them at your price and sell them at their own. There are many, too, that have a very good opinion of themselves, which they have gained from the church. The minister thinks well of them; the church thinks well of them; they are respectable people; it is so nice to have them come, it helps the cause so, to see such respectable people sitting in the pews! Really, I do think he would do for a deacon! Everybody thinks well of him. Now we have nothing to do with this kind of opinion to-night; our business is with God's opinion of such a man. And God's opinion of a man who makes a profession without being sincere, is this - that he is the most useless thing in the world. And now let me try to prove it. Is there any one that will prove that this man is of any use at all? I will ask the church - Here is a man that brings forth no fruit, and has only a profession. Members of the church, what is the use of this man? Will he comfort any of you in your distress? Will he hold up the pastor's hands in prayer, when he is weary? Will he lead the troops to battle? Will he be of any service to you? I see you unanimously lift up your hands, and say, "The man is of no use to us whatever, if he brings forth no fruit; if his life be not consistent with his profession; strike his name off the church-roll; let him go; he is of no use." Where has he gone to? He has gone to the world. Bring the worldling up. What do you think of this man? He makes a profession of religion. Is he of any use to you? "No," they say, "we do not want such a fellow as that. The man is Jack-of-both-sides; he is sometimes a professor of religion, and sometimes a sinner in the world. We will have nothing to do with him; turn him out of our company." Where shall we sell him then? How shall we dispose of him? He seems to be of no use either to the church or the world. Is he of any use to his family? Ask his eldest son. "John, is your father any good to you?" "No, sir; none at all. He used to pray the Lord to save us with seeming earnestness, and rise from his knees to give vent to his temper. Many a violent blow has he given me without any reasonable provocation. He was always a passionate man. He used to go to chapel on Sunday and take us with him and then we know what he used to do on Monday; he would get drunk, or swear. A deal of use he was ever to me! He made me an infidel, sir!" And his wife, "Well, what do you think of this good husband of yours? He has long made a profession of religion." "Ah! sir, it is not for

me to say a word about my husband; but he has made me a miserable woman. I think I should have joined your church long ago, if it had not been for his miserable inconsistencies. But really he has grieved my heart; he has always been a stumbling-block to me; and what to do with him I do not know." Well, Jane, we will have you out of the kitchen. "What think you of your master; he makes a profession of religion, yet does not live a right life. What do you think of him?" "Well, I did think that Christians were a good sort of people, and that I should like to live with them; but if this be Christianity, sir, I will take five pounds a year less to live with a worldly man; that's all I can say." Well, what is the use of him? I suppose he does something in business. He is a grand professor. He keeps a shop; everybody thinks him a most respectable man. Has he not given a hundred pounds just now to the building of a new church? Is he not always known to subscribe liberally to ragged schools? We will ask his men. "What do you think of your master?" "What do we think of him? Why, we would think a great deal more of him if he would give us a half-crown a week more wages; for he is the worst paymaster in the parish." "That is nothing, perhaps. But what do you think of him?" "Why, that he is an unutterable cant! Some of us did go to a place of worship, but we are honest, and we would rather stay away than go with such a miserable hypocrite." I am describing real cases and not fictions. I need not to go further than between this and London Bridge to knock at the door and wake them up, some of them. What is the good of such professors? If they would speak fairly out, and say, "I am no Christian," there would be some sense in it. For if Baal be God, let Baal be served; and if the world be worth serving, let a man serve it out and out; and let him get the credit of candor - not cheating the devil. But if God be God, and a man live in sin, and talk about grace, then of what use is he? God himself will disown him. Ask him if this man has been of any use, and he replies, "No, of no use whatever." The vine is of no use unless it bring forth fruit; and this man, making a profession, is worse than worthless, because he does not live up to it. My dear friends, I would not say an extravagant thing, but I will say this very coolly - if any of you, who make a profession of religion, are deceiving others, by not living up to it, I do request you - and I say it advisedly - I do request you to give up your profession, unless God give you grace to live up to it. Do not, I beseech you, halt between two opinions; if God be God, serve him, and do it thoroughly; do not tell lies

about it. If Baal be God; if he be a nice master; if you would like to serve him, and win his wages, serve him; but do not mix the two together; be one thing, or else the other. Renounce your profession, and serve the devil thoroughly, or else keep your profession, and serve God with your heart - one thing, or else the other. I solemnly exhort you to choose which you will have, but never think that you can keep both; for "no man can serve two masters." "Ye can not serve God and mammon."

4. And now let me close up by mentioning what is to become of this fruitless tree? We are told it is to be devoured in the fire. When an old vine is pulled off the wall, after having brought forth no fruit, what becomes of it? You know there is a lot of weeds raked up in the corner of the garden, and the gardener, without taking any notice of it, just throws the vine on the heap of weeds, and it is burned up. If it were any other kind of a tree he would at least reserve it for chopping up to make a fire within the master's house; but this is much an ignominious thing, he throws it away in the corner and burns it up with the weeds. If it were a stout old oak, it might have the funeral of the yule log, with honor in its burning, and brightness in its flame; but the fruitless vine is treated with contempt, and left to smoulder with the weeds, the refuse, and rubbish. It is a miserable thing. Just so with professors; all men that love not God must perish. But those who profess to love him, and do not, shall perish with singular ignominy. "They shall not come into the sepulchres of the kings." Something like the ancient king, of whom it was said, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." The damnation of a professor will be the most horrible and ignominious sight that ever hell itself has seen! When Satan fell from heaven, with his black Satanic malice against God, there was a kind of grandeur in his devilry; there was an awful, terrific sublimity in his damnation; and when a great blasphemer and a hard swearer shall be sent at last to perdition, there shall be something of sublimity in it, because he has been consistent with his profession. But when a professor of religion finds himself in hell, it shall be the most miserable, contemptible, and yet terrible mode of damnation wherewith men were ever damned. I think I see honest blasphemers lifting themselves from their chains of fire, and hissing between their teeth at the minister who comes there, after having been a deceiver - "Aha! aha! aha! art thou here

with us? Thou didst warn us of our drunkenness, and tell us of our curse; ah! art thou come into the drunkard's hell thyself?" "Pshaw!" says another, "that is your strict Pharisee. Ah! I remember how he told me one night that I should perish, unless I made a profession of religion. Take that, sir!" and he spits upon him. "Thou art a loathsome thing. I perished; but I served my master well. Thou - thou didst pretend to serve God, and yet thou art a sneaking hypocrite!" Says another, yelling from the corner of the pit, "Let us have a Methodist hymn, sir; quote a promise from the Bible; tell us about election. Let us have a little of your fine preaching now." And round hell there goes the hiss, and the "aha! aha! aha!" and the yell of spitefulness and scorn upon the man who professed to be a Christian, but became a castaway, because his heart was not right in the matter. I confess, I should dread above all things the unutterable hell of hells of hypocritical apostates, of men that stand in the ranks, profess to love God, prate godliness, that sit in the pews and uphold Christianity, that take the sacrament, and speak about communion, that stand up to pray, and talk about being heard for their faith, who are all the while committing abominations, and under cover of their professions are cheating the poor, robbing the fatherless, and doing all kinds of iniquity. I confess, I as much dread the excess of their damnation, above the damnation of others, as I dread to be damned at all. It is as if in hell another hell had been made, to damn those that sin above others, to damn them after being damned - for hypocrites, for men who have been with us, and not of us; who professed to be Christ's, and yet have been mean deceivers after all. O! sirs, if ye would not make your chains more heavy, if ye would not stir the fire to a more furious heat, if ye would not make your yells more hideous, quit your professions this night, if ye are not worthy of them. Go out of this place, and send in your resignation to the church; or else, sirs, be honest, and bend your knee before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and make you sincere and upright before him. Be one thing, or else the other; do not cloak yourself in the robes of sanctity to hide the corruptions that all the while fester beneath. Stand out, bold, brave sinners; and do not be mean, sneaking sinners, that wear the masks of saints. "What is the vine more than any other tree?" Without fruit it is worse than any other. It must perish more dolefully, more horribly than any other, if there be on it no fruit brought to perfection. Does not this shake us? Ah! it will shake you, very likely,



that do not want the shaking; but the men that want arousing will keep just as they were. It will go into the hearts of some of you, like the cry, "Howl, Moab, howl, Moab!" but alas! Moab will not howl. You will weep for Kirhareseth but Kirhareseth will not weep for herself. You will weep for your hypocritical friends; but they will rub their eyes, and say, "A strong sermon; but it has nothing to do with me." And they will go out with cool presumption; sin with one hand, and take the sacramental cup with the other; sing the lascivious song one night, and then sing,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,"

the day after. Meet Christ here, and take the devil yonder, and bid him God speed in all his freaks of devilry. Ah! sirs, sirs, sirs, take heed, take heed, I beseech you, of this matter. Let us each search our hearts, lest we should have been deceived. And may God bring us to a right understanding in this matter, that we may be clear before him. "Search me, O God, and know my ways; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked thing in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

And, now, I must not send you away until I have had a word with my friend in the aisle there. He says, "I like that, I like that; I am no professor, I am not; I am all right. No one can call me a hypocrite." Well, my dear friend, I am very glad you are not, because you say you are no Christian. But let me tell you, you must not expect to be a wonderful deal the better off for that. Suppose two men are brought up before the Lord Mayor, and one says, "Your worship, I am an honest man and not guilty;" and he blushes that an imputation should be cast on his character. Well, he is proved to be guilty, and gets committed to prison for three months. Up comes the other one, and says, "Your worship, I am a guilty man; I always was a rogue, and I always shall be; I don't make a profession at all." "I think I must give you six months," says his worship, "for really I think you must be the more determined rascal of the two." So if any of you say, "I don't make a profession, I shall be all right," let me tell you, that to make a lying profession is a very fearful thing; but for you to think of getting off because you make no profession at all, is equally bad. Take heed you do not deceive yourselves; it must be the new heart and the right spirit with God, or else, profession or no profession, we must perish. O! that God would give us grace to go to our houses, and cry to him for

mercy, and would help us to repent of our sins, and bring us to put our trust simply and wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ! So should we be saved now, and saved for ever.

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## **Sin And Grace**

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. - Romans 5:20

There are two very powerful forces in the world, which have been here ever since the time when Eve partook of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Those two forces are sin and grace. A very great power is sin, a power dark, mysterious, baleful, but full of force. The sorrows of mankind, whence came they but from sin? We should have known no war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor would aught of sickness or sorrow ever have smitten the human race had not sin sown its evil seed in this earth. Sin is the Pandora's box from which all evil has come to mankind. See what ravages death has made; its hillocks are everywhere. Its mighty scythe mows men down as the mower cuts down the grass of the field; but death came by sin and after death comes judgment, and, to the ungodly, the doom that never can be desired, the eternal wrath whose blackness the wildest tempest cannot imitate. Who digged this pit? It was the justice of God on account of sin, and sin must therefore be charged with the authorship of sorrow, disease, death, and hell. This is no mean power with which we have come into conflict; it is a veritable Goliath, stalking along and defying the whole race of mankind.

The power that is to fight and overcome sin is ever described in the Word of God, as the natural goodness of human nature, Pshaw! That is but as wax before the fire, or as the fat of rams upon the altar; it is consumed in a moment in the fierce heat of sin. The force to combat sin is never

described, in the truthful pages of God's Word, as the power of human endeavor to keep the law. Indeed, this has been tried, and it has utterly failed. The way to heaven is not up the steep sides of Sinai; that granitic mountain is too rugged and too high for unaided human feet to climb. Not there can be found the weapons with which a man may slay his sins, and fight his way to everlasting bliss.

The only counter force against sin is grace; so my text tells us, and we may learn the same truth from a hundred texts besides. And what is grace? Grace is the free favor of God, the undeserved bounty of the ever-gracious Creator against whom we have offended, the generous pardon, the infinite, spontaneous lovingkindness of the God who has been provoked and angered by our sin, but who, delighting in mercy, and grieving to smite the creatures whom he has made, is ever ready to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and to save his people from all the evil consequences of their guilt. Here, my brethren and sisters in Christ, is a force that is fully equal to the requirements of the duel with sin; for this grace, of which I am going to speak, is divine grace, and hence it is omnipotent, immortal, and immutable. This favor of God never changes; and when once it purposes to bless anyone, bless him it will, and none can revoke the blessing. The gracious purpose of God's free favor to an undeserving man is more than a match for that man's sin, for it brings to bear, upon his sin, the blood of the incarnate Son of God, and the majestic and mysterious fire of the eternal Spirit, who burns up evil and utterly consumes it. With God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost united against sin, the everlasting purposes of grace are bound to be accomplished, sin must be overcome and my text proved to be true, "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound."

I. To illustrate the great principle of my text, I ask you to notice, first, that the context refers us to THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAW. "The law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Instead of giving any historical statement concerning the introduction of the law in the days of Moses, I am going to speak about the experimental matter of the introduction of the law of God into our hearts. Those of you who have been converted remember the time when the law of the Lord

first entered your heart. The law engraved on the two tables of stone, the law recorded in the Bible, does but very little for us; but when the law really enters our heart, it does much for us. What does it do?

The first thing the law does to most men is to develop the sin that is in them. Paul writes, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." But, as soon as he found that there was a law against a certain sin, by some unhallowed instinct of his unrenewed nature, he wanted to do the very thing that he was forbidden to do. It was like that with us, the first effect of the entrance of the law of God into our hearts was to develop the sin that was already within us. "That is a dreadful thing," says one. Yes, it is; but look at the matter from another aspect. Here is a man who has within him a dire disease which will be fatal if it is allowed to remain, so the physician gives him some medicine which throws the disease out. The man used to have a beautiful complexion, but after he has taken that medicine, his face is covered with blotches. Is that a bad thing? Yes, the blotches are bad, but the hidden disease was worse. While that disease was concealed within his system, and was killing him, he probably did not even know that it was there. He knew that he was not well, and perhaps thought that he was dying as the result of some other complaint; but now he sees what the disease is, and everybody sees it, and now that which looked like an evil thing may turn out to be for real good to the man. So does it often happen mentally, morally, and spiritually. A man's wicked heart is full of enmity against God, yet he thinks—and perhaps he is right in thinking—that he is outwardly a strictly moral man; but, lo! the law of God, with its requirements of perfect purity and Absolute obedience, enters his heart, and he rebels against it, and now the sin is apparent, even to himself. It is likely now that this man will repent of sin, it is highly probable that this development of his latent sin will lead him to form a different opinion of himself from any that he ever had before; and therefore, though the sin is evil, and the development of it is evil, yet, where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound, and so good shall come out of the evil after all.

When the law enters a man's heart, it also brings his sin out in very strong relief. He never saw his sin to be so black as he now sees it to be. A stick is

crooked, but you do not notice how crooked it is until you place a straight rule by the side of it. You have a handkerchief, and it seems to be quite white; you could hardly wish it to be whiter; but you lay it down on the newly-fallen snow, and you wonder how you could ever have thought it to be white at all. So the pure and holy law of God, when our eyes are opened to see its purity, shows up our sin in its true blackness, and in that way it makes sin to abound; but this is for our good, for that sight of our sin awakens us to a sense of our true condition, leads us to repentance, drives us by faith to the precious blood of Jesus, and no longer permits us to rest in our self-righteousness; and so it can be said of us that, though the entrance of the law has made our sin to abound, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

The entrance of the law of God into the heart very generally causes great anguish. Well do I remember that experience, and so do some of you. When the law entered our hearts, it came not merely with a straight rule, and with a perfect pattern of whiteness, to show us our deformity and our blackness, but it also came with a heavy whip; and it laid that whip about our shoulders, and every time it fell it stung us to the quick. A little while ago, I met with a brother who said to me, "You cannot too forcibly describe the anguish of a convicted conscience; for," said he, "I remember when I reckoned how long it would be before I must, in the ordinary course of nature, be in hell. I said to myself, 'Suppose I live to be eighty years of age, yet how short a time it will be before I must be enduring the infinite wrath of God.'" Yes, that is the effect that the law of the Lord often produces upon a man when it enters his heart. It brings a mirror before him, and says to him "Look in there, and see not only what you have done, but also what is the just consequence of your evil deeds." A man no longer cavils at God's justice when the law once gets inside his heart; it shuts his mouth except for groans and sighs, and he has plenty of them.

It may be thought, by some people, to be a very sad thing that the law should come into a man's heart to break it, and to cause him such sorrow and anguish as I am trying to describe. Ah, but it is not so; it is a very blessed thing. You cannot expect God to clothe you until he has stripped you, nor to heal you until he has cut the proud flesh out of your wounds.

When a woman is sowing with a fine white silken thread, she must have a sharp needle to go first, to make a way for the thread to go through after it; and the anguish of spirit, which the law creates in the soul, is just the sharp needle which makes a way for the fine silken thread of the gospel to enter our heart, and so to bless us. Let us thank God if ever we have experienced the entrance of his law into our hearts: for, although it makes sin to abound, it makes grace much more abound.

When the law gets thoroughly into a man's heart, it drives him to despair of himself. "Oh!" says he, "I cannot keep that law." Once, he thought that he was as good as other people, and a little better than most; and he did not know but that, with a little polishing, and a little help, he might be good enough, to win the favor of God and go to heaven; but when the law entered his heart, it soon smashed his idol to atoms. The Dagon of self-righteousness speedily falls before the ten commands of God, and is so broken that it can never be mended. Men try to set the stump of it up on its pedestal again; but so long as the law of the Lord is in the same temple with self-righteousness, self-righteousness can never be exalted again. To some people, it seems to be a dreadful thing to give a man such a bad opinion of himself, but, indeed, it is the greatest blessing that could come to him, for when he despairs of himself, he will fly to Christ to save him. When the last crust is gone from his cupboard, he will cry to the great Giver of the bread of life, whereof, if a man eat, he shall live for ever. You must starve the sinner's self-righteousness to make him willing to feed on Christ; and thus the very depths of his despair, when he thinks that he must be lost for ever, will only lead him, by God's abundant love, to a fuller appreciation of the heights of God's grace.

Once more, when the law of God enters a man's heart, it pronounces a curse upon him. That was a singular scene which was beheld over against mount Ebal, and over against mount Gerizim, where one company read the curses, and another company read the blessings out of the book of the law. Now the law can do nothing for a sinner but say to him, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" but the gospel comes in, and it replies to the curse of the law with such words as these, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord

impuneth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Let the law curse as is may, the gospel's blessing is richer and stronger, for the gospel says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

II. Now I change our line of thought, and come closer home to Christians, by noticing that the great principle of our text is also illustrated in THE AFTER-EXPERIENCE OF THE BELIEVER.

Some young converts imagine that, as soon as they believe in Christ and find peace with God, they will be perfect; and have no more sin within them. Such an erroneous idea will only prepare them for a great disappointment, for conversion is not the end of the battle with sin, it is only the beginning of that battle. From the moment that a man believes in Jesus, and is thereby saved, he begins his life-long struggle against his inbred sins. I hear that, there are some brethren and sisters who have become perfect, and I am pleased to hear it if it is true: but I am glad they are not members of my family, I do not think I could live with them very peaceably, as I have generally found that the so-called "perfect." People are usually not at all pleasant people to be associated with those of us who do not profess to be perfect. We wish we were perfect, and we wish that other people were perfect; but, hitherto, our investigations have led us to believe that the perfection which is claimed by certain persons is in every case a mistake, and in many cases is a delusion and a sham.

Our opinion is that men, after they are converted, and begin to examine themselves in the light of God's Word, if they are at all like us, find sin everywhere within them;—sin in the affections, so that the hearts lusteth after evil things;—sin in the judgment, so that it often makes most serious mistakes, and honestly puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—sin in the desires, so that though we try to curb them, they wander hither and thither, whither we would not;—sin in the will, so that Lord Will-be-will proves that he is still very proud, and wants to have his own way,—and is not willing to bow submissively to the will of God;—sin in the memory, so that the most godly people can often recollect a snatch of a bad old song which they used to hear or to sing, far more readily than they can

remember a text of Scripture; which they wish to treasure up in their memories, for memory has become unhinged, like all the rest of our faculties, and is quick to retain evil, and slow to retain that which is good. Brethren and sisters in Christ, in what part of our body does sin not dwell? Is there any single faculty, or power, or propensity that we have which will not lead us astray if we will let it do so? Are we not obliged to be always upon our guard against ourselves, and to watch ourselves as a garrison of soldiers would have to watch the natives of a country whom they had subdued, but who were anxious to throw off the yoke of the foreigners who had overcome them. In a similar fashion, grace is a foreigner in possession of our nature, and it holds by its own superior force what it has won; and only by its supernatural strength are we kept from regaining our former position.

Thus you see how sin abounds, even in the heart of a believer; but, blessed be God, grace doth much more abound there; for, although the will is still strong, there is a higher power that subdues and controls it so that our will is being gradually conformed to the will of God. Our affections, though they are apt to grovel here below, do soar towards Christ, for he really has won our hearts. Our desires do go astray, yet their main tendency is towards holiness. Blessed be the name of the Lord, unless we are awfully deceived, we do desire to do that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Our memory, too, though I have already confessed its faultiness, does often enable us to remember Jesus Christ, and it never will forget him whoever else it may forget. Ay, and our whole nature, though I have truly spoken of its faults, is a new nature, which God has wrought within us,—a nature that is akin to the divine, and in this nature grace triumphs over sin, so that where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound.

The same truth may be learned in another way. Sin abounds in the believer, not merely in the shape of the original sin in which he was born, and in the tendency to sin which is ever present with him, but sin mars the best thing he ever does. Did you ever examine one of your own prayers, did you ever look at it critically after it was finished? Shall I tell you what it was like? It was like something that man had manufactured, and which, when observed by the naked eye, looked very beautiful. Put a



microscope over it, and look at it. Take a needle if you like, for that seems to be one of the most polished pieces of metal conceivable; and as soon as you place it under the microscope, you say, "Why, I have got a rough bar of iron here! Surely it cannot be a needle." Yes it is, but you are looking at it now with a power far beyond your ordinary sight; and, in like manner, when the grace of God opens a man's eyes to see his best actions as they appear in God's sight, he sees that those actions are marred by sin. There is not anything that he has done which appears to him to be what it ought to be when he looks at it aright in the light of God's Word. The most consecrated action of his life, the most devout communion with Christ, the most intense ardor after God, falls far short of what it ought to be, and has something in it which ought not to be there. When the grace of God is strong within us, it makes sin appear to abound even to our own vision; we see it in every hymn we sing, in every prayer we pray, in every sermon we preach.

Not only do we see sin in our best things, but we also discover sin in our omissions. We were never troubled about that matter before, but now we recollect that what we do not do is often sinful;—not merely the wrong that we commit, but the good that we omit, the good that we neglect or forget to do. There is much sin there. Then we begin to examine our thoughts, and our trivial utterances, and we see them all crusted over with sin. Tested under the light of God's Word, everything seems to be honeycombed through and through with sin, so that sin indeed aboundeth. Well, what then? Why, then, this blessed text comes sweetly home to our hearts. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And now, how gloriously grace abounds! Now we prove the power of that precious blood which can wash us whiter than snow, so that God himself shall say to each one of us, "There is no spot in thee." Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I do firmly believe that a deep and clear sense of sin is necessary to a right estimation of the power of pardoning love. I am sure that it is a great blessing to us when we have a deep sense of our sinnership. God forbid that we should ever pray as the Pharisee did, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." Far better would it be for us to imitate the publican, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." None but those who are lost prize the Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost, none but those who feel that they

are foul and vile rightly value his cleansing blood. O beloved, when your sin abounds, then is the time to recollect that grace much more abounds. Sinner as you are, you are forgiven, you are "accepted in the Beloved," you are saved, you are a child of God, you shall be in heaven ere long, to praise for ever the grace that shall be crowned with glory.

Once more on this point. I believe that many of you have had an experience similar to mine, and that there have been times when you have been living specially near to God, and walking in the light of his countenance, when, on a sudden, the sin that dwelleth in you has seemed to attack you just when you least expected it. I know that my fiercest temptations often come to me immediately after my highest enjoyment of communion with God. They seem to come like a sharp draught of cold air the moment you step out of a warm room, and you hardly know what to do for the best, you are scarcely prepared for it. It will sometimes happen that a tempter, which you thought you had quite overcome, will rush upon you like a lion out of a thicket; or a passion, which you thought had been most eventually conquered, will come sweeping down upon you like a hurricane from the hills, and your poor little skiff upon the lake seems well-nigh overwhelmed with its furious onslaught. Then, as you look at yourselves, and are surprised to find so much sin in yourselves, you know that sin abounds; what do you do then? Well, I believe that, at such times, Christians try to nestle closer than ever under the wings of God, and they feel humbler, and they go to the precious blood of Jesus with a more intense desire to prove again its cleansing power; and they cry to the Strong for strength, and they feel more than ever they did before their need of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power. Ralph Erskine said that he was more afraid of a sleeping devil than of a roaring devil, and there was good reason for his fear, for when the devil was roaring, the saints would be more on the watch than when he was quiet. The worst temptation in the world is not to be tempted at all; but when there is a strong temptation, and your soul is fully aware of it, you are on your guard against it. The wave of temptation may even wash you higher up upon the Rock of ages, so that you cling to it with a firmer grip than you have ever done before, and so again where sin abounds, grace will much more abound.

III. Now I must close with a few general observations upon another matter. The great truth revealed in our text is not only illustrated by the entrance of the law into the hearts of believers, and in the after-life of Christians, but also IN ALL THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION.

It is very wonderful, but it is certainly true, that there are many persons in heaven in whom sin once abounded. In the judgment of their fellow-men, some of them were worse sinners than others. There was Saul of Tarsus, there was the dying thief, there was the woman in the city who was a sinner,—a sinner in a very open and terrible sense. These, and many more of whom we read in the Scriptures, were all great sinners, and it was a great wonder of grace, in every instance, that they should be forgiven; but did they make poor Christians when they were converted? Quite the reverse; they loved much because they had been forgiven much. Amongst the best servants of God are many of those who were once the best servants of the devil. Sin abounded in them, but grace much more abounded when. It took possession of their hearts and lives. They were long led captive by the devil at his will, but they never were such servants to Satan as they afterwards became to the living and true God. They threw all the fervor of their intense natures into the service of their Savior, and so rose superior to some of their fellow-disciples, who did not so fully realize how much they owed to their Lord. I trust that any here present, who have gone far in sin, may be saved by the immeasurable grace of God ere they leave this building, and that, throughout the whole of their future lives, they may love Jesus Christ better, and serve him more than others who have not sinned as deeply as they have.

The same truth comes out if we think of what sin has done for us. O brethren, sin has infected the nature of man with a foul leprosy, a deadly disease, but Jesus has cured the disease, and given us a life of a holier kind than we ever knew before. Sin has robbed us; but Christ has restored to us more than sin ever took away from us. Sin has stripped us; but Christ has clothed us in a better robe than our natural righteousness could ever have been. Well do we sing of Jesus,—

"In him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost."

Sin has brought us very low, but Christ has lifted us higher than we stood before sin cast us down. Sin took away from man his love to God, but Christ has given us an intenser love to God than Adam ever had, for we love God because he has first loved us, and given his Son to die for us, and we have, in his greater grace, a good reason for yielding to him a greater love. Sin took away obedience from man, but now that saints obey to a yet higher degree than they could have done before; for I suppose it would not been possible for unfallen man to suffer, but now we are capable of suffering for Christ; and many martyrs have gone signing to death for the truth, because, while sin made them capable of suffering, Christ's grace has made them capable of obedience to him in the suffering, and so of doing more to prove their allegiance to God than would have been possible if they had never fallen. Sin, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, has shut us out of Eden; yet let us not weep, for Christ has prepared a better paradise for us in heaven; Sin has deprived us of the river that rippled o'er sands of gold, and of the green glades of that blessed garden into which suffering could never have come unless sin had first entered, but God has provided for us "a pure river of water of life," and a lovelier garden than Eden ever was; and there we shall for ever dwell through the abounding grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which has abounded even over our abounding sin.

Sin has separated us from God, but grace has brought us nearer to God than we ever were before sin divided us from him. Until Christ became man, there was no man on the earth, and there would have been no man, who was more to God than man could be to his Maker; but now there lives a Man who is more to God than any created being ever could be, for that Man is also God, and he sits at the right hand of his Father, and shares with him the control of the universe. That Man has brought the human race nearer to the Deity than the mere act of creation could possibly have done. Glory be to God for Jesus Christ, the Man from heaven, the Son of Mary, and the Son of the Highest. Sin wrought us untold mischief, but grace has made even that mischief to be a gain to us, for now we are sought with blood as, otherwise, we never could have been. Now we know both sin and righteousness as we could not otherwise have done; and now the whispering of the old serpent, which was a lie, has proved to have a truth concealed in it, for we are indeed as gods, since

we have become partakers of the divine nature by virtue of our union with the Christ of God. O wondrous Fall, which would have broken us hopelessly had it not been for still more marvelous grace! O wondrous restoration which has lifted us up, and made us more perfect than we were before we were broken, and elevated us to a glory of which we could never have dreamed, had we lived with Adam and Eve in paradise, and remained in innocence for ever!

One practical remark I want to make before I close; it is this, if you have received this grace, which has abounded over your sin, take care that you do more for grace than you ever did for sin. It is wonderful how much people will do for sin, what they will give, what they will spend, and what they will endure to gratify their passions and serve their cruel taskmaster, Satan. I should not like to guess what some men waste on their lusts; I should not like to make a calculation as to what some people spend in a year on what they call their pleasures. Well, whatever the amount is, shall they give more, shall they do more for their god than we give and do for ours? Shall they be more intense in their adoration of Satan than we are in our obedience to God? That must never be, nor must we ever permit, them to outdo us in the praises of their treasure. They make night hideous with their praises of their god, Bacchus; but we do not often annoy them with the songs of Zion; it would be as well, perhaps, if we did; but we are often cowards in not rendering due praises to our God. They are not ashamed to make the welkin ring with their lascivious notes; then let us pluck up courage, and solidly assert the glories of our God and the wonders of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Especially, let us never be ashamed to say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me, and blessed be his holy name for ever and ever. Amen."

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# Full Redemption

There shall not a hoof be left behind. - Exodus 10:26

The controversy between Jehovah, the God of the whole earth, and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was intended to be remembered, and spoken of throughout all generations. On that occasion, God permitted human nature to arrive at its highest degree of stubbornness and obstinacy; but he, nevertheless, cowed it, and overcame it. He did indeed raise up Pharaoh for this purpose, that he might show forth his power in him. Pharaoh, as an absolute monarch, is permitted to go to the utmost degree of hardness of heart, and yet the Lord would show to all coming generations that his decrees shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. You will remember that the quarrel was on this wise - God had sent his people into Egypt in the olden times, there to dwell in the land of Goshen. They had multiplied exceedingly, they had been favourably treated by succeeding kings, till at length a new king arose who knew not Joseph. He began to oppress the people, but the more he oppressed them, the more they increased. He made their lives bitter with hard bondage. In mortar and in rick, and in all manner of service of the field, did he make them to serve with rigour. Probably they were employed in building many of those mighty piles, the pyramids, which now stand upon the plains of Egypt. He subjected them to the most rigorous tasks; they worked under the whip continually, and had to make bricks without straw, the hardest possible exaction that even a tyrant could have imagined. At last the cry of the people went up to their God in heaven. He saw their affliction, he heard their cry, he knew their sorrows, and he determined, with his own bare arm, to be avenged on Pharaoh, and to bring out all his people, the seed of Jacob, from their house of bondage. He raised up Moses, and he sent him in with this message to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me." Pharaoh laughs at it; "Ye are idle," saith he, "ye are idle, ye shall not go." A plague at once is God's answer to Pharaoh's laughter; he turns their water into blood, and the fish that was in the river died. Pharaoh gives way a little; for, if he must yield, it must be by degrees. "You shall have," says he, "two or three days of rest, to serve your God, but it must be in this land." "Nay," says Moses, "We

cannot serve our God in this land, we must go forth into the wilderness." Pharaoh bids them begone. Another plague, and yet another. And now Pharaoh yields thus far. "They may go into the wilderness, but they must not go very far." "Nay, but," says Moses, "we will have no such stipulation." Pharaoh, therefore, again deals deceitfully, again refuses, again grows angry, and waxes proud; and God smites the land with lice, with flies, with a very grievous murrain, with all manner of plagues. Then Pharaoh says, "You may go, you may go into the wilderness; but only the strong men among you shall go; ye shall leave your wives, and your little ones." "Nay," says Moses, "we must all go, with our wives, and with our little ones, must we serve the Lord our God." Pharaoh again refuses; his heart is hardened; he will not yield. Moses, at the command of the Lord, then stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt, even darkness that might be felt. Then Pharaoh's subjects clamoured to him, "Let these men go." Pharaoh yields this, "For," he says, "You shall go, your wives, and your little ones, but you shall leave your cattle and your goods behind." "Nay," saith Moses, "We must have all or none; not a hoof shall be left behind." Not a single sheep shall stay in Egypt; the whole of God's host, and all they have, their sick, their young, their aged, and all their possessions must go forth out of Egypt. And you will remember, that the Lord never yielded a single point to Pharaoh, but exacted all of him, and at last buried him with his horses, and his riders, in the depths of the sea.

Now, it seems to me, that this grand quarrel of old is but a picture of God's continual contest with the powers of darkness. The mandate has gone forth to earth and hell: "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me." "No," saith Satan, "they shall not." And if he be compelled to yield one point, he still retains his hold upon another. If he must give way, it shall be inch by inch. Evil is hard in dying; it will not readily be overcome. But this is the demand of God, and to the last will he have it. "All my people;" the whole of, ever one of them, and all that my people have possessed, all shall come out of the land of Egypt. Christ will have the whole; he will not be contented with a part, and this he vows to accomplish. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

I think you will now see the drift of the discourse. I use the text as an

aphorism, which I hope to be enabled to illustrate. God bless it to our souls. "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Christ will have all that he has died to purchase; all that he has bought with blood he will have; not a fraction of the purchased possession will he lose.

First then, Christ will have the whole man - "Not a single hoof shall be left behind." In the next place, he will have the whole church - "Not a single hoof shall be left behind." In the next place, he will have the whole of the lost inheritance of his church - "Not a hoof shall be left behind;" and at last, in the fourth place, to conclude, he will have the whole world to serve him - "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

I. First, then, Christ have THE WHOLE MAN. In his people whom he has purchased with his blood, he will reign without a rival. As for the world that lieth in the wicked one, the prince of this world shall have his power over it, until his time shall be accomplished. But as for the Lord's people whom he hath redeemed, on whom his heart is set, he will not have a single hair of their heads to be alienated from himself. "They shall be mine," saith the Lord, "they shall be wholly mine." Christ will not be part-proprietor of any man; he will not have one part of the man, and leave the other part to be devoted to Satan.

In entering upon this point, that Christ will have the whole man, I shall have to notice, that he does already possess the whole of his people in heir intent and purpose, and that by-and-bye, when he hath sanctified them wholly, he will hen actually possess the whole spirit, and soul, and body of the man whom he hath purchased with his precious blood. Mark then, my hearers, if you be children of God, if you be saved, you belong wholly and entirely to Christ. By this may you know this morning whether you belong wholly and entirely to Christ. By this may you know this morning whether you are subjects of that old Pharaoh, or whether Jehovah is the Lord your God and your great Deliverer. Are there not multitudes of men, who seem to imagine that if they save a corner in their souls for their religion, all will be well? Satan may stalk across the road acres of their judgment and their understanding, and he may reign over their thoughts and their imaginations; but if in some quiet nook there be preserved the appearance of religion, all will be right. Oh! Be not deceived, men and brethren, in this, Christ never went halves in a man



yet. He will have the whole of you, or he will have none of you. He will be Lord paramount, Master supreme, absolute Lord, or else he will have nothing to do with you. You may serve Satan, if you will, but when you serve him, you shall not serve Christ too. He will not permit you to have your right hand in his service, and your left hand employed for the black designs of hell. The whole man Christ died to purchase, and if you are not wholly given up to God, if in the intent and purpose of your souls, every thought, and wis, and power, and talent, and possession, be not devoted and consecrated to Christ, you have no reason to believe that you have been redeemed by his precious blood.

Christ will not allow us to spare a single sin. We may not select some favourite evil, and say, I will give my heart wholly up to God, but this vice is to be spared. Nay, nay, my hearers, ye are not Christ's if ye have one tampered lust, one sin which you fondly indulge. Sin you will, even though you be Christ's, but if you indulge sin, if you love it, and delight in it, if it is not to you a plague and a curse, you have no reason whatever to conclude that your name is on his breast, or that you belong to Christ at all. Suppose a house attacked by seven thieves. The good man of the house has arms within, and he manages to kill six of the thieves; but if one thief survive, and he permits him to range his house, he may still be robbed, perhaps still be slain. And if I have had seven evil vices, and if by the grace of God six of these have been driven out, should I yet indulge and pamper one that remaineth, I am still a lost man. I am not his so long as I willingly yield, and joyfully hold fellowship with a single evil and false thing. I contend not for creature perfection; I believe it to be impossible for us to attain it in the present life, but I do contend for perfection in purpose, perfection in design; and if we wantonly and wilfully harbour a solitary sin, we are no friends of Jesus Christ. Not one sin, hen, is to be spared. And as no sin is to be spared, so no duty is to be neglected. If I am Christ's, I am not to look down his law, and say, "Such-and-such a precept is agreeable to me, I will keep it." No, as I hate every foolish way, so much I love every right one. "I count all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." We have not come yet to be Christ's verified property, to be Christ's disenthralled people, unless we feel that in all the commandments of God we desire to walk blamelessly, - not a hoof is to be left behind.

As no sin is to be spared, and no service to be shunned, so no power is to be reserved from entire consecration. Christ bought the whole man, and the whole man must be devoted to Christ; I am not to use my judgment for the Saviour, and let my imagination lie idle; I am not to reserve for sin the freedom of my will, while I give to God my conscience; but the whole man is to be given up, to Christ, he is not enlisted in Jesus Christ's army, who has not given up to Christ, head, and hands, and feet, and heart, and all. I am old that in Scotland, in the olden times, the farmers used to save one field which they did not sow, they saved that for the devil, it was called, "The gude man's croft;" so that Satan might range there, as much as he liked, and not disturb the crops elsewhere. A strange whim. Oh! How many Christians have tried to do the like in their hearts. They have had just the gude man's croft, a little corner where Satan might have his way, but, oh! This will never serve, the whole land must be tilled; every acre must be sown with the good seed, for it is all Christ's, or else it is none of it Christ's, we are wholly consecrated, or else unconsecrated. We belong from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot to Christ, or else we do not belong to Christ at all. Man, - the entire nature must be surrendered. The demand is imperative; to a proverb it shall be verified; "there shall not a hoof be left behind."

Yet, further, if no power is to be unconsecrated, how much less will Christ ever permit our heart to be divided. If we seek to serve God and mammon, God and self, God and pleasure, we do not serve God at all. When the Romans erected the statue of Christ, and put it up in their pantheon, saying that he should be one among their Gods, their homage was worthless. And when they turned their heads, first to Jupiter, then to Venus, and then to Jesus Christ, they did no honour to our Lord, they did but dishonour him. Their service was not acceptable, and so if you imagine in your heart that you can sometimes service God, and sometimes service self and be your own master, you have made a mistake. Christ will have no such service as this; he will have all or nothing; and indeed, men and brethren, it is necessary for us to escape entirely from the snares of sin, or else we cannot be saved. A quaint old divine uses the following figure: "If," saith he, "a hart be caught in a trap, and it shall extricate all its limbs except one foot, it has not escaped as long as the foot is in the trap; and if a bird be taken, and if with much

struggling it getteth its liberty all but one wing, yet when the fowler comes he will seize it unless that wing also become delivered." So is it with you and me; if any part of our heart be devoted to Satan we might as well devote the whole, for we are still his bond-slaves. If you say, "Well, I was once bound hand and foot, but now I have broken off the chain from my hand." Yes, but if the ring of iron encircles one foot, and it is fastened down to the floor, you are still a slave. You may have filed through the chain of your drunkenness, but if you have not filed through the chain of your self-righteousness, you are still as much a bondman as ever. It is all in vain for you to fight half the battle; it is not the half but the whole that gives the victory. It is not the slaying of here and there a sin, like the stopping of here and there a leak in the ship; she must be re-keeled, or else she will sink; she must be new bottomed and new made; and so must you. All those slight amendments and improvements, good as they are in a moral aspect, are worthless as to any spiritual salvation of your soul. Remember this, thou who thinkest thou art a believer, see whether it can be said of thee, "I have wholly come out of Egypt in my heart's intent, 'not a hoof has been left behind.'"

But to proceed: what is already true in our intent and purposes shall ere long be true in reality. Tarry a little while, Christian, a few more struggles against the flesh, a little more battling and of warring against the evil powers within thee, and thou shalt put thy foot upon the neck of thy old corruptions: sin and self shall both be slain, and Jesus Christ shall reign triumphantly. What a joy it is to the Christian to believe that he shall one day be perfect. As we have worn the image of the earthy, so shall we also wear the image of the heavenly. The tongue that has spoken many an evil thing, bought with the blood of Christ, shall one day be full of the sonnets of Paradise. There shall be no strife in the soul; the Canaanite shall no more dwell in the land; we shall be vessels fully purged as by fire, fully sanctified and made fit for the Master's use. When we shall come up dripping from the shelving banks of Jordan, we shall have left behind us all our sins; up those celestial hills our feet shall climb, and our garments shall be whiter than any fuller can make them. Not Jesus in his transfiguration shall be more complete and perfect than we shall be in ours. The black drops of depravity will have been wrung out of our hearts; the virus of deep corruption shall have been extracted, and we shall take

our place among the angels, pure as they; among the perfect spirits, the prophets, and the glorious host of martyrs as truly sanctified, as fully redeemed, as effectually delivered from sin, as even they are. The redemption shall be complete; "not a hoof shall be left behind."

Before I leave this point, let me remark that there is one part of man seemingly the most worthless, which we sometimes think will be left behind. The poor body! it shall be put into the grave, the worms shall hold a carnival within it, and soon it shall crumble down into a few atoms of dust; but Christ who redeemed his people, bought their flesh and their bones as well as their souls, "and not a hoof shall be left behind." Not the eye shall be left any more than the judgment, nor the arm any more than the spiritual vigour; for the Redeemer lays claim to the organs of the body as well as the faculties of the mind. He will raise from the dead the very bones of his people, and as the whole host shall go marching up behind their conquering leader, he shall cry, "Of them that thou hast given me I have lost none, not a bone in my own body has been broken, and not a bone of their bodies has been left behind." The whole man, body, soul, and spirit, all consecrated, all filled with the Spirit, shall stand before the throne and clap its hands, and sing the everlasting song of glory unto God for ever and ever. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

II. This, to proceed to the second part of our discourse, is equally true of THE WHOLE CHURCH as of the whole man - "Not a hoof shall be left behind." I never have subscribed - I think I never shall - to the doctrine of universal redemption. I believe in the limitless efficacy of the blood of Christ. I would not say, with some of the early Fathers, that a single drop of Christ's blood would have been sufficient for the redemption of the world. That seems to me to be an expression too strained, though doubtless their meaning was correct. I believe that there is efficacy enough in the blood of Christ if it be applied to the conscience to save any man and every man. But when I come to the matter of redemption it seems to me that whatever Christ's design was in dying, that design cannot be frustrated, nor by any means disappointed. When I look at the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot imagine that such an One offering such a sacrifice, can ever be disappointed of the design of his soul. Hence I think that all whom he came on purpose to save he will

save, all who were graven on the strong affections of his heart as the purchase of his blood he assuredly shall have. All that his heavenly Father gave him shall come to him. All that he chose from before the foundation of the world, he will raise up at the last day. All who were included among the members of his mystic body, when he was nailed to the tree, shall be one with him in his glorious resurrection, and "not a hoof shall be left behind." I know there are some who believe in a disappointed Christ, who affect to lament concerning Christ a design not accomplished, a frustrated cross, agonies spent in vain, blood that was poured out on the ground as water that cannot be gathered up. I believe in no such thing. God created nothing in vain, nor will I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross in vain in any sense or in any degree whatever. Not a hoof of all his purchased flock shall be left behind.

Come, then. Methinks I see before my mind's eye the countless multitudes whom Jesus bought with blood. The day shall come when their great shepherd walking in their front shall lead behind him the entire flock, and not one shall be absent. But suppose for an instant - we take that ground to see how untenable it is - suppose for an instant that one of those purchased ones should be absent; of what sort shall that one be? Suppose it to be a suffering one, one that has lain tossing on the bed of pain for many months and years, some aged disciple filled with twitchings and convulsions, who for the last few years seemed to suffer pains like those of hell though she lay on the borders of Paradise - shall she be left behind? Such a supposition impugns the love of Christ. If he left any, certainly it should not be the suffering ones. If one should be cast away, certainly not of that martyr band who for his sake endured, nor of that pilgrim band of the despised who through much tribulation inherit the kingdom of heaven. Who then shall it be? Shall it be the strong ones that shall be lost? Imagine it so. But how were they strong? They were strengthened through Christ and yet can they perish? Such a supposition impugns the immutability of God. Did he gird them with strength one day and leave them helpless the next? What! Did God pour the full vigour of his grace into a heart and then restrain that vigour, and suffer the strong one to perish? Samson, shalt thou be lost after thou hast slain heaps upon heaps thy thousand men? Shalt thou at last die ingloriously? No, if thou diest upon earth thou shalt hear the groans of thy Philistine enemies

about thee, and die, as a warrior should, in the midst of battle, an undefeated one. Shall the minister of Christ whom God has greatly blessed be deserted by the faithful God, and shall the shame of his fall ring round the world and become the jest and mockery of drunkard and harlot? God forbid; he shall keep the strong and they shall enter into life. But suppose for a minute it should be one of our weak ones, our poor friend, Mr. Feeble-Mind, or our excellent sister, Miss Despondency; suppose these must perish. Ah! then this would impugn the power of God, for then the enemy would cry, "Aha! Aha! He kept the strong, but he could not keep the weak. Those who took care of themselves he kept, but the weak ones he suffered to perish." Ay, beloved, but there shall "not a hoof be left behind;" not that poor lingering sheep, not that poor newly-born and feeble lamb; they shall ever one of them be brought in; no, "not a hoof shall be left behind." But saith one, "Perhaps it will be the erring ones among them." Ah, but if the erring ones in the Church be lost then should all be lost, for they all err. "But suppose there be some that specially err?" Well, if these were lost, it would be to impugn the grace of God, because then it might be said, and said with truth, "It was of works and not of grace," for if it be of grace then must the erring be brought back and forgiven, and even those sheep that break the hedge and leave the pasture, these must be brought in, that it may be said on earth and sung in heaven that it was of grace, free grace, and grace alone, that any were saved - that all were saved - that none are left behind.

Methinks I see the great Shepherd now, and there are all his sheep. They have been wandering. They have got into a dark glen in the mountains and a snow-storm is coming on, and he goes to seek them. There they are. The grim spirit of the tempest, the Prince of the power of the air meets him, and says, "Back, shepherd! What dost thou here?" "I have come to reclaim my own." "They are not thine now," saith he, "they have strayed into my grounds and they are mine, not thine." "Nay, fiend," saith he, "they are mine; they have my blood-mark on them; they were given me of my Divine Father, and I am bound by solemn obligations to keep ever one of hem safely." "Thou shalt not have them," saith the fiend. "I must, I will," saith he. They fought and the good Shepherd he overcame. He dashed down the enemy and trod him underfoot, and crushed him - crushed the serpent. Then the serpent with wily craft replied, "They are

thine - thine, I confess, and I will give thee some of hem - the fattest of them." "Nay," saith he, "Nay, fiend, I have bought them all, and I will have them all." And there they come, a goodly company; but he keeps back a few. "They are not all here," says the Shepherd, "and I will have all." "But," saith the fiend, "there are some of them that are speckled sheep, and some that are black and diseased; dost thou want them? Let me have a few at least." "No," saith he, "No; I must have the black ones, the speckled ones, the diseased ones: let them all come. Fiend, stand back, let them come I tell thee, or my right arm shall fell thee to the ground again." And now they all come but one, and Satan says, "Nay, but this is such a little one; this is so weak. Thou wouldst not have such a shrivelled, scabby one as this in thy bright flock, thou fair Shepherd of God." "Ay," saith he, "but sooner than lose one of hem I will die again, and shed my blood once more to buy it back. Avaunt! All that my Father gave me I will have." And now methinks I see him in the last tremendous day when the sheep pass again under the hand of him that telleth them. He cries, "Of all thou hast given me, I have lost none. They have none of them perished. The lion has not devoured them, nor has the cold destroyed them. I have brought them all safely here, "not a hoof is left behind."

III. The third point was to be this - Jesus Christ will not only have all of a man, and all the men he bought, but he will have ALL THAT EVER BELONGED TO ALL THESE MEN. That is to say, all that Adam lost, Christ will win back; all that we fell from in Adam, Christ will restore us to, and that without the diminution of a single jot or tittle. Not an inch of Paradise shall be given up, nor even a handful of its dust resigned. Christ will have all, or else he will have none - "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Very briefly let me run through a short list of all those precious things which we lost in Adam. And first, with reference to God. Christ's blood-bought own image, in our own likeness," saith God. Alas! that likeness has been defiled and debased. Like the king's superscription on the coinage, which has been worn for many a year, you cannot tell whose image and superscription it now is. Ay, but we shall have that back again. God will re-stamp his precious things; re-engrave his name upon his gems, and we shall wear the likeness of God as Adam did, when he came fresh from his Maker's hand. We have lost, too, as we know to our cost, by

nature the divine favour; God loved Adam, he showed that love to him, but when Adam sinned, though God was merciful, he could not show love to one who had become a rebel; I mean - not the love of complacency - though the love of benevolence never ceased for a moment. Ay, but God delighteth in his people now in Christ. Christ hath gotten back for us the full light of God's favour. The sun shone on Adam full-orbed, and it will not shine on us with less brithness. God loved Adam very tenderly, but he loves us just as much. We have gotten back the two divine privileges of heavenly likeness and heavenly favour. But you will remember, also, Adam had the celestial boon of divine fellowship: "The Lord God walked with Adam in the garden in the cool of the day." And some of you know what it is to have that back again, for he has walked with us, and God has talked to his people till our eyes have shone, and our hearts have been ready to break for very joy. Our poor weak body was not able to contain its overflowing bliss. Christ will get back for his people all the likeness of God, all the favour of God, and all the fellowship with God, of which Satan robbed them. Not a particle less shall they have, but I think I may venture to say even more, for God loved Adam for Adam's sake; he loves you and me for Christ's sake, and that is a better motive; a higher, a deeper, and grander consideration, than even loving a man for his own sake. Because of his only begotten and well beloved Son, he loves all his people with an infinite, unfailing affection. This is the first part of the inheritance which we lost, and which Christ will get us back.

Then again, Adam lost happiness, and we have lost it too, and we have become the heirs of sorrow, and like our Master we are acquainted with grief. Ay, but he will get us back our happiness; we have had some portion of it already. That well of living water, into which Satan cast a great stone so that it could not spring up, Christ has rolled away the stone, and now we drink the water, whereof, if a man drink, he shall never thirst, and shall never need to go to earthly fountains to draw. Oh! Courage, courage, Christian, in all thy sorrows, Christ will win thee back that glorious happiness which Adam lost for thee. Besides, you all know that in Adam we lost the right to live. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man became a dying soul, and not a living soul any more. But Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, and because he lives, we shall live also.



And yet again, Adam of old was king. Wherever he went there was a dignity about him, that made the lordly lion crouch and lick his feet; the birds of the air did him homage; he bade the fish of the sea leap in their waters, and they did it for he was king - God's crowned cherub who walked in the garden of Eden like a king in his palaces. But now, what are ? The servants of servants; toiling creatures that wipe the sweat from our face, and strain our nerves, and empty out our veins with labour. Ay, but that dignity is restored already to the people of God, for he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord. And visibly shall that dignity come back to us, when the leopard shall lie down with the kid; when the lion shall eat straw, like the ox, and man on earth shall be lord of the creation just as he was of old. Master of the sea - leviathan, shall do his bidding, and Behemoth shall stay him in his course to hasten to the voice of puny, but redeemed man. We shall have back I believe everything that Adam had, and much more. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

And yet further, not to keep you longer, we believe that in Adam we lost sonship, but in Christ we have received the adoption. In Adam we lost safe standing; but he hath plucked us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock. In Adam we lost righteousness; but he that believeth is justified from all things. Whatever Adam lost, Christ has found, and infinitely more.

A man once wrote a book to prove the devil a fool. Certainly, when all matters shall come to their destined consummation, Satan will prove to have been a magnificent fool. Folly, magnified to the highest degree by subtlety, shall be developed in Satan. Ah! thou trailing serpent, what hast thou now after all? I saw thee but a few thousand years ago, twining around the tree of life, and hissing out thy deceptive words. Ah! how glorious was the serpent then - a winged creature, with his azure scales. Ay, and thou didst triumph over God. I heard thee as thou didst go hissing down to thy den, I heard thee say to thy rood, - vipers in the nest as they are, - "My children, I have stained the Almighty's works: I have turned aside his liege subjects; I have injected my poison into the heart of Eve, and Adam hath fallen too; my children let us hold a jubilee, for I have defeated God." Ah! fiend; I think I see thee now, with thy head all

broken, and thy jaw-teeth smashed, and thy venom-bags all emptied, and thou thyself a weary length of agony, rolling miles afloat along a sea of fire tortured, destroyed, overcome, tormented, ashamed, hacked, hewed, dashed in pieces, and made a hissing, and a scorn for children to laugh at, and made a scoff throughout eternity. Ah! well, brethren, the great Goliath hath gained nothing by his vauntings: Christ and his people have really lost nothing by Satan. All hey lost once, has been re-taken. The victory has not simply been capture of that which was lost, but a gaining of something more. We are in Christ more than we were before we fell. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

IV. I shall want your patience and your prayers while I now attempt to dwell upon my last illustration. CHRIST WILL HAVE THE WHOLE EARTH - "not a hoof shall be left behind." God hath made this world for himself, and when he made it he looked around on all his works, and he said, "They were very good." All creation was meant to be a grand orchestra, the angels occupying the higher seats, and sounding the higher notes; while descending in the scale, the inhabitants of the divers worlds, which are perhaps countless in multitude, taking their places in the one harmonious song. In one place there was an old and almost empty spot without a singer; blessed be God, the singers have many of them taken their places already, and there are others on the way. That spot was left for men to sing in, for men who should praise God, and magnify his name always. Ay, but Satan came and took away all the singers, spoiled their voices, and ruined them, and now this world, instead of being an orchestra for God's praise, has become an arena for evil passions, a battle field for lust and rapine, and murder and sin. But mark this, God will not be disappointed of his purpose; this ruined world shall yet sing forth his praises, and without a marring or a jarring voice, the whole of his creatures shall magnify his holy name. Satan is now lord of the most of the world, and he seems to say to-day, "Thou King of kings, take England for thyself, and America be thine, here and there thou shalt take an island, or a city, but let me have the masses of mankind; I will be lord of China's teeming multitudes, and India shall lie within my coils." Brethren, shall it be so? Shall it be so? - are you content in your Master's name to resign those mighty empires to the prince of darkness? Unanimously your hearts speak out your Master's language; it must not,

and it shall not be. The tramp of Christian heroes shall yet shake those nations, and the trumpet of Jubilee shall proclaim liberty to the bonded sons of Adam that are weeping there. They must - they shall belong to Christ. And now the black prince comes forward, and he proposes another thing. "Oh!" saith he, "great King, why this perpetual duel, why must thy servants fight and live, and my servants continually be defeated? Let us divide the empire." You remember that in the olden times of England, when Canute and the Danes were fighting against the Saxons under Edmund, it was decided at last that the two kings should fight it out. A most agreeable and proper method, I only would that it were always taken in hand, and that all kings who choose to engage in warfare, had to fight their own battles. I am sure we should all be patrons of their encounters, and we should sincerely thank God that there was such a saving of blood; let them fight if they will, but why should their poor subjects die? The fight went on with various success, and at last, the champions having parted, it was decided that one should take one part of England, and the other the other, and so a truce was made. And so, black fiend, thou proposest this to the king of heaven, dost thou? - a division, shall it be; shall the fight be suspended, shall Christ have half, and Satan the other half? No, listen to the cry of that half, which we might give up. "Ye men, ye men of Israel, come hither, help! Help! Come ye to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Why should we be give up to intolerable tyranny, and devoted for ever to hell's monarch and his mighty power"? Nay, we cannot consent, thou fiend! That thou shouldst have one half. Imagine, then, that the gospel has spread in ever country but one, and now Satan pleads, "No missionaries shall be sent there to disturb their unhallowed peacefulness. Let me reign there," saith he, "and I will be content."

But it must not be: Soldiers of Christ, to the battle, to the battle. All the line, all the rampart must be stormed. Not a single castle must be left in the possession of the enemy. We must dash him down from his hills, and rend him up from his valleys. He must not have a single spot whereon to place his foot. Now I hear him flap his broken wings and fly into the grim north. "There are a few Esquimaux," saith he, "who live in the dreary region long consecrated to my power. I will betake myself to the land of icebergs and of rocks, of the wild bear and of the dog, and there will I

keep my last resting place." Brethren, shall it be, shall it be? Shall he reign king of the icebergs and lord even of the frozn north? No, by heaven, and him that redeemed the earth. Out even of that region must he be dashed; as of old he fell from heaven, so must he fall from earth. And now I see the Icelanders bowing before Christ, and the vilest and most depraved of men submitting to Jehovah's sway; but Satan has one dark-souled being; the last man that is left unconverted. Ring your Sabbath bells, my brethren! Go up to your house of prayer! Be happy! But I see a gloom upon your face. What means it? You reply, there is one man left unsaved; Satan has still a lodging-place in the heart of one man, surely our songs would lose their melody if that were the case. Nay, Master, nay, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Thou shalt walk through this world and meet no more with sin. There shall not be found one inhabitant of this globe who is not thy subject; not a single being who is not fully consecrated to thy will. That were a consummation devoutly to be wished. Equally may I say, it is a consummation confidently to be expected. Wait a little while, labour a little longer, and he that will come shall come and will not tarry; then shall the world see, and hell shall tremble at the sight, that Christ has conquered and has taken back all his possessions. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

And now, ere you disperse, I have just a word or two of practical doctrine to deliver. Give me your solemn attention; I will not detain you more than one or two minutes. On whose side art thou man, woman? Art thou Christ's, or art thou Satan's? Remember, if thy soul belongs to sin, living and dying as thou art, hell's greedy maw must devour thee; for Satan saith, as Christ saith, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." The waves of the deluge of wrath, shall drown ever man who is not in the ark. Not a single horn, or tare, shall be left to grow, they must all be bound up in bundles to be burned, and cast into the fire. Answer that question then: Whose art thou? Answer now another. If thou hopest that thou art Christ's, Christ's motto with every man is, "Aut Caesar, aut nullus." He will be Caesar in your hearts, king, emperor, or nothing at all; he will reign entirely over you, or not at all; Christ will not go shares in your heart. Are you wholly Christ's then? "Oh," saith one, "I hope so." Ay, but take care it is not mere hope, but that it is the fact; and lift up thy heart and pray, "Great God sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul and body, take full possession of all my

powers, all my members, all my goods, and all my hours, all I am, and all I have, take me, and make me what thou wouldest have me to be." God hear that prayer for thee, and make thee wholly Christ's. Yet, one other question. Is there one who says, "I fear I am not Christ's, but I wish to be?" Is that a sincere wish? I am happy, happy, thrice happy, that thou feelest thus, for thou couldst not even wish to be Christ's, unless Christ's grace had made thee wish. Oh, remember, if thou wilt to have Christ, there is no question about Christ's willingness to have thee. Come, just as thou art, and with a full surrender, say: -

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to thee,  
Oh! Lamb of God, I come."

Trust Christ, and you are saved; rely on Jesus, and your sins are forgiven, and you are Christ's, and shall be Christ's in that day when he maketh up his jewels. May God bless these thoughts and meditations to each and all of us. Amen.

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## **The Glorious Master And The Swooning Disciple**

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. - Revelation 1:17-18

How thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ are exceedingly mischievous to believers. If you sink your estimate of him you shift everything else in the

same proportion. He who thinks lightly of the Savior thinks so much the less of the evil of sin; and, consequently, he becomes callous as to the past, careless as to the present, and venturesome as to the future. He thinks little of the punishment due to sin, because he has small notions of the atonement made for sin. Christian activity for right is also abated; as well as holy horror of wrong. He who thinks lightly of the Lord Jesus renders to him but small service; he does not estimate the Redeemer's love at a rate high enough to stir his soul to ardor; if he does not count the blood wherewith he was redeemed an unholy thing, yet he thinks it a small matter, not at all sufficient to claim from him life-long service. Gratitude is weak when favors are undervalued. He serves little who loves little, and he loves little who has no sense of having been greatly beloved. The man who thinks lightly of Christ also has but poor comfort as to his own security. With a little Savior I am still in danger, but if he be the mighty God, able to save unto the uttermost, then am I safe in his protecting hand, and my consolations are rich and abounding. In these, and a thousand other ways, an unworthy estimate of our Lord will prove most solemnly injurious. The Lord deliver us from this evil.

If our conceptions of the Lord Jesus are very enlarged, they will only be his due. We cannot exaggerate here. He deserves higher praise than we can ever render to him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is he above our loftiest conceptions. Even when the angels strike their loudest notes, and chant his praises most exultingly on their highest festal days, the music falls far short of his excellence. He is higher than a seraph's most soaring thought! Rise then, my brethren, as on eagle's wings, and let your adoring souls magnify and extol the Lord your Savior.

When our thoughts of Jesus are expanded and elevated, we obtain right ideas upon other matters. In the light of his love and atoning sacrifice, we see the depth of the degradation from which such a Redeemer has uplifted us, and we hate, with all our hearts, the sins which pierced such an altogether lovely one, and made it needful for the Lord of life to die. Forming some adequate estimate of what Jesus has done for us, our gratitude grows, and with our gratitude our love—while love compels us to consecration, and consecration suggests heroic self-denying actions. Then are we bold to speak for him, and ready, if needs be, to suffer for

him while we feel we could give up all we have to increase his glory, without so much as dreaming that we had made a sacrifice.

Let your thoughts of Christ be high, and your delight in him will be high too; your sense of security will be strong, and with that sense of security will come the sacred joy and peace which always keep the heart which confidently reposes in the mediator's hands. If thou wouldst thyself be raised, let thy thoughts of Christ be raised. If thou wouldst rise above these earthly toys, thou must have higher and more elevated thoughts of him who is high above all things. Earth sinks as Jesus rises. Honor the Son even as thou wouldst honor the Father, and, in so doing, thy soul shall be sanctified and brought into closer fellowship with the great Father of Spirits, whose delight it is to glorify his Son.

My object, this morning, is to suggest some few truths to your recollection which may help to set the Lord Jesus on a glorious high throne within your hearts. My motto, this morning, will be -

"Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown him Lord of all."

My anxiety is that he may be crowned with many crowns in all these many hearts, and that you may now perform those exercises of faith, those delightful acts of adoring love, which shall bring to him great glory.

I. Coming to the text, the first thing we notice in it is THE DISCIPLE OVERPOWERED. We will meditate a little while upon that. John writes, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

The beloved disciple was favored with an unusual vision of his glorified Lord. In the blaze of that revelation even his eagle eye was dimmed and his holy soul was overwhelmed. He was overpowered, but not with ecstasy. At first sight it would have seemed certain that excess of delight would have been John's most prominent feeling; it would appear certain that to see his long lost Master, whom he had so dearly loved, would have caused a rush of joy to John's soul, and that if overpowered at all, it would have been with ecstatic bliss. That it was not so is clear from the fact that our Lord said to him, "Fear not." Fear was far more in the

ascendant than holy joy. I will not say that John was unhappy, but, certainly, it was not delight which prostrated him at the Savior's feet; and I gather from this that if we, in our present embodied state, were favored with an unveiled vision of Christ, it would not make a heaven for us; we may think it would, but we know not what spirit we are of. Such new wine, if put into these old bottles, would cause them to burst. Not heaven but deadly faintness would be the result of the beatific vision, if granted to these earthly eyes. We should not say, if we could behold the King in his beauty as we now are, "I gazed upon him, and my heart leaped for joy," but like John we should have to confess, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." There is a time for everything, and this period of our sojourn in flesh and blood is not the season for seeing the Redeemer face to face: that vision will be ours when we are fully prepared for it. We are as yet too feeble to bear the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I do not say but what we are so prepared by his grace that, if now he took us away from this body, we should be able to bear the splendor of his face; but, I do say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and that when, as an exception to the rule, a mortal man is permitted to behold his Lord, his flesh and blood are made to feel the sentence of death within themselves, and to fall as if slain by the revelation of the Lord. We ought, therefore, to thank God that "he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." That face which shines as the sun in its strength, manifests its love by wearing as yet a concealing veil. Be grateful, that while you are to be here to serve him, and to do his will in suffering for him, he does not deprive you of your power to serve or suffer, by overwhelming you with excessive revelations. It is an instance of the glory of God's grace that he conceals his majesty from his people, and wraps clouds and darkness round about him; this he does not to deny his saints a bliss which they might covet, but to preserve them from an unseasonable joy, which, as yet, they are not capable of bearing. We shall see him as he is, when he shall be like him, but not till then. That for a while we may be able to perform the duties of this mortal life, and not lie perpetually stretched like dead men at his feet, he doth not manifest himself to us in the clear light which shone upon the seer of Patmos.

I beg you to notice with care this beloved disciple in his fainting fit, and



note first, the occasion of it. He says, "I saw him." This it was that made him faint with fear. "I saw HIM." He had seen him on earth, but not in his full glory as the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. When our Savior dwelt among men, in order to their redemption, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant; for this reason he restrained the flashings of his Deity, and the godhead shone through the manhood with occasional and softened rays. But now, Jesus was resplendent as the ancient of days, girt with a golden girdle, with a countenance outshining the sun in its strength, and this even the best beloved apostle could not endure. He could gaze with dauntless eye upon the throne of jasper and the rainbow of emerald, he could view with rapture the sea of glass like unto crystal, and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, but the vision of the Lord himself was too much for him. He who quailed not when the doors of both heaven and hell were opened to him in vision, yet fell lifeless when he saw the Lord. None either in earth or heaven can compare with Jesus in glory. Oh for the day when we shall gaze upon his glory and partake in it. Such is his sacred will concerning us. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." To bear that sight we shall need to be purified and strengthened. God himself must enlarge and strengthen our faculties, for as yet, like the disciples upon labor, we should be bewildered by the brightness.

Here was the occasion of his faintness. But what was the reason why a sight of Christ so overcame Him? I take it we have the reason in the text, it was partly fear. But, why fear? Was not John beloved of the Lord Jesus? Did he not also know the Savior's love to him? Yes, but for all that, he was afraid, or else the Master would not have said to him, "Fear not." That fear originated partly in a sense of his own weakness and insignificance in the presence of the divine strength and greatness. How shall an insect live in the furnace of the sun? How can mortal eye behold unquenched the light of Deity, or mortal ear hear that voice which is as many waters? We are such infirmity, folly and nothingness, that, if we have but a glimpse of omnipotence, awe and reverence prostrate us to the earth. Daniel tells us that when he saw the great vision by the river Hiddekel, there remained no strength in him, for his comeliness was turned in on him into

corruption, and he fell into a deep sleep upon his face. John, also, at that time, perhaps, perceived more impressively than ever the purity and immaculate boldness of Christ: and, being conscious of his own imperfection, he felt like Isaiah when he cried "Woe is me, I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts." Even his faith, though fixed upon the Lord, our righteousness, was not able to bear him up under the first surprising view of uncreated holiness. Methinks his feelings severe like those of the patriarch of Uz, when he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord, that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. The reverence which is commendable is pushed by the infirmity of our nature into a fear which is excessive, and that which is good in itself is made deadly unto us; so prone are we to err on the one side or the other.

There is no doubt, too, that a part of the fear which caused John to swoon arose from a partial ignorance or forgetfulness of his Lord. Shall we charge this upon one who wrote one of the gospels, and three choice epistles? Yes, it was doubtless so, because the Master went on to instruct and teach him in order to remove his fear. He needed fresh knowledge or old truths brought home with renewed power, in order to cure his dread. As soon as he knew his Lord he recovered his strength. The wonderful person who then stood before him bade him know that he was the first and the last, the ever living and Almighty Lord. The knowledge of Jesus is the best remedy for fears: when we are better acquainted with our Lord we part company with half our doubts—these bats and owls cannot bear the sun. Jesus in his person, work, offices, and relations, is a mine of consolation; every truth which is connected with him is an argument against fear: when our heart shall be filled with perfect love to him fear will be cast out, as Satan was cast down from heaven. Study then your Lord. Make it your life's object to know him. Seek the Holy Spirit's illumination, and the choice privilege of fellowship, and your despondency and distress will vanish as night birds fly to hide themselves when the day breaketh. It is folly to walk in sorrow when we might

constantly rejoice. We do not read that John was any more afraid after the Lord had discoursed lovingly upon his own glorious person and character. That divine enlightenment which was given to his mind, purged from it any secret mistake and misjudgment which had created excessive fear.

But, while we thus notice the occasion and the reasons, we must not forget the extent to which John was overpowered. He says, "I fell at his feet as dead;" He does not say in a partial swoon, or overcome with amazement: he uses a very strong description, "I fell at his feet as dead." He was not dead, but he was "as dead;" that is to say, he could see no more, the blaze of Jesus' face had blinded him; he could hear no more, the voice like the sound of many waters had stunned his ear; no bodily faculty retained its power. His soul, too, had lost consciousness under the pressure put upon it; he was unable to think much less to act. He was stripped not only of self-glory and strength, but almost of life itself. This is by no means a desirable natural condition, but it is much to be coveted spiritually. It is an infinite blessing to us to be utterly emptied, stripped, spoiled, and slain before the Lord. Our strength is our weakness, our life is our death, and when both are entirely gone, we begin to be strong and in very deed to live. To lie at Jesus' feet is a right experience; to lie there as sick and wounded is better, but to lie there as dead is best of all; a man is taught in the mysteries of the kingdom, who comes to that. Moses with dim legal light needs to be told to put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the Lord of Hosts, but John is manifestly far in advance of him, because he lies lower, and is like a dead man before the Infinite Majesty. How blessed a death is death in Christ! How divine a thing is life in him. If I might see Christ at this moment upon the terms of instant death, I would joyfully accept the offer, the bliss would far exceed the penalty. But as for the death of all within us, that is of the flesh and of fallen nature, it is beyond measure desirable, and if for nothing else; my soul would pant more and more to see Jesus. May that two-edged sword which cometh out of his mouth smite all my besetting sins; may the brightness of his countenance scorch and burn up in me the very roots of evil: may he mount his white horse and ride through my soul conquering, and to conquer, casting out of me all that is of the old dragon and his inventions, and bringing every thought into subjection to himself. There

would I lie at his dear conquering feet, slain by his mighty grace.

Only one other reflection while we look at this fainting apostle, observe well the place where he was overpowered. Oh, lovely thought. "I fell as dead;" but where? "I fell at his feet as dead." It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus' feet. Better be dead there than alive anywhere else. He is ever gentle and tender, never breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax. In proportion as he perceives that our weakness is manifest to us, in that degree will he display his tenderness. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young; feebleness wins on him. When he sees a dear disciple prostrate at his feet, he is ready at once to touch him with the hand of his familiar love, and to revive him by his own strength. "He restoreth my soul." "He giveth power unto the faint." He saith unto our pitiful weakness, "Fear not, I am the first and the last." To be as dead were not desirable, but to be as dead at Jesus' feet is safe and profitable. Well doth our poet say, when expressing his desire to escape from all worldly bonds.

"But oh, for this, no strength have I,  
My strength is at his feet to lie."

II. And now, having seen the disciple overpowered, I shall ask your consideration of THAT SAME DISCIPLE RESTORED. He was not long in the condition of death, for the Master laid his right hand upon him, and said to him, "Fear not." Here then, we shall notice, that when the children of God become exceeding faint and feeble, and their own sense of impurity and nothingness becomes painful, and even killing to them, the Lord has ways of restoring and reviving their spirits.

And first, he does it by a condescending approach. "He laid his hand upon me." It is noticeable, that in the great cures which our Savior wrought, he almost always touched the patient. He could with a word have healed, but to prove his fellowship with the sick, he put his hand upon the leper, and upon the blind eye, and touched the deaf ear; thus manifesting his condescending contact with the infirmities of our nature. The Master could have spoken a word to John, and have revived him; but he did not stand at a distance, or guard himself with a "Touch me not" but, instead of that, he commenced his care with a touch. No other hand could have

revived the apostle, but the hand which was pierced for him had matchless power. There is mighty healing in the royal hand of our Immanuel. When the Holy Spirit inspires us with a sense of the relationship which Christ bears to us, of the sympathy which Christ feels with us, of the kinship and fellowfeeling which reign in Jesus' breast, then are we comforted. To know that he is not ashamed to call us brethren is a wellspring of comfort to a tried child of God; to feel his presence, to perceive the touch of his hand, and to hear him say: "I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God," this is new life to our waning spirits. Oh what bliss is this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He is a brother born for adversity, a sympathetic and tender friend touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He laid his hand upon me." "O child of God, pray for a manifestation of the kinsman Christ to thy soul; ask that he would instruct thee as to the fact that he enters into thy grief, having himself endured the like. Thou art one with him, and he is one with thee; and as surely as the head feels the pain of the members, so does Jesus share in all the sorrows of his people. Let this be a comfort to thee, thou who art now lying as dead before the risen Lord. He comes near to thee, not to kill thee, but to revive thee by most intimate intercourse, talking with thee as a man speaketh with his friend. O man, greatly beloved, be not so overwhelmed with the greatness of thy Lord as to forget his love, his great love, his familiar love, which at this moment lays its hand upon thee.

The same action implies the communication of divine strength. "He laid his right hand upon me." It is the hand of favor, it is also the hand of power. God gives strength to those who have none. He puts power into the faint. When the child of God is brought very low, it is not a mere subject for consideration or theme for reflection that can lift him up: sick men want more than instruction, they require cordials and supports. There must be actual strength and energy imparted to a swooning soul, and, glory be to God, by his own Holy Spirit, Jesus can and does communicate energy to his people in the time of weakness. He is come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. The omnipotence of God is made to rest upon us, so that we even glory in infirmities. "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness," is a blessed promise, which has been fulfilled to the letter to many of us. Our own strength has departed, and then the power of God

has flowed in to fill up the vacuum. I cannot explain the process: these are secrets and mysteries to be experienced rather than expounded; but as the coming of the Spirit of God into us first of all makes us live in regeneration, so the renewed coming of the power of God into our soul raises us up from our weakness and our faintness into fresh energy. Be thou encouraged, then, thou fainting spirit today. They that trust upon the Lord shall renew their strength. All power belongeth unto the Lord, and he will give it plenteously to those who have none of their own. Be of good courage and wait upon him for none shall be ashamed who make him their confidence.

Then there followed a word from the Master's own mouth. He spoke and said, "Fear not." Here he applied the remedy to the disease. Christ himself is our medicine, as well as our physician. His voice which stilled the sea, also casts out all our fears. The word of God, as we find it in this book, is very consoling; the word of God, as we hear it from Christ's ministers, has great power in it; but the real and true power of the word lies in Jesus THE WORD. When the truth falls fresh from his own lips, then is it power. Right truly did the Master say, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." With what power did those syllables fall on the fluttered heart of John—"Fear not." Oh that we might hear the same voice by the Spirit in our inmost souls.

"Oh might I hear thine heavenly tongue,  
But whisper 'Thou art mine.'  
Those gentle words should raise my song  
To notes almost divine."

Truly there are many voices and each has its significance, but the voice of Jesus has a heaven of bliss in its every accent. Let but my beloved speak to me, and I will forego the angelic symphonies. Though he should only say, "Fear not," and not a word beyond, it were worth worlds to see him open his mouth unto us. But you say, can we still hear Jesus speak to us? Ay, by his Spirit. His Spirit still hath fellowship with the hearts of men, and he can bring the word of Scripture right home into the soul, until it becometh no more the letter but the living, quickening word of Christ. Do you know what I mean by this? If you do not, it is not possible to tell you; and if you do, you will need no explanation. Jesus speaks to the heart, the

truth comes not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. O thou troubled believer, thou who art abashed by the very glory thou hast been made to see, be assured that Jesus will draw near unto thy soul, and touch thee, and speak with thee, so that thou shalt be strengthened with might by his Spirit in thine inner man. Had John not fallen as dead, he might never have heard the voice and felt the touch of his Lord. Sweet is the fall which leads to such a rise again.

In order to complete the cure of his servant our Lord went on to give him fuller instruction in that very matter which had overpowered him. Sometimes like cures like. If in a certain sense it is true of divine revelations, that "shallow draughts intoxicate the brain," it is assuredly true that "drinking largely sobers us again." If a glimpse of Christ makes holy men to faint, a clearer sight of him will set them on their feet again. Our Lord went on to instruct John in the glory of his person and power, that his fears might be removed. And truly, brethren, John was in a right state for such celestial instruction; he who is lowly is ready to learn mysteries. He was like wax ready for the seal; or as paper cleansed of all other writing. Because we think we know, we know not; but the death of the pride of knowledge is the birth of true understanding. The Lord loves best for pupils those who lie lowest before him. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." "With the lowly is wisdom." Where Jesus is the teacher, and instructs the heart in the things concerning, himself, the soul is made to inherit substance, and its treasures are filled. Blessed are the men who are taught by him who is the wisdom of God, even though while they watch at the posts of his doors they lie as dead men; they are blessed, for they shall find life, and obtain favor of the Lord.

III. We will now advance to the third point of our discourse which contains the pith of it. We have observed the beloved disciple overpowered and we have seen him afterwards revived; now we shall consider for awhile **THE SAME DISCIPLE STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTED**. Let me have your attention, dear friends, to the glorious truth which is now opening up before us in the text. John was first of all instructed as to the Lord's person. "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead." As to the Lord's person, Jesus revealed

to his disciple that he was most truly divine. "I am the first and the last." This language can be used of none but God himself; none but he is first; none but he is last; none but God can be first and last. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was evidently first. He existed before he was born into the world. We read, "a body hast thou prepared me." Then Christ was a previously existing one for whom that body was prepared; and he it is who said, "Lo, I come, to do thy will O God." He came into the world, but he had from old eternity dwelt in the bosom of the Father. John the Baptist was born into the world before the Savior, of whom he was the forerunner, but what does he say? His testimony is "he, coming after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me." He is first in order of honor because first in order of existence. John was the elder as man, but as God the Lord Jesus is from everlasting. Go back in history as far as you will; with one leap ascend to the days of Moses, and there is Christ before you, for we read: "Let us not tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." There was Christ, then, in the wilderness vexed by the people. He it was whose voice then shook the earth, but who will yet shake not the earth only but also heaven. Go further back to Abraham, and we find the angel of the covenant there. Our Lord expressly says, "Before Abraham was I am." Mark you, not "I was," but "I am;"—he speaks in a God-like manner. Ascend even to the age of Noah, the second parent of our race, and there we discover Jesus Christ preaching to those spirits who are now in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." It was Christ in Noah, who by the Spirit preached to the antediluvian sinners. We go further back to the creation of the world, and are find "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God;" and if we fly back to old eternity, before the creating hand commenced its work, we find in Proverbs, the eighth chapter, the witness of the incarnate wisdom himself. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled. Before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." Our Lord is thus the first: and so assuredly will he be the last; for all things consist and subsist through the perpetual emanations of his infinite power; and when the kings of the earth shall



sleep in the dust, and the popovers thereof shall have passed away, when the treasures of time shall have melted, and its most enduring memorials shall have gone like the mists of the morning, he shall be the same, and of his years there shall be no end. Christ is the true Melchisedec, without beginning of days or end of years, "made a priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." This was revealed to John for his comfort, and it stands true to us today, and is equally fraught with consolation.

Moreover, by the words "the first and the last" are signified, in most languages, the sum and substance of all things. We say sometimes the top and the bottom of it is so and so; we mean that it is the whole of it. And the Greeks were wont to say, "This is the prow and stern of the business," meaning that it is the whole. And so Jesus Christ, in being first and last, is all in all. And, truly, it is so in the working of redemption and salvation; he begins, carries on, completes; he asks no creature help and will have none. To us he is the author and the finisher of our faith, the alpha of our first comfort, and the omega of our final bliss. We worship Christ as the sum and substance of all good. Herein is wealth of comfort, and, therefore, did the Lord instruct his servant, John, therein, he did as much as say, "John, thou needest no ear, for I am no enemy, no stranger, no avenging spirit, but God himself, in whom thou has learned to put thy trust. Thou believest in God, believe also in me." To every trembling believer we would say, Why dost thou fear? Jesus is all. Art thou afraid of him, thy brother, thy Savior, thy friend. Then, what dost thou fear? Anything old? He is the first. Anything to come? He is the last. Anything in all the world? He is all in all, from the first to the last. What dost thou want? If thou hast him thou hast all. Dost thou need more than all? Hast thou discovered a need within thy spirit, a grievous lack which troubles thee? How can that be when thy Lord Jesus fills all things, and all things are yours in him. If thou hast, indeed, placed thy confidence in him, and made him all thy salvation, to what end and for what cause shouldst thou be troubled with any sort of fear? Having a divine person to be thy protector and thy Savior, Why shouldst thou be afraid?

In addition, however, to rendering to John the comfort derived from his person, our blessed Master went on to comfort him with the truth of his

self existence. "I am he that liveth," saith he, "or I am the living one." Creatures are not living in themselves, they borrow leave to be; to God alone it belongs to exist necessarily. He is the I AM, and such is Christ. Why then dost thou fear? If the existence of thy Lord, thy Savior, were precarious and dependent upon some extraneous circumstances, thou wouldst have cause for fear, for thou wouldst be in constant jeopardy. If he had to borrow permission to be, derived strength from creatures, and needed to look hither and thither for strength to sustain his own existence, thou wouldst be ever in danger, and consequently in distress; but, since Jesus cannot possibly cease to be, or be other than he is, or less than he is, what occasion canst thou have for alarm? A self-existent Savior, and yet a troubled Christian! Oh, let it not be so. "Fear not, I am he that liveth."

And, if these two sources of consolation should not suffice, the Lord in the glory of his tenderness mentions a third—viz, his atoning death. He says, "I was dead," the original more correctly rendered is "was made dead." Here we come upon the human nature of our Redeemer. As God and as man he had two natures, but he was not two persons. As one person he ever lives, and yet he was made to die. He came into this world in human form that he might be capable of death; the pure spirit of God could not die, it was not possible that he, the I AM, could be subject to death; but he allied himself with humanity, and in that human form Jesus could die, and did die. In very deed, and truth, and not in semblance; Jesus bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, and they laid his corpse in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Here to the child of God is a fruitful source of consolation. He died, then the atonement is complete; without the shedding of blood there is no remission, but the death of the Son of God brings plenteous pardon. There must be in the death of such a one of sufficient merit to remove guilt and cleanse transgression. Is it not written, "He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Dost thou not hear that song in heaven? Will not its music make thee glad? His own blood hath washed thee; if thou believest in him thou art clean. Look to Calvary, and as thou lookest there and perceivest that he was dead, "fear not."

And then the master declared his endless life, "I am alive for evermore."

He who offered up the atonement lives again to claim the effect of his sacrifice. He has presented the meritorious sacrifice, and now he has gone to heaven to plead the sacrifice before the throne of God, and to lay claim to the place which he has prepared for them that love him. Thou hast no dead Savior to trust to: thou reliest in him who once died—this is comfort to thee, but he lives, the great Redeemer lives. He has risen from the tomb; he has climbed the hills of heaven; he sits at the right hand of the Father, prepared to defend his people. If thou hadst a Christ in the sepulcher that were sorrow upon sorrow; but thou hast a Christ in heaven, who can die no more. Be thou of good cheer.

And then, to close the whole, the Master said "Amen, and hath the keys of hell and of death." The mediatorial office which Christ now occupies is one of great power. He is "God over all, blessed for ever." His dominion is over land and seas and over heaven and the regions of the dead. There is nothing hid from the energy of his power. He is Lord of all. "He hath the keys of hell and of death." By the word "hell" may be meant here the entire invisible land, the whole realm of spirits: Christ is Lord there, adored in heaven and feared in hell. But, if we restrict the sense to the common meaning of the word in our language, he is Lord of hell. The devil despite his malignity can do nothing but what Christ permits him. He is a chained enemy; he may rave and rage, but he cannot injure the child of God. Christ hath him ever in check, and when he permits him to wander abroad, he makes the wrath of man and the wrath of devils to praise him, and the remainder he doth restrain. Why dost thou fear therefore? Thou sayest, "I am a sinner—Satan will prevail against me." But Christ saith "I am master of Satan, I am Lord of hell, he cannot prevail against thee." He cannot leave hell unless Christ permits him, for Christ can turn the key and lock him in. He could not take thee there, for Christ has locked thee out and keeps the key. Thou art eternally and perpetually safe from all the machinations of the powers of darkness. And dost thou tremble at death? Is it that which alarms thee? Have the pains and groans and dying strifes sounded in thine ear till thou art timid and afraid? Then remember Christ hath the keys of death. Thou canst not die until he permits. If men of blood should seek thy life, they could not smite thee till thy Lord should allow it; and if plagues and death should fly about thee, and thousands die at thy right hand, and ten thousands at thy

left, thou canst not die till the Lord wills it. Thou art immortal till he saith "return." The iron gate of death opens not of its own accord to thee, a thousand angels could not drag thee to the tomb; thou comest there only at his call. Fear not, therefore, but remember that death is no longer death to the saints of God, they fall asleep in Jesus. Since thy Lord will be with thee, it will not be death to die; thou shalt find death to thee an enemy muzzled and chained: the wasp shall have lost its sting, it shall be a bee that shall bring thee honey; out of the lion, as Samson did, shalt thou get sweetness to thyself. Death is overborne, and when it arrives, Jesus will come with it, and make thy dying bed most soft to thee.

Remember one thought more. He that hath the key of death will annihilate death; for thy body shall not become the prey of the worm for ever. At the trump of the archangel thy body shall rise again. There shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of one of his people perish, their very dust is precious in his sight. They sleep awhile, and rest from their labors; but, from beds of dust and silent clay, the Lord of life shall call them all. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, wherein thy victory! Since Jesus who died and ever lives has the keys of death and hell at his girdle, we will not fear to die, let the time appointed be when it may. So that you see there was abundance of comfort for the sinking spirit of the apostle John.

Let me close by saying, in the glory and exaltation of Christ is the saint's cordial. Some of us have tried it when our mouths were full of bitterness, and we have rejoiced and been exceeding glad at the thought. A reigning Savior makes a joyful people. Run there for comfort, ye sons of sorrow: rejoice ye in your king all ye his saints.

But this same glorious Savior will be the sinner's terror. They shall hide their faces at the last from the brightness of his glory; they shall ask the hills and mountains to conceal them from his face who sits upon the throne. A glorious monarch is the rebel's horror. By so much as he whom you have rejected is great and glorious, by so much shall the punishment from his right hand be intolerable. Oh that you were wise enough to cease from fighting with the Almighty Lord.

But, lastly, he is also the penitent's hope; for now, to-day, if you would be forgiven, the exalted Savior presents himself to you most freely. He is

exalted on high, but what for? It is to give "repentance and remission of sins." The greater he is the better for those who need great mercy; the more royal and kingly he is the better for humble, broken, bleeding hearts. "Oh, kiss the son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." From the highest heaven he stretches down the silver scepter; touch it by a simple faith. May he enable you to do it, and though as yet you fall at his feet as dead, you shall hear him say this morning, "Fear not, I am he that liveth, and was dead, and am alive for evermore, and am, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by me, seeing I ever live to make intercession for thee." God bless you, dear friends, by his Spirit. Amen.

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## **Glorious Predestination**

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. - Romans 8:29

You will have noticed that in this chapter, Paul has been expounding a very deep inward, spiritual experience. He has written concerning the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption, the infirmities of the flesh, and the helpings of the spirit; the waiting for the redemption of the body, and the groanings which cannot be uttered. It was most natural, therefore, that a deep spiritual experience should bring him to a clear perception of the doctrines of grace, for such an experience is a school in which alone those great truths are effectually learned. A lack of depth in the inner life accounts for most of the doctrinal error in the church. Sound conviction of sin, deep humiliation on account of it, and a sense of utter weakness and unworthiness naturally conduct the mind to the belief of the doctrines of grace, while shallowness in these matters leaves a man content with a superficial creed. Those teachings which are commonly called Calvinistic doctrines are usually most beloved and best received by

those who have had much conflict of soul, and so have learned the strength of corruption and the necessity of grace.

Note, also, that Paul in this chapter has been treating of the sufferings of this present time; and though by faith he speaks of them as very inconsiderable compared with the glory to be revealed, yet we know that they were not inconsiderable in his case. He was a man of many trials; he went from one tribulation to another for Christ's sake; he swam through many seas of affliction to serve the church. I do not wonder, therefore, that in his epistles he often discourses upon the doctrines of foreknowledge, and predestination, and eternal love, because these are a rich cordial for a fainting spirit. To be cheered under many things, which otherwise would depress him, the believer may betake himself to the matchless mysteries of the grace of God, which are wines on the lees well refined. Sustained by distinguishing grace, a man learns to glory in tribulations also; and strengthened by electing love, he defies the hatred of the world and the trials of life. Suffering is the college of orthodoxy. Many a Jonah, who now rejects the doctrines of the grace of God, only needs to be put into the whale's belly and he will cry out with the soundest free-grace man, "Salvation is of the Lord." Prosperous professors, who do no business amid David's billows and waterspouts, may set small store by the blessed anchorage of eternal purpose and everlasting love but those who are "tossed with tempest, and not comforted, are of another mind." Let these few sentences suffice for a preface. I utter them not in the spirit of controversy, but the reverse.

Our text begins by the expression, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," and many senses have been given to this word "foreknow" though in this case one commends itself beyond every other. Some have thought that it simply, means that God predestinated men whose future history he foreknow. The text before us cannot be so understood, because the Lord foreknows the history of every man, and angel, and devil. So far as mere prescience goes, every man is foreknown, and yet no one will assert that all men are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus. But, it is further asserted that the Lord foreknow who would exercise repentance, who would believe in Jesus, and who would persevere in a consistent life to the end. This is readily granted, but a

reader must wear very powerful magnifying spectacles before he will be able to discover that sense in the text. Upon looking carefully at my Bible again I do not perceive such a statement. Where are those words which you have added, "Whom he did foreknow to repent, to believe, and to persevere in grace?" I do not find them either in the English version or in the Greek original. If I could so read them the passage would certainly be very easy, and would very greatly alter my doctrinal views; but, as I do not find those words there, begging your pardon, I do not believe in them. However wise and advisable a human interpolation may be, it has no authority with us; we bow to holy Scripture, but not to glosses which theologians may choose to put upon it. No hint is given in the text of foreseen virtue any more than of foreseen sin, and, therefore, we are driven to find another meaning for the word. We find that the word "know" is frequently used in Scripture, not only for knowledge, but also for favor, love, and complacency. Our Lord Jesus Christ will say, in the judgment, concerning certain persons, "I never knew you," yet in a sense he knew them, for he knows every man; he knows the wicked as well as the righteous; but there the meaning is, "I never knew you in such a respect as to feel any complacency in you or any favor towards you." See also John 10:14-15, and 2 Timothy 2:19. In Romans 11:2, we read, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknow," where the sense evidently has the idea of fore-love; and it is so to be understood here. Those whom the Lord looked upon with favor as he foresaw them, he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. They are, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians, "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will."

I am anxious not to tarry over controverted matters, but to reach the subject of my sermon this morning. Here we have in the text conformity to Christ spoken of as the aim of predestination; we have, secondly, predestination as the impelling force by which this conformity is to be achieved; and we have, thirdly, the firstborn himself set before us as the ultimate end of the predestinations and of the conformity.—"that HE might be the first-born among many brethren."

I. Mark then, with care, that **OUR CONFORMITY TO CHRIST IS THE SACRED OBJECT OF PREDESTINATION.** Into predestination itself I

will not now pry. The deeper things shall be left with God. I think it was Bishop Hall who once said, "I thank God I am not of his counsels, but I am of his court." If I cannot understand I will not question, for I am not his counsellor, but I will adore and obey, for I am his servant. Now, today, seeing we are here taught the object of his predestination, it will be our business to labor after it, to bless God that he has set such an object before him, and pray that we may be partakers in it. Here stands the case. Man was originally made in the image of God, but by sin he has defaced that image, and now we who are born into this world are fashioned, not in the heavenly image of God, but in the earthy image of the fallen Adam. "We have borne," says the Apostle, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "the image of the earthy." The Lord in boundless grace has resolved that a company whom no man can number, called here "many brethren," shall be restored to his image, in the particular form in which his Eternal Son displays it. To this end Jesus Christ came into the world and bore our image, that we, through his grace, might bear his image. He became a partaker of our infirmities and sicknesses that we might be partakers of the divine nature in all its excellence and purity. Now, therefore, the one thing to which the Lord is working us through his Spirit, both by providence and by grace, is the likeness of the Lord from heaven. He is evermore transforming the chosen, removing that defilement of sin, and moulding them after the perfect model of his Son, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who is the firstborn amongst the "many brethren."

Now, observe, that this conformity to Christ lies in several things. First, we are to be conformed to him as to our nature. What was the nature of Christ, then, as divine? We must not pry into it, but we know that he was verily of the nature of God. "Begotten not made," says the Athanasian Creed, and it says truly too, "being of one substance with the Father." Now, we also, though we at our conversion are new creatures, are also said to be "begotten again into a lively hope." To be begotten is something more than to be made: this is a more personal work of God; and that which is begotten is in closer affinity to himself than that which is only created. As Christ was, as the only-begotten of the Father, far above mere creatures; so also to be begotten of God, in our case, means far more than even the first and perfect creation could imply. As to his humanity our blessed Lord, when he came into this world, underwent a birth which was



a remarkable type of our second birth. He was born into this world in a very humble place, amidst the oxen, and in the manger; but yet he lacked not the songs of angels, and the adoration of the heavenly hosts. Even so we also were born of the Spirit without human observation; men of this world saw no glory whatsoever in our regeneration, for it was not performed by mystic rites, or with sacerdotal pomp. The Spirit of God found us in our low estate, and quickened us without outward display. Yet at that selfsame moment, where human eyes saw nothing seraphic eyes beheld marvels of grace, and angels in heaven rejoiced over one sinner that repented, singing once again "glory to God in the highest." When Lord was born a few choice spirits welcomed his birth; an Anna and a Simeon were ready to take the new-born child into their arms and bless God for him: and even so there were some that hailed our new birth with much thanksgiving; friends and well-wishers who had watched for our salvation were glad when they beheld in us the true heavenly life, and gladly did the take us up into the arms of Christian nurture. Perhaps, also, there was one who had travailed in birth till Christ was formed in us the hope of glory, and how happy was that spirit to see us born unto God; how did our spiritual parent ponder each gracious word which we uttered, and thank God for the good signs of grace which could be found in our conversation. Then, too, a worse than Herod sought to kill us. Satan was eager that the new-born child of grace should be put to death, and, therefore, sent forth fierce temptations to slay us; but the Lord found a shelter for our infant spiritual life, and preserved the young child alive. In us the living and incorruptible seed abode and grew. As many of you as have been born again have been conformed to the image of Christ in the matter of his birth, and you are now partakers of his nature. It is not possible for us to be divine, yet it is written that we are made "partakers of the divine nature." We cannot be precisely as God is, yet as we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, whatever that image may be. The new birth as surely stands us with the image of Christ as our first birth impressed us with a resemblance to the fathers of our flesh. Our first birth gave us humanity; our second birth allies us with Deity. As we were conceived in sin at the first, and shapen in iniquity, even so in regeneration our new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is

not ashamed to call them brethren.

Furthermore, this conformity to Christ lies in relationship as well as in nature. Our Lord is the Son of the Highest,—the Son of God; and truly, beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Jehovah has declared that he will be a father unto us, and that we shall be his sons and his daughters. As surely as Jesus is a son, so surely are we, for the same Spirit bears witness to both, as it is written "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." When Jesus came into the world as God's Son, he was not left without attesting proofs. His first public appearance, when he came to the waters of baptism, was signalled by a voice out of the excellent glory, which said, "this is my beloved Son," and the descending Spirit, like a dove, rested upon him. So is it also with us. The voice of God in the word has testified to us our Heavenly Father's dove; and the Holy Spirit has borne witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. When first we dared to come forward and say "we are on the Lord's side," some of us had sacred tokens of sonship which have never been forgotten by us, and oftentimes since then we have received renewed seals of our adoption from the Great Father of our spirits. "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself," so that he can with his brethren say plainly "we know that we have passed from death unto life." God has given us full assurance, and infallible testimony, and in all this we rejoice. We have believed in Jesus, and it is written, "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name."

Our Lord was declared to be the Son of God by the actions which he performed, both towards God and towards man. As a Son he served his Father, you could see the nature of God in him, in his deep sympathy with God and in his exact imitation of God. Whatever God would have done under the circumstances, that Jesus did. You perceive at once, by his deeds, that his nature was godlike. His works bore witness of him. It was evermore most clear that he acted towards God as a son towards a father. Now in proportion as God's determination has been carried out in us, we also act to God as children towards a loving father, and whereas the

children of darkness speak of their own, and like their father, who is a liar, speak the lie; and like their father, who is a murderer, act out wrath and bitterness, even so the children of God speak the truth, for God is true, and they are full of love, for God is love; and their life is light, for their God is light. They feel that they must act, under the circumstances in which they are placed, as they would suppose Jesus would have acted, who is the Son of the ever blessed Father. Moreover, Christ wrought miracles of mercy towards men, which proved him to be the Son of God. It is true we can work no miracles, yet can we do works which mark God's children. We cannot break the bread and multiply it, we can, however, generously distribute what we have, and thus in feeding the hungry we shall prove ourselves children of our Father who is in heaven; we cannot heal the diseased with our touch, still we can care for the sick, and so in love towards the suffering we can prove ourselves to be children of the tender and ever-pitiful God. But our Lord has told us that greater works than his own shall we do, because he is gone to his Father; and these greater works we do. We can work spiritual miracles. Today, can we not stand at the grave of the dead sinner, and say, "Lazarus, come forth?" And has not God often made the dead to rise at our word, by the power of his Spirit! Today, also, we can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, casting it about us as it were as our garment, and he that toucheth the hem thereof shall he not also be made whole to-day, even as when Jesus was among men? This day, if we do not break fish and barley loaves, we bring you better food; this day, if we cannot give to men opened eyes and unstopped ears, yet in the teaching of the gospel of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, the mental eye is cleansed, and the soul's ear also is purged; so that in every child of God, in proportion as he labors in the power of the Spirit for Christ, the works which he does bear witness of him that he is the son of God. His zeal in doing them proves that he has the spirit of a child of God, and the result of those works proves that God works in him as he will never do in any but his own children. Thus, in relationship, as well as in nature, we are conformed to the image of Christ.

Thirdly, we are to be conformed to the image of Christ in our experience. This is the part of the subject from which our craven spirit often shrinks, but if we were wise it would not be so. What was the experience of Christ in this world? for that ours will be. We may sum it up as referring to God,

to men, to the devil, and to all evil.

His experience with regard to God, what was that? "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Though without sin, he was not without suffering. The firstborn of the divine family was more sorely chastened than any other of the household; he was smitten of God and afflicted till, as the climax of all, he cried Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. Oh, the bitterness of that cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the father bruising the firstborn son; and, if you and I, brethren, are to be conformed to the image of the firstborn, though we may expect from God much fatherly love, we may also reckon that it will show itself in parental discipline. If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons; but, if ye be true sons, like to the firstborn, the rod will make you smart, and sometimes you will have to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" If we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son, the Lord has predestinated us to much tribulation, and through it shall we inherit the kingdom.

Next survey our dear covenant Head in his experience in relation to men. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." "He was despised and rejected of men." He said, "Reproach hath broken mine heart, and I am full of heaviness." Now, brethren, in the very proportion in which we are conformed to the image of Christ we shall have to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach:" for the disciple, if he be a true disciple, is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call them of his household by some yet more opprobrious title, if they can invent it. The saints of God must not expect crowns where Christ found a cross; they must not reckon to ride in triumph through those streets which saw the Savior hurried to a malefactor's death. We must suffer with him if we would be glorified with him. Fellowship in his sufferings is needful to communion with his glory.

Then, consider our Lord's experience with regard to the prince of the

power of the air. Satan was no friend to Christ, but finding him in the desert he came to him with this accursed "if"—"If thou be the Son of God." With that attack upon his Sonship the fiend commenced the battle. "If thou be the Son of God." You know how thrice he assailed him with those temptations which are most likely to be attractive to poor humanity, but Jesus overcame them all. The arch enemy, the old dragon, was always nibbling at the heel of our great Michael, who has for ever crushed his head. We are predestinated to be conformed to Christ in that respect; the serpent's subtlety and cruelty will assail us also. A tempted head involves tempted members. Satan desires to have us and to sift us as wheat. He attacked the Shepherd, and he will never cease to worry the sheep. Inasmuch as we are of the seed of the woman, there must be enmity between us and the seed of the serpent.

And, as to all evil, our Lord's entire life was one perpetual battle. He was fighting evil in the high places and evil in the low, evil among the priests and evil among the people, evil in a religious dress, in Pharisaism, and evil in the dress of philosophy amongst the Sadducees; he fought it everywhere: he was the foe of everything that was wrong, false, selfish, unholy or impure. And you and I must be conformed to Christ in this respect. We are to be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one. We are chosen out of the world to be a peculiar people, adversaries to all evil, never sheathing our sword till we enter into our rest. We are to be like him then in nature, in relation, in experience.

Fourthly. We are to be conformed to Christ Jesus as to character. Time and ability alike fail us to speak of this. I only pray that God's Spirit may make our lives to speak of it. He was consecrated to God; so are we to be. The zeal of God's house ate him up; so should it consume us also. He went about his Father's business; so should we ever be occupied. Towards man he was all love; it becomes us to be the same. He was gentle and kind and tender; as he was, so are we to be in this world. He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; neither should we. Yet was he stern in the denunciation of all evil; so should we be. Purity, holiness, unselfishness, all the virtues, should glow in us as they shone in him. Ah, and blessed be God they will too, by the work of the Spirit. Our text

speaks not only of what we ought to be, but of what we shall be, for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. My brethren, what a glorious model! Behold it, wonder at it, and bless God for it. You are not to be conformed to the mightiest of the apostles, you will one day be purer than were Paul or John while here below; you are not to be conformed to the sublimest of the prophets, you shall be like the prophets' Master; you are not to be content with your own conception of that which is beautiful and lovely, but God's perfect conception incarnated in his own Son is that to which you shall certainly be brought by the predestination of God.

Just a sentence upon another point. We are to be conformed to the image of his Son, fifthly, as to our inheritance for he is heir of all things, and what less are we heirs of, since all things are ours? He is heir of this world. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." We see not yet all things put under man, but we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor; and in the person of Christ Jesus this day we, the men who are made in his image, have dominion over all things, being all made kings and priests unto God, and in Christ Jesus ordained to reign with him forever and ever. "If children then heirs," says the apostle; therefore, whatever Christ has we have, and though we may be very poor and unknown, yet whatever belongs to Christ to us. "The good of all the land of Egypt is yours," said Joseph to his brethren, and Jesus saith this to all his people, "All are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

I must close this point—time goes much too swiftly this morning when descanting upon this delightful theme—by observing that we are to be conformed to Christ in his glory. We will think of our bodies, for that is a point surrounded with consolation, since he shall change our vile body and make it like unto his glorious body. We are like Adam now in weakness and pain, and we shall soon be like him in death, returning to the ground whence we were taken; but we shall rise again to a better life, and then shall we wear in glory and incorruption the image of the second

Adam, the Lord from heaven. Conceive the beauties of the risen Redeemer. Let your faith and your imagination work together to portray the unutterable glories of Immanuel, God with us, as he sits at the right hand of the Father. Such and so bright shall our glories be in the day of the redemption of the body. We shall behold his glory, we shall be with him where he is, and we shall be ourselves glorious in his glory. Is he exalted? you also shall be lifted up. Is he a King? you shall not be uncrowned. Is he a victor? you also shall bear a palm. Is he full of joy and rejoicing? so also shall your soul be filled to the brim with delights. Where he is every saint shall be ere long.

Thus much upon the sacred end of predestination.

II. Now, observe that PREDESTINATION IS THE IMPELLING FORCE TOWARDS THIS CONFORMITY. This truth divides itself thus: it is the will of God that conforms us to Christ's image rather than our own will. It is our will now, but it was God's will when it was not our will, and it only became according to our will when we were converted, because God's grace had made us willing in the day of its power. We cannot be made like Christ unwillingly; a consenting will is essential to the likeness of Christ; unwilling obedience would be disobedience. Naturally we never will towards good without God, but God works in us to will and to do. God treats us as men responsible and intelligent, and not as stone or metal; he made us free agents, and he treats us as such. We are willing now to be conformed to the image of Jesus, yea, we are more than willing, we are anxious and desirous for it; but still the main and first motive power lay not in our will, but in his will, and to-day the immutable force which is best to be depended upon does not lie in our fickle, feeble will, but in the unchanging and omnipotent will of God. The force that is conforming us to Christ is the will of God in predestination.

And so, too, it is rather God's work than our work. We are to work with God in the matter of our becoming like to Christ. We are not to be passive like wood or marble; we are to be prayerful, watchful, fervent, diligent, obedient, earnest, and believing, but still the work is God's. Sanctification is the Lord's work in us. "Thou hast wrought all our works in us." From the first, and now, and to the last, "he that hath wrought us to the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit."

There is no holiness in us of our own creating; no good thing in us of our own fashioning. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be praise." Still, true as it is that we are free agents, yet the Lord is the potter and we are the clay upon the wheel, and it is his work, and not ours, that makes us like to Christ. If there be a touch of our finger anywhere upon the vessel, it mars and does not beautify. It is only where God's hand has been that the vessel begins to assume the form of the model.

Therefore, beloved, all the glory must be unto God and not to us. It is a great honor to any man to be like Christ; God does not intend that his children should have no honor, for he puts honor upon his own people; but, still, the true glory lies with him, since he has made us and not we ourselves. Cannot we say this morning with thankful hearts, "By the grace of God I am what I am?" and do we not feel that we shall lay all our honors, whatever they may be, at his dear feet, who hath according to his abundant mercy predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son?

III. Now I must come to the third point, upon which with brevity. It sweetly appears that the **ULTIMATE END OF ALL THIS IS CHRIST**. "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that HE,"—"that HE"—God is always driving at something for him, his well-beloved Son. He aims at his own glory in the glory of his dear Son; if he blesses us the text of last Sabbath is still true, "not for your sakes do I this;" it is for the sake of a higher, a better one than we are, it is "that he might be the first-born." Now, if I understand the passage before us, it means this. First, God predestinates us to be like Jesus that his dear Son might be the first of a new order of beings, elevated above all other creatures, and nearer to God than any other existences. He was Lord of angels, seraphim and cherubim obeyed his behests; but the Son desired to be at the head of a race of beings more nearly allied to him than any existing spirits. There was no kinship between the Lord Jesus and angels, for to which of the angels had the Father said at any time, "Thou art my Son?" They are by nature servants, and he is the Son, this is a wide distinction. The Eternal Son desired association with beings who should be sons as he was, towards whom he could stand in a close relationship as being like to them



in nature and Sonship, and the Father therefore ordained that a seed whom he has chosen should be conformed to the image of the Son, that his Son might head up and be chief among an order of beings more nearly akin to God than any other. The serpent said to Eve, "God doth know that ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." That lie had in it a residuum of truth, for by sovereign grace we have become such. There were no obedient creatures in the world of that sort, knowing good and evil, in the days of Eden's glory. The angels in heaven had known good, and only good, and preserved by grace had not fallen; the evil spirit had fallen, and he knew evil, but he had forgotten good, and was incapable of ever choosing it again; he is now for ever banished from hope of restoration. But here are we who know both good and evil; we understand the one, and the other too, and now there is begotten in us a nature which loves holiness and cannot sin, because it is born of God; we are left free agents, yea, we are freer than ever we were, and yet in this life, and in the life to come, our path is like that of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Angels know not evil; have never had to battle with evil known and felt within; they have not tried the paths of sinful pleasure, and through grace been turned from them, so as with full purpose of heart to cleave to holiness for ever. Jesus now heads a race assailed but victorious; sorely tempted but enabled to overcome. Joyfully and cheerfully for ever shall it be our delight to do the Father's will. For ever with Christ at our head he shall be the nearest to the eternal throne; the most attached of servants, because also sons; the most firmly adhesive to good, because we once knew the bitterness of evil. Even as Christ had to drink the cup of suffering, for sin, we also have sipped of it. We have known horror caused by guilt, and, therefore, for the future shall be throughout eternity a nobler race, freer to serve, and serving God after a nobler fashion than any other creatures in the universe. I take it that it is the meaning of the text, that the Lord would have Christ to be the first of a nobler order of beings.

But, secondly, the object of grace is that there may be some in heaven with whom Christ can hold brotherly converse. Note the expression, "Many brethren"—not that he might be the firstborn among many, but among "many brethren," who should be like himself. Our blessed Lord delights in fellowship; such is the greatness of his heart that he would not

be alone in his glory, but would have associates in his happiness. Now, I speak with bated breath. God can do all things, but I see not any way by which he could give to his only-begotten Son beings that should be akin to himself, except through the processes which we discover in the economy of grace. Here are beings that know evil, and know also good, beings placed under infinite obligations by bonds of love and gratitude to choose for ever the good, beings with a nature so renewed that they always must be holy beings; and these beings can commune with the incarnate God upon spurring as angels cannot, upon the penalty of guilt as angels cannot; upon heart-throes, conflicts, reproaches, and brokenness of spirit as angels cannot: and to them the Lord Jesus can reveal the glory of holiness, the bliss of conquering sin, and the sweetness of benevolence as only they can comprehend them. Renewed men are made fit companions for the Son of God. He shall feast all the more joyously because they shall eat bread with him in his kingdom. He shall be joyful when he declares the Lord's name unto his brethren. He shall joy in their joy, and be glad in their gladness.

No doubt, however, the text means that these will for ever love and honor the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The children look up to the firstborn. In the East the firstborn is the lord and king of the household. We love Jesus now, and esteem him our head and chief. How will we, when we once get to heaven, love and adore him as our dear elder brother with whom we shall be on terms of the closest familiarity and most reverent obedience. How joyfully will we serve him, how rapturously adore him. Shall we not want to have our voices made more loud till they become as thunders, or like many waters, or surely we shall not be able to praise him as we would? If there be work to do for him in future ages we will be the first to volunteer for service; if there be battles to be fought in times to come with other rebellious races, if there be wanted servants to fly over the vast realms of the infinite to carry Jehovah's messages, who shall fly so swiftly as we shall, when once we feel that in his courts we shall dwell not as mere servants, but as members of the royal family, partakers of the divine nature, nearest to God himself. What bliss to know that he who is "very God of very God," and sits on the eternal throne, is also of the same nature with ourselves, our kinsman, who is not ashamed even amidst the royalties of glory to call us brethren. O brethren, what honors are ours!

What a heritage lies before us! Who among us would change with Gabriel? We shall have no need to envy angels, for what are they but ministering spirits, servants in our Father's halls; but we are sons, and sons of no inferior order, no sons of a secondary rank like Abraham's children born of Keturah, or like the son of the bondwoman, but we are the Isaacs of God, born according to the promise, heirs of all that he hath, a seed beloved of the Lord for ever. Oh, what joy ought to fill our spirits this morning, at the prospect which this text reveals, and which predestination secures!

Perhaps our fullest thought upon the text is this. God was so well pleased with his Son, and saw such beauties in him, that he determined to multiply his image. "My beloved," said he, "thou shalt be the model by which I will fashion my noblest creature, I will for thy sake make men able to converse with thee, and bound to thee by bands of love, who shall be next akin to myself, and in all things like to thee." Behold from heaven's mint golden pieces of inestimable value are sent forth, and each one bears the image and superscription of the Son of God. The face of Jesus is more lovely to God than all the worlds, his eyes are brighter than the stars, his voice is sweeter than bliss; therefore doth the Father will to have his Son's beauty reflected in ten thousand mirrors in saints made like to him, and his praises chanted by myriads of voices of those who love him, because his blood has saved them. The Father knew how happy his Son would be to associate his chosen with himself, for of old his delights were with the sons of men. As a shepherd loves his sheep, as a king loves his subjects, so Jesus loves to have his people around him; but deeper yet is the mystery, as it is not good for a man to be alone, and as for this cause doth a man leave his father and mother and is joined unto his wife, and they twain are one flesh, even so is it with Christ and his church. He was made like to her for her salvation, and now she is made like to him for his honor. In what way could the Father put greater honor on his Son than by forming a race like to himself, who shall be the many brethren among whom he is the well-beloved firstborn?

Now, brethren, this word I say and send you home. Keep your model before you. You see what you are to come to, therefore, set Christ before your eyes always. You see what you are predestinated to be: aim at it, aim

at it every day. God worketh, and he worketh in you not to sleep, but to will and to do according to his own good pleasure. Brethren, grieve at your failures; when you see anything in yourselves that is not Christlike mourn over it, for it must be put away, it is so much dross that must be consumed; you cannot keep it, for God's predestination will not let you retain anything about you which is not according to the image of Christ. Cry mightily to the Holy Spirit to continue his sanctifying work upon you; beseech him not to be grieved and vexed, and, therefore, in any measure to stay his hand. Cry, "Lord, melt me, pour me out like wax, and set thy seal upon me until the image of Christ be clearly there." Above all, commune much with Christ. Communion is the fountain of conformity. Live with Christ and you will soon grow like Christ. They said of Achilles, the greatest of the Grecian heroes, that when he was a child they fed him upon lion's marrow, and so made him brave; feed upon Christ and be Christlike. They record on the other hand of blood-thirsty Nero, that he became so because he was suckled by a woman of a ferocious, barbaric nature. If we drink in our nutriment from the world, we shall be worldly; but, if we live upon Christ and dwell in him, our conformity with him shall be readily accomplished, and we shall be recognized as brethren of that blessed family of which Jesus Christ is the firstborn. How I wish every one here had a share in the text: I mourn that some have not, for he that believeth not on the Son hath not life, and therefore cannot have conformity to a living Christ. God grant to you all to be believers in Christ, now and for ever. Amen and amen.

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## **The Glory In The Rear**

And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face,

and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. - Exodus 14:19-20

The glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. - Isaiah 58:8

For the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward. - Isaiah 52:12

When the Israelites left the place of their bondage and came to the edge of the wilderness, a visible token of the Lord's presence and leadership was granted to them. They saw high in the air a pillar, which by day might be compared to rising smoke, but at night became a flame of fire. Such displays on a small scale were usual in the march of armies, but this was of supernatural origin. Where it moved the people were to follow; it was to be their companion, that they might not be alone, their conductor, that they might not go astray. We have become familiar, by accounts of our own soldiery in Egypt, with the extreme danger of the oriental sun when men are marching over the fiery sand: this cloud would act as a vast umbrella tent, covering the whole of the great congregation, so that they could march without being faint with the heat. By night their canvas city was lighted up by this grand illumination. They could march as well by night as by day, for we are told at the close of the previous chapter that by night the Lord went before them "in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." Might they not have said, "The Lord God is a sun and shield"? Did they not realize the fulfillment of the promise not yet spoken in words, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night"? This sacred symbol of the divine presence must have been a very great solace to them in those early days, when their pilgrim life was novel to them, and their newly-found liberty was darkened by a terrible fear of recapture.

The particular sign which the Lord vouchsafed them was very practical; it was not only glorious, but useful; it served them both for shade and light, and was both their guide and guard. It was exceedingly conspicuous, so that they could all see it. Any man of the millions who came out of Egypt could stand at his tent door and see this flaming signal high in heaven,

floating over all as the banner and oriflamme of the Great King. It appears to have been continual; an abiding token, and not an intermittent brightness. Even thus has Moses written:—"He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

Beloved friends, God is always with those who are with him. If we trust him, he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There is a special and familiar presence of God with those who walk uprightly, both in the night of their sorrow, and in the day of their joy. Yet we do not always in the same way perceive that presence so as to enjoy it. God never leaves us, but we sometimes think he has done so. The sun shines on, but we do not always bask in his beams; we sometimes mourn an absent God—it is the bitterest of all our mourning. As he is the sum total of our joy, so his departure is the essence of our misery. If God do not smile upon us, who can cheer us? If he be not with us, then the strong helpers fail, and the mighty men are put to rout. It is concerning the presence of God that I am going to speak this morning. You and I know how joyous it is. May we never be made to know its infinite value experimentally by the loss of it. If we see no cloud or flame, yet may we know that God is with us, and his power is around us. In that sense we will pray,

"Cover us with thy cloudy shrine,  
And in thy fiery column shine."

Or in more familiar words we will sing,

"Let the fiery cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through."

I. In considering the subject of the Lord's abiding with his people, I shall first call attention to THE DIVINE PRESENCE MYSTERIOUSLY REMOVED. According to our text, "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed." The chosen of the Lord may lose the manifested presence of God; and, indeed, often they may miss it in the particular form in which they have been accustomed to enjoy it.

The symbol of God's presence removed from where it had usually been.

From the day when they entered upon the desert, they had seen the fiery, cloudy pillar well to the front; but now suddenly it wheeled about, and left the van comparatively dim, because the glory had departed. Those who looked forward saw it no more. So has it been with us at times: we have walked day after day in the light of God's countenance, we have enjoyed sweet fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord, and on a sudden we have missed his glorious manifestation. Like the spouse, we cried, "I sought him, but I found him not." Aforetime everything had seemed bright, and we expected to go from strength to strength, from victory to victory, till we came unto the mount of God, to dwell for ever in his rest; but now before us on a sudden things look dark; we do not feel so sure of heaven as we were, nor so certain of perpetual growth and progress. The prospect is darkened, the clouds return after the rain, and our soul out of the darkness cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Moreover, they missed the light from where they hoped it would always be. They had been given to understand, I do not doubt, that the Lord would be always with them; and yet now, as they looked forward, the bright light was gone from its place of leadership. They looked for it as their guide, and, behold, that guidance was gone! The pillar might be behind them, but it was not before them; they could see nothing ahead to lead them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which the Lord had promised them. Sometimes you also may imagine that God's promise is failing you; even the word of God which you had laid hold upon may appear to you to be contradicted by your circumstances. Then your heart sinks to the depths, for "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" If ever the word of God becomes a subject of doubt, where can any certainty remain? Where any hope for the insure? We have said, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death": but what if he refuse to guide us? Then are we in an evil case. Can it be so? "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

The pillar of fire also removed from where it seemed more than ever to be needed. Now they were in a cleft stick; how could they possibly escape? Pharaoh was behind them, with all the horsemen of Egypt. They could hear the noise of the chariots, and the neighing of the horses, and the

shouts of the armies, eager for the prey. Before them rolled the Red Sea in its might. How could there be a way in the mighty waters? Now, if ever in their lives, they must have looked anxiously for the symbol of the Divine presence. What could they do if Jehovah did not lead their van? Yet the token of his presence was not there. Even thus is it with you, dear friend, who once walked in the light of God's countenance: you perhaps have fallen into temporal trouble, and at the same moment the heavenly light has departed from your soul. Now, it is bad to be in the dark on the king's highway; but it is worse to be in the dark when you are out on the open common, and do not know your road. It is well to have a guide when the road is easy; but you must have one when you are coming upon precipitous and dangerous places. Is it so with any child of God here, that he sees no light to shine before him, no star to guide him on his road? On the contrary, does his future become more and more clouded? Is the track quite gone? Does the sea seem shut in with an ironbound coast without a harbor? Does he

"See every day new straits attend,  
And wonder where the scene will end"?

Then let him trust; but he will need all the faith of which he can be master. Oh, my Lord, if ever thou dost leave me, forsake me not in the day of trouble. Yet what have I said? It is a day of trouble when thou art gone, whatever my condition may be. Yet, brethren, our Lord said, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." Pray that if you must for a while bewail the Lord's absence from you, it may not be in a time of dire and dark necessity.

Thus it did seem a mysterious thing that the Covenant Angel should no longer direct the marchings of the host of God, and I dare say that some of them began to account for it by a reason which their fears would suggest. Naturally, there was only one way of accounting for this removal of the guide, and that way was a wrong one, but one to which the Lord's people often refer their trials. I should not wonder that, if they had been asked why the blazing pillar was no longer in the van, they would have replied, "Because of our murmurings against the Lord and his servant Moses. God will not go before us because of our sins." Now, it is true, and does happen, that the Lord often hides his face behind the clouds of dust



that his own children make by their sins; but this is not always the case. When the consolations of God are small with you, you may generally conclude that there is some secret sin with you: and then it is your duty to cry, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." But in this case God was not punishing them for their sins, as he did on after occasions. He seems to have been very patient with their early murmurings, because they were such feeble folk, so unused to pilgrimage, and so unfit for anything heroic. Every trial was severe to the raw, undisciplined spirits of the tribes, and therefore the Lord winked at their follies. There was not a touch of the rod about this withdrawing of his presence from the van, not even a trace of anger; it was all done in loving-kindness and tender mercy, and no sort of chastisement was intended by it. So, dear child of God, you must not always conclude that trouble is sent because of wrath, and that the loss of conscious joy is necessarily a punishment for sin. Such thoughts will be a case of knives cutting your heart in pieces. Do not make for yourself a needless pain. All trouble is not chastisement; it may be a way of love for your enriching and ennobling. Upon the black horse of trouble the Lord sends his messengers of love. It is a good thing for us to be afflicted; for thus we learn patience, and attain to assurance. Shall the champion who is bidden to go to the front of the battle think that he is punished thereby? No, verily, my brethren: whom the Lord loveth he sets in the heat of the conflict, that they may earn the rarest honors. Great suffering and heavy labor are often rewards of faithfulness. Know ye not how the poet puts it,—

"If I find him, if I follow,  
What his guerdon here?  
'Many a labor, many a sorrow,  
Many a tear'?"

Darkness of soul is not always the fruit of divine anger, though it is often so. Sometimes there is no trace of wrath in it: it is sent for a test of faith, for the excitement of desire, and for the increase of our sympathy with others who walk in darkness. When the cloud of the divine glory is no longer seen in front it has gone behind, because it is more wanted there, and it is no loss after all, as we shall have to show. When the Lord hides

his face for a moment, it is to make us value his face the more, to quicken our diligence in following after him, to try our faith, and to test our graces. There are a thousand precious uses in this adversity. Yet it is a mysterious thing when the light of the future fades, and we seem to be without a guide.

II. Now, secondly, all this while THE DIVINE PRESENCE WAS GRACIOUSLY NEAR. The angel of the Lord had removed, but it is added, he "removed and went behind them," and he was just as close to them when he was in the rear, as when he led the van. He might not seem to be their guide, but he had all the more evidently become their guard. He might not for the moment be their Sun before, but then he had become their Shield behind. "The glory of the Lord was their reward." The Lord may be very close to thee, dear child, when thou canst not see him, perhaps closer than ever he was when thou couldst see him. The presence of God is not to be measured by thy realization of it. When thou canst not tell that he is with thee at all, and thou art singing and crying after him, those very sighs and cries after him are the holy fruit of his secret presence. It may be, the day shall come when thou shalt think that he was more near thee when thine eyes were filled with weeping after him, than when thou didst take thine ease, and speak confidently. Much of the creature, much of human excitement will mix with our most spiritual joy, our groanings and our sorrows, when we are pining after the Lord, are often more purely spiritual than our own delights, and therefore they are all the surer proofs of the work of the Lord in our souls. Oh, soul, the Lord may be very near thee, and yet he may be behind thee, so that thine outlook for the future may not be filled with the vision of his glory.

Note in the text that it is said the pillar went, and "stood behind them." I like that, for it is a settled, permanent matter. The Lord had removed, but he was not removing still. He would stay as long as was needful where he then was. That glorious angel, shrouded in the clouds, stood with his drawn sword in the rear of Israel, saying to Pharaoh, "Thou darest not come further, thou canst not break in upon my chosen." He lifted up his vast shield of darkness, and held it up before the tyrant king, so that he could not strike, nay, could not see. All that night his horses champed their bits, but could not pursue the flying host. "They were as still as a

stone till thy people passed over, O Lord, till thy people passed over whom thou hadst purchased." It is glorious to think that the Lord stood there, and the furious enemy was compelled to halt. Even thus the Lord remaineth with the dear child of God. Thou canst not see anything before thee to make thee glad, but the living God stands behind thee to ward off the adversary. He cannot forsake thee. He saith to thee out of the pillar of cloud, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." He standeth fast as thy rock, steadfast as thy safeguard, sleepless as thy watcher, valiant as thy champion.

"God is near thee, therefore cheer thee,  
Sad mind!  
He'll defend thee, all around thee,  
And behind."

What is more, these people had God so near that they could see him if they did but look back. Earnestly I desire you to think of this. If you cannot see the Lord bright before you, and you are very dull and heavy, then, I pray you, look back and see how the Lord has helped you hitherto. Sit not down with your eyes shut! but look back! Steadily observe the past! What see you there? Loving-kindness and tender mercy, and nothing else. As I look back upon my own past life—and I think I am not one by myself—I cannot discover, even with the quick eye of selfishness, anything of which I can complain of my God. "Truly God is good to Israel." "His mercy endureth for ever." Not one good thing hath failed; he has never left me, nor forsaken me. I have received blessings through my joys, and even greater blessings through my sorrows. The Lord's way has been all goodness, undiluted goodness, all the while. I look back, and see the light of his presence shining like the sun at noon; it is as a morning without clouds, I am overwhelmed with the boundless bounty of my God. I am unable to conceive of anything more kind than the heart of God towards his unworthy child. Well, then, God is not far away, if we look backward he is there. He has been mindful of us, he will bless us. He gave us mercies yesterday; and he is the same today and for ever. The blessings of last night we have not forgotten; the blessings of this morning, are they

not still with us? The fountain will not fail: it has flowed too long for us to raise the question. If there be no light breaking in the east, behold, it is lighting up the western sky. The Lord is evidently still behind us, and it is enough; for we can sing, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

A thoughtful person would conclude the Lord to be all the more evidently near because of the change of his position. When a symbol of mercy comes to be usual and fixed, we may be tempted to think that it remains as a matter of routine. If the rainbow were always visible it might not be so assuring a token of the covenant. Hence the Lord often changes his hand, and blesses his people in another way, to let them see that he is thinking of them. If he always did the same by us, every day and every night, we should get to attribute his dealings to some fixed law operating apart from God, just as our modern philosophers dethrone the Lord to set up the calves of nature. But now, when our God is sometimes before us, and sometimes behind us, and makes those apparent changes because of deep and urgent reasons, we are compelled to feel that we are the objects of his constant solicitude. "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." He deals with us in all wisdom and prudence. His modes change, but the changes are all from the same motive, and with the same reason, all to make us sick of self and fond of him. Blessed be his name, the change of his operations makes us feel the unchangeableness of his design; and the different ways in which he visits us only makes us value each visit, the more.

III. Thirdly, let us see THE DIVINE PRESENCE WISELY REVEALED. That the symbol of God's presence should be withdrawn from the front and become visible behind, was a wise thing.

Observe, there was no fiery pillar of cloud before them, and that was wise; for the going down into the Red Sea was intended to be an act of lofty faith. The more of the visible the less is faith visible. The more you have of conscious enjoyment the less room there is for simple trust. Faith performs her greatest feats in the darkest places. These Israelites were to do what after all was a grandly glorious thing for them to do,—to march right down into the heart of the sea. What people ever did this before?

Modern haters of miracle may say that they passed over the sands at an unusual tide, and that an extraordinarily strong wind drove back the water and left a passage, but that is not the notion of the Holy Spirit. He says by his servant Moses, "The floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." It is also written, "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." The tribes went down into the dread valley which remained when the waters dried up, and they crossed over between two frowning walls of water. You and I would have needed great faith to have gone down into such an abyss as that, but they descended without fear. Moses lifting up his rod and the waters rolling apart to make them a passage-way, with no fiery cloudy pillar in front of them, they calmly marched into the heart of the sea. That was a grand act of faith. This would not have been so clearly of faith had the way been made easier by miracle and token. I know some of you who are Christian people want to be always coddled and cuddled, like weakly babies. You pine for love-visits and delights, and promises sealed home to your heart. You would live on sweetmeats and be wheeled in a spiritual perambulator all the way to heaven, but your heavenly Father is not going to do anything of the sort. He will be with you, but he will try your manhood, and so develop it. I have seen children cosseted into the grave by their fond mother; and I suppose that a great many more will follow in the same way; but God never spoils his children. He educates them for nobler ends. He takes visible guides away from them that they may exercise faith in him. Why, Job would have been nobody if he had not lost everything. Who would have heard of the patriarch of Uz? What glory would he have brought to God with his camels and his oxen and his children? These were all taken away, and then Job became famous. See how he sits on the dunghill and is much more noteworthy there than Solomon in all his glory. Where the word of king Solomon was there was power, but nothing to equal the power of Job's word when he blessed the God who taketh away. Solomon spake many proverbs, and wrote many songs; but none of them attained unto the glory of that saying,—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Here was a triumph of faith! Beloved, you and I lose the enjoyments of religion and the comforts of hope in order that we may walk by faith and not by sight, and may the more greatly glorify God.

Moreover, let us mark that the cloudy pillar was taken away from the front because the Lord meant them simply to accept his word as their best guidance. The Lord said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." That word was sufficient guide. Suppose they had said, "Lord, we will go forward if the fiery pillar leads us forward, but not else." What then? Why, they would have been rebels. We are to obey God's word as God's word. I heard a brother say some time ago that he should be baptized when it was laid home to him. I thought of what a father would say to his boy if he said, "Father, I shall obey you if it is laid home to me." In all probability the child would have it laid home to him more feelingly than he desired. There are some disobedient children in the Lord's family who, if they do not mind, will have scriptures laid home to them in a way they do not quite reckon upon. What have you and I to guide us but the word of the Lord? "Well," says one, "I guide myself by outward providences." Do you? You will get into a terrible maze one of these days. Jonah wanted to flee from the presence of the Lord, and therefore he went down to the seaside, and lo, he found a ship going to Tarshish. Might he not have said, "I must be in the way of duty in going to Tarshish, for no sooner did I go down to the wharf than I found a ship starting immediately, and a cabin vacant for a passenger. I paid my fare, and walked on board at once. I had not to go off to the shipping-agent's, and wait for the next liner, but all was prepared for me. Was not that a providence!" Yes, but if you get following providence, and turning aside from the word, you may soon find yourself in the sea, and no whale prepared for you. Our way is clearly set before us in the word of God, and that most sure word of testimony should be followed. I have known a brother wanting to go abroad to preach the gospel to the heathen, but a great many difficulties have been thrown in his way, and therefore he has said, "I can see that I am not called to go." Why not? Is no man called unless his way is easy? I should think myself all the more called to a service if I found obstacles in my way. The course of true service never did run smooth. I should say, "The devil is trying to hinder me, but I will do it in spite of all the devils in hell." Will you always be wanting to have your bread buttered for you on both sides? Must your road be gravelled, and smoothed with a garden roller? Are you a carpet knight, for whom there is to be no fighting? You are not worthy to be a soldier of Jesus Christ at all if you look for ease. Go home! I dare say, after all, it is the

best thing you can do. True believers expect difficulties. It is ours to do what we are bidden to do, not to act according to fancied indications of providence. When the Lord said "Forward!" forward Israel must go, without a fiery cloudy pillar to cheer the way. Has not the Lord spoken? Who shall ask for plainer guidance?

Moreover, God was teaching them another lesson, namely, that he may be near his people when he does not give them the usual tokens of his presence. Who shall say that God was not in the van of Israel when they went down into the sea? They could not see the ensign of his presence, but he could see their obedience to his bidding. How else did the sea in fright draw back? Was it not because the Lord rebuked the sea? The strong east wind did not of itself divide the sea; for a wind naturally strong enough for that would have blown all the people into the air. The wind was used of God to move the waters, but its chief object was to dry up the damp from the floor of the sea, and to make marching the more easy for the vast host of Israel. Truly the Lord was there, triumphing gloriously. No cloudy pillar was seen across the waters as Israel looked forward to the shore; but yet the Lord was there majestically; and you may have but little comfort of the Lord's presence at this time, and yet God may be with you wondrously. Do not so much set your heart upon comfort, but rejoice in the fact which gladdened Hagar in the wilderness: "Thou God seest me." It does not matter to the fire whether the logs are cast upon it from the front, or the oil poured upon it secretly from behind the wall, so long as it finds its fuel. To you the daily supply of grace is more important than the supply of comfort, and this shall never fail you so long as you live.

Let me whisper to you one word more. After all, the host of Israel did not require any guide in front when they came to the sea. "How is that?" say you. Why, beloved, there were no two ways to choose from: they could not miss the way, for they must needs march through the sea. No room for wandering remained: their road was walled up and they could not miss it. So when men come into deep trouble, and cannot get out of it, they scarcely need a guide, for their own plain path is submission and patience. Tried child of God, you have to bear your trouble, and when that is quite clear your way is no longer doubtful. Cast all your care on him

who careth for you, and in patience possess your soul. "Oh, but I thought I was going to find a way of escape made for me. "Listen!" God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." You have to bear it, you see. Your great want for this present is faith in God, who has said—"I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea." Thus, you see, the light for guidance was not needed just then.

What they did want was the pillar of cloud behind them, and that is where they had it. What was that cloud behind them for? Well, it was there for several reasons: the first was to shut out the sight of their enemies from them. We read that Israel lifted up their eyes and saw the Egyptians, and then they began to tremble, and cry out: and so God drew the blinds down that his poor children could not see their frightful taskmasters. It is a great mercy when God does not let us see everything. What the eye does not see, perhaps the heart will not rue. May I ask you just to try and use your eyes a little now? There are your sins; will you look back on them for a minute? Look steadily. They are quite as dreadful as the Egyptian horsemen and chariots. I have looked intently, and I cannot see a sin remaining. "What, have you lived such a life that you have never sinned?" Ah, no, beloved, I have to mourn over many offenses, but I cannot see one of them now, for my sin is covered. I believe this text, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If I am cleansed, why should I see spots, or speak as if I did? The Lord stands between his people and their sins. Jesus, who veiled his glory in the cloud of our humanity, interposes between us and our transgressions. Is it not written, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve"? If God declares that our sins cannot be found, then I am sure we need not look for them; and if he says that Christ has made an end of sin, then there is an end of it. The Egyptians shall not come near us all the night of this life; and when the morning breaketh, we shall see them dead upon the shore. Then shall we sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, and our transgressions and iniquities hath he cast into the depths of the sea.



"Ah," saith one, "I know that my sins are forgiven, but I am troubled about my circumstances." Will you now look back with all your eyes? How about the circumstances you have passed through? Do you see anything wrong about them now? Oh, no, say you, they were all right. As you look back you can only see the glory of God: the Lord hath led you by a right way. Very well: learn to look at your circumstances through the light God hath set between Israel and the Egyptians. Who is he that can harm us? What is there to distress us? See your circumstances through the medium of the love of Jesus, and you perceive all things working for your good. Hitherto the Lord hath been our shield and our exceeding great reward. We see now no evil occurrent; he hath turned for us the curse into a blessing. The Lord has caused us to be far from fear, and has put terror far away.

The cloudy pillar went behind for another reason, namely, that the Egyptians might not see them. Their enemies were made to stumble, and were compelled to come to a dead stand. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them." Why does he halt? Why does the lion pause when about to spring? He is blindfolded. He shivers in the dense blackness, bethinking him of that former day when all the land of Mizraim quailed beneath a darkness that might be felt. Be calm, O child of God; for the Covenant Angel is dealing with your adversaries, and his time is generally the night. You will hear by-and-by of what he has done. Meanwhile, remember what he did to Pharaoh and Sennacherib. The Lord may not be before you, shedding delight upon your face, but he is behind you, holding back the foe. He looks forth from the cloud and discomferts your foes. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Wherefore, stand still, and see the salvation of God!

IV. Now, beloved, I must draw towards a conclusion by observing, that **THE DIVINE PRESENCE WILL ONE DAY BE MORE GLORIOUSLY REVEALED**. I have been speaking about the Lord being the rereward of his people, and so explaining my second text: but I must now refer you to my last text, in the fifty-second of Isaiah—"The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward." This is the condition into

which the Lord brings his people when they depart from Babylon, and are no more conformed to this present evil world. I trust he has brought many of us into this all-surrounding light at this good hour. The Lord is behind us, we know: our sins and iniquities are covered, our past mistakes are all erased, we are accepted in the Beloved. But we have not to look forward and say, "The angel of God has removed." Oh, no. We can see the bright light before us still. Our ways are ordered of the Lord, and none of our steps shall slide. We glory in tribulations also, believing that we shall glorify God in them. We look forward to the time of old age, believing that to hoar hairs he is the same, and that in our days of decline he will carry us. We look forward to the advent of our Lord with delight; or, if that may not be in our day, we look to falling asleep upon the bosom of our Savior. Before us we see the resurrection morning and all its splendor: we anticipate the risen body, that glorified fabric in which our pure and perfect spirits shall dwell for ever: we hear the voice of harpers harping with their harps, saluting the reign of Christ and the glorification of his people with him. Below there is nothing before us now but that which is inexpressibly delightful: the day has long dawned with us, whose morning clouds have passed away; a day which grows warmer and brighter, and is nearing to the perfect day. A few more months, a few more years, and we shall be in the land of the unclouded sky. What will it be to be there! What will it be to be there for ever!

"Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in."

How willingly would I fly away and be at rest. I feel my wings; they are not strong enough, as yet, to bear my soul away; but they will be. God is making his children ready to depart, and he will only have to beckon them, and they will cry, "Here am I," and then they shall be with him for ever. Yes, the glory of the Lord is above us and beneath us, on the right hand and on the left, without us and within us. We depart not from it, though it is behind us: we are going ever into the glorious light, for it is before us, too. The Lord shall be a wall of fire around about us, and the glory in the midst. If you have come there, dear brother, stop there. If you have entered there, dear sister, never quit that charmed circle, but abide in full communion with the Lord your God.

V. But now I have a sorrowful word to say, and with that I have done. THIS DIVINE PRESENCE HAS A TWOFOLD ASPECT: that same glory which lit up the canvas city, and made it bright as the day, darkened all the camps of Egypt. They could see nothing, for the dark side of God was turned to them. I am afraid it is so with some of you. Oh, dear friends, is it not a dreadful thing that to some men the most terrible thing in the world would be God? If you could get away from God, how happy, how merry, how jolly you would be! You want to depart from him; you are departing from him. One of these days Jesus will tell you to depart. "Keep on as you were," says he, "you were always departing from God; keep on departing. Depart from me, ye cursed!" That will be the consummation of your life. To some of us the thought of God is joy, but to the ungodly nothing would be such good news as to hear that there was no God, indeed, they find a dreadful comfort in endeavoring to be sceptical and unbelieving. God has a dark side to sinners; his justice and his righteousness, which are the comfort of his people, are the despair of the wicked.

word of God has a dark side to sinners. I will tell you what they say: they say, "We do not understand this Book, it is so full of mystery. We find it full of dark sayings, and hard things, and things difficult to be believed. It is all knots and snarls." Just so; you are an Egyptian, it is dark to you. Let me call up the smallest babe in grace, and say, "Dear child, is that what the Bible is to you?" "Oh, no," he says, "it is my joy and my delight. I may not understand it all, but I love it all, and I feed on it all." Oh, it is a good thing when you cannot understand a revealed truth to feed on it, and when you find it to be good for your soul, you will not complain of its mystery. The Bible is dark to the Egyptians, but it is light to Israel.

Now look at the gospel itself. Why, there are many that sit and hear the gospel, and they say, "I do not understand this believing, this atonement, and so on." No, I know you do not; you are an Egyptian, it is dark to you. It is a savor of death unto death to you. I am afraid you will go on quarrelling with it until God ends the quarrel in your destruction. But if you are one of his, you will quarrel no longer, you will say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. The blessed way of salvation by atoning blood I do accept with avidity, and rejoice in it." That will prove you to be

an Israelite; it will be a savor of life unto life to you.

Why, even the blessed Lord Jesus Christ has a dark side for sinners. If he were to come here this morning, oh, how gladly would I stand back to let him come forward and show his surpassing beauty. Why, some of you would think it heaven if you could but see him here and look into his pierced hands and side, and mark that blessed, marred, unutterably lovely visage. Yes, but it could not bring any joy to you who do not love him. You do not trust him; and if the news were given out, "Christ has come," why, you would swoon with fear in your pews, for you would say, "He has come to judgment, and I am unprepared. He that is not my Savior will be my judge, and sentence me to everlasting woe." There is a dark side in the Mediator to the Egyptians while there is a bright side to Israel.

Oh that ye would believe in Jesus Christ! Oh that ye would "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little," for "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." You can come and be numbered with Israel, for the door into Israel is Christ himself. If you come to Christ you have come to his people, you have come to safety, and henceforth "the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward." Amen.

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## **The Glory of Christ - Beheld!**

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth - John 1:14

I cannot refrain from mentioning an incident connected with the perusal of the first chapter of John. I suppose there is not a passage in God's Word which has not at some time or other been blessed to the conversion of a soul. Even the fifth chapter of Genesis, which is so uninteresting to the most of readers, because the verses continually end, "And he died," "And he died," "And he died," has been blessed to one, who from the reiteration of the fact that men who lived nine hundred years nevertheless died, was led to think of his own death. Now, the first chapter of John was the means of the conversion of a celebrated writer, Junius the younger, one who did good service in the Church. His father, perceiving him to be an ungodly young man, put in his way as much as possible the New Testament, and the following is an extract from Junius's account of his own life. "My father, who was frequently reading the New Testament, and had long observed with grief the progress I had made in infidelity, had put that book in my way in his library, in order to attract my attention, if it might please God to bless his design, though without giving me the least intimation of it. Here, therefore, I unwittingly opened the New Testament thus providentially laid before me. At the very first view, although I was deeply engaged in other thoughts, that grand chapter of the evangelist and apostle presented itself to me—'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.' I read part of the chapter, and was so greeted that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument, and the majesty and authority of the composition, as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered; my mind was in amazement, and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was; nor did the agitation cease, but continued till it was at last soothed by a humble faith in him who was made flesh and dwelt among us."

One of the Platonic philosophers, who considered all Christian writers to be but barbarians, nevertheless said of the first chapter of John, "This barbarian hath comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines, than we have done in all our voluminous discourses." And we will to this day glory in the power of the Holy Spirit, that an unlearned and ignorant man like John, the son of Zebedee the fisherman, should be enabled to write a chapter which excels not only the highest flight of eloquence, but the greatest divings of philosophy.

But now for the verse before us. I think, if you look attentively at it, and if you are in some slender measure acquainted with the original, you will perceive that John here compares Christ to that which was the greatest glory of the Jewish Church. Let me read it, giving another translation: "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Now, you remember that in the Jewish Church its greatest glory was that God tabernacled in its midst: not the tent of Moses, not the various pavilions of the princes of the twelve tribes, but the humble tabernacle in which God dwelt, was the boast of Israel. They had the king himself in the midst of them, a present God in their midst. The tabernacle was a tent to which men went when they would commune with God, and it was the spot to which God came manifestly when he would commune with man. To use Matthew Henry's words, it was the "trysting place" between the Creator and the worshipper. Here they met each other through the slaughter of the bullock and the lamb, and there was reconciliation between them twain. Now, Christ's human flesh was God's tabernacle, and it is in Christ that God meets with man, and in Christ that man hath dealings with God. The Jew of old went to God's tent, in the center of the camp, if he would worship: we come to Christ if we would pay our homage. If the Jew would be released from ceremonial uncleanness, after he had performed the rites, he went up to the sanctuary of his God, that he might feel again that there was peace between God and his soul; and we, having been washed in the precious blood of Christ, have access with boldness unto God, even the Father through Christ, who is our tabernacle and the tabernacle of God among men.

Now let us draw the parallel a little further. The greatest glory of the tabernacle itself was the most holy place. In the most holy place there stood the ark of the covenant, bearing its golden lid called the mercy-seat. Over the mercy-seat stood the cherubim, whose wings met each other, and beneath the wings of the cherubim there was a bright light, known to the Hebrew believer by the name of the Shekinah. That light represented the presence of God. Immediately above that light there might be seen at night a pillar of fire, and by day a spiral column of cloud rose from it, which no doubt expanded itself into one vast cloud, which covered all the camp, and shielded all the Israelites from the blaze of the broiling sun. The glory of the tabernacles, I say, was the Shekinah. What does our text say? Jesus Christ was God's tabernacle, and "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Jesus is not the tabernacle without the glory; he is not as the temple when the voice was heard with the rushing of winds before the siege of Jerusalem, crying, "Arise, let us go hence," but it was a temple in which God himself dwelt after a special manner; "for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The apostle however points to a surpassing excellence in Christ the tabernacle, by which he wondrously excels that of the Jewish Church. "Full of grace and truth." The Jewish tabernacle was rather full of law than full of grace. It is true there were in its rites and ceremonies, foreshadowings of grace, but still in repeated sacrifice there was renewed remembrance of sin, and a man had first to be obedient to the law of ceremonies, before he could have access to the tabernacle at all: but Christ is full of grace—not a little of it, but abundance of it is treasured up in him. The tabernacle of old was not full of truth, but full of image, and shadow, and symbol, and picture; but Christ is full of substance; he is not the picture, but the reality; he is not the shadow, but the substance. Herein, O believer, do thou rejoice with joy unspeakable for thou comest unto Christ, the real tabernacle of God. Thou comest unto him who is full of the glory of the Father; and thou comest unto one in whom thou hast not the representation of a grace which thou needest, but the grace itself—not the shadow of a truth ultimately to be revealed, but that very truth by which thy soul is accepted in the sight of God. I put this forth as a matter for you to think over in your retirement. It might have constituted the divisions of the sermon, but as I want more especially to dwell upon

the glory of Christ, we leave these observations as a preface, and go more particularly to that part of the subject where the apostle says, "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

I. In the first place, we have here A FAVORED PEOPLE. "We beheld his glory."

And who are these—the "we" to whom the apostle here refers? They were first of all an elect company, for Jesus said, "I know whom I have chosen;" "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but they who did receive him are described as men who were "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The elect in Christ's day, though they were but a small remnant, nevertheless did exist. There were a few, else had that generation been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah. There were twelves and seventies, and afterwards we read of three thousand, and then of many others who were added to the Church of such as should be saved. In Christ's own day, however, the lines of manifest election seemed to be but very narrow, for there were but few that followed him, and of those who followed him it is said, many from that day went back and walked no more with him; for his truth had sifted the mere professors, and reduced them but to a slender company who followed the Lamb whithersoever he went. The "we," then, who "beheld Christ's glory," were a chosen company.

They were also a called company, for of many of them we read their special calls. Of John himself we read, that Jesus walked by the sea and "saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." Of most of the apostles and immediate attendants' upon Christ's person we have a record of their divine and special call by Christ's own voice; and in the case of those respecting whom there was no record preserved; yet was it, nevertheless, the fact, for he had called them as the shepherd calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. Indeed, in all of us who shall at any time perceive Christ's glory, it must be because he has called us unto this special privilege as the result of his election of



us thereunto.

These who beheld his glory were also an illuminated people; for Christ's glory was not manifest unto the rest of mankind. None of the princes of this world knew him. The priests who had studied the law could not discover him; the members of the Sanhedrim, who were under some expectation of his advent, could not perceive him. In vain the star in the east; in vain the miraculous appearance of angels to the shepherds; the blind generation would not perceive him. In vain the opening of blind eyes and the preaching of the gospel to the poor; in vain the raising of the dead; in vain all those innumerable signs and wonders; they could not perceive his glory; but of those who did perceive it it may be said, as of Simon Barjonas, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee."

We may say, then, of those who beheld his glory, the favored people, that they were chosen of sovereign grace, that they were called effectually by the Holy Spirit, and that they were anointed by the same divine person. And to this day, brethren, it is the same. None believe in Christ but those who are his sheep; no man cometh unto him except the Father who hath sent him draws them, and none ever perceive him but those whose eyes are opened by his own healing fingers. Let the question be passed round among us—Do I perceive his glory? Have I seen something of the splendor of God in the humble man of Nazareth? Have I learned to magnify him in my soul, and have I desired to glorify him in my life, as my God, my life, my love, my all in all, though once despised and rejected of men? If so, beloved—if we can say this from our heart, we are favored indeed, and especially favored if we remember how many there are who have never obtained this grace. Not many great men after the flesh see any glory in Christ; they find their glory in the clash of arms and in garments rolled in blood, but not in him who is meek and lowly of heart, who gives rest to weary souls. Not many wise men have seen any glory in Christ; they find glory in philosophy; they can see glory in nature, but not in him who is nobler than God's creation, inasmuch as he is the only perfect one among the sons of men. They say they see something of glory in providence, and yet fail to perceive anything wonderful in grace. Not many wise men are called. Oh! let us be astonished at the sovereignty of

God, let us be filled with gratitude at his compassion; let us pray that ere we know something of the glory we may know more of it day by day, and may set it forth among the sons of men, that they too may by-and-by perceive his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

II. But now, secondly we have spoken of the favored people—let us spend a minute or two in dwelling upon THEIR EXALTED PRIVILEGE. "We beheld his glory."

What is the word "Beheld?" It says not we heard of his glory, we read of it in prophecy, or we listened to it from the lips of others, but we beheld his glory. What a privilege was this, which was accorded to the first disciples! Have you not often envied them? To see the man, the very man, in whom God dwelt—to walk with him as one's companion along his journeys of mercy—to listen to the words as they stream all living from those eloquent lips—to look into his eyes, and mark the depth of love that glistened there—to see his face, even though it was more marred than that of any man. I have often sympathised in that child-like hymn:—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How he called little children as lambs to his fold,  
I should like to have been with them then.  
I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,  
That his arm had been thrown around me,  
And that I might have seen his kind looks when he said,  
'Let the little ones come unto me.'"

But better still to have been with him—to have leaned this head upon his bosom—to have told him my griefs, as they did who took up the body of John, and went and told Jesus—to have asked of him the explanation of difficulties, as they said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth"—to have had one's faith encouraged by touching his very flesh, as he did of whom it is written, that he put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into his side. But what are we talking about? All this is carnal, all this is of sight, and the Christian is a nobler being than to live and walk by

sight. He lives by faith; and to this day, brethren, there is a sight of Christ which can be had by faith; and therefore, we need not murmur because we are denied the privilege of sight. The sight of Christ it seems, did but little good to those who had it, not even to his disciples, for they were sorry dolts, even though he was the Master. It was only when the Spirit came down at Pentecost, that they began to know Christ, and to understand what he had said to them, though he himself had said it. And truly 'tis better to see Christ by faith than it is to see him by sight, for a sight of him by faith saves the soul; but we might see him with the eye, and yet crucify him, yet be found amongst the greatest rebels against his government and power.

Now we say to you, Have you beheld his glory by faith? Oh! ye have all of you heard of it. We, the ministers of Christ, have tried Sabbath after Sabbath to lift him up, and it is such sweet and blessed work that I would fain do it every day. When we have to preach the law, we feel it a hard and toilsome servitude, but to preach Christ; O how sweet and blessed is the labor! Happy is the man whose lips are ever overflowing with the news of Jesus! Blessed is he whose ministry is full of Christ! He is blessed in his own soul, as well as blessed unto others. Ye have heard of it, then, but what of all this? Ye may hear of his glory and perish in your sins. Ye have read of his glory; this book is in your houses, and ye read it, I trust, each day, thus ye have read the story of the Man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. And ye know how he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and ever sitteth at the right hand of God. But ye may read all this; and yet it shall be a curse and not a blessing, for ye knew him and yet rejected him. You were among his own and he came unto you, and ye received him not. Oh! to behold his glory! This is soul work, saving work, blessed work, everlasting work: have ye any interest in it?

But ye answer, "How can we behold his glory?" Why, faith sees it. Faith looks back to the man who lived and died for us, and sees glory in his shame, honor in his disgraces, riches in his poverty, might in his weakness, triumph in his conflict, and immortality in his death. Nay, Faith is sometimes assisted by Experience; and Experience sees his glory: it sees the glory of his grace in rolling away all our sins; the preciousness of his blood in giving us reconciliation with the Father; the power of the

Spirit in subduing the will; the love of his heart in constantly remembering us upon the throne; and the power of his plea in its perpetual prevalence with God. Experience shows us the glory of Christ in the deep waters, while he puts his arm beneath us and says, "Fear not, thou shalt not be drowned." It shows us the glory in the blazing furnace while the Son of Man treads the glowing coals with his afflicted Israel. Experience shows us the glory of Christ in all the attacks of Satan. While he is our shield he wards off every poisoned arrow, shows us the glory of Christ in helping us to live and enabling us to die, and by-and-bye it shall show us the glory of Christ in enabling us to rise and take possession of the crown which he hath purchased for his children.

And with Experience there is another that helps us to behold the glory of Christ, namely, Communion. Beloved, I hope you know what that means —when in the chamber shut in with God, and the world shut out, our eyes behold him and not another; when we can kneel down in the very posture of the poor agonizing victim of Gethsemane, and see by fellowship the sweat of blood as it streams from the pores of his frame: when we can mark him hounded, hissed, scouted through all the streets of his own city, and taken to Calvary to die. Communion knows something of the bitterness of the cup which he then drank, somewhat of the sharpness of the nails that pierced his hands, and somewhat of the death which was endured when at last he said, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost. Yes, Communion can show us the glory of Christ even in his shame. And then it can take to its wings and show us his glory beyond the skies. These eyes have never seen the Savior, but this heart hath seen him; these lips have never kissed his cheek, for that they might do and I might be a Judas; but the soul hath kissed him and he hath kissed me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine. Think me not enthusiastic or fanatical when I say that the children of God have as near access to Christ to day in the spirit, as ever John had after the flesh; so that there is to this day a rich enjoyment to be obtained by those who seek it, in having actual fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Oh, it is a joy worth worlds! Worldling, if thou hadst ever known the sweetness of this bread, thou wouldst never eat thine own ashes again. O pleasures of the world! ye would cease to tempt us, if ye knew how much more sweet are the pleasures of his face. O thunders of this world! ye would cease your

attempts to frighten us, if ye knew the sweet satisfaction and solace which we find in him, when everything is bitter and disconsolate abroad. Yes, we have beheld his glory, just as surely as if we had seen it with our eyes; as certainly as if we had heard with our ears the acclamations of the glorified, and taken our seat with them at the foot of his throne, or with them had veiled our faces with wings, and cried, "Holy holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent!" Just as truly, though not so fully, we have beheld his glory—the glory of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth.

### III. Thirdly we have in the text, A MOST BLESSED VISION.

We have had the favored persons, their exalted privilege, and now we have their blessed vision. We have beheld his glory. Let us dwell upon the thought of his glory for awhile. My brethren, what a glory have we beheld by faith! By faith, in the first place, we have beheld the glory of his complex person. We have known and believed that he is the everlasting Word, the veritable Son of the Father, we have beheld him by faith, as dwelling with the Father or ever the world was, the beloved of his Father's soul; we have seen him and we have marked that his goings-forth are of old, even from everlasting, we have seen him weighing the clouds, measuring the channels of the great deep, planning the heavens, and meting out the sea, we have seen him with the line and with the plummet, making all things according to his wisdom, and the purpose of the counsel of his will, for "without him was not anything made that was made." We have seen him as God, seated upon the throne of his Father, and we have believed that the sea roareth only as he bids it, that the earth with all the creatures that are therein obeys his glorious will. Lo, in his hands to-day the keys of heaven and death, and hell! We have had no doubts whatever as to his Divinity, for we have seen and known that he is "very God of very God." "God over all, blessed for ever Amen."

We have seen him too as man. We have perceived that he is of the substance of his mother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; man in all infirmities, but not man in any guiltiness of his own; man weak, suffering, hungry, thirsty, dying, but without spot or wrinkle—pure, the immaculate Lamb of God. We have beheld him in the glory of this complex person—not God deteriorated to man, not man deified to God, but God, very God,

and very man; God in all that is God-like, man in all that is manlike, and we have adored him as such. We have seen in him the lustre of a beauty which far outshines all that earth can present us, or all that heaven can offer. Whom have we on earth but Jesus? Who is there in heaven that we can desire beside him?

Next, we have beheld his glory, not merely in his person, but in the motive for which he undertook his great work. That motive was love, love which could have his self interest to be an alloy, love to worthless creatures, love to those who could never repay his love to rebels, love to men who crucified the Lord of glory, and we have said as we have seen this love sparkling like a jewel in a black setting, lying in the heart of the pool, injured, poverty-stricken, houseless, comfortless Man of Nazareth. "There is a glory here in this love that is never to be found elsewhere."

Then, we have beheld the glory of his self-sacrifice. We have looked upon him giving up everything for us, renouncing his crown and sceptre, laying aside his royal robes and splendor, leaving his Father's house, and palaces, and honor, becoming man, nay, a poor man, a despised afflicted man; nay, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. We have read history through, but we never saw a self-sacrifice that could equal his. In him selfishness never lived, and therefore, never needed to be kept in check. He was not his own; his whole history could be written in this: "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Glorious Christ, in this whilst thou wast rejected of men, we have beheld thy glory.

We have beheld, moreover, the glory of his endurance. He is tempted in every point, yet fails in none. The world's glory lies at his feet, he chooses rather our salvation than the glories of earth. He counted the reproach that he should bear for us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We see him mocked, yet never reviling, spit upon, yet never spitting back again even so much as a word of venom. We see him despised, yet never attempting to clear himself; accused, yet silent before the judgment-seat; so giving up himself that he can bear all things, whatsoever they may be. Many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it. Though all the substance of the world's house were offered him that he might renounce his love, yet did he utterly despise the world. Who was ever such a martyr as the Savior? Who endured as he did? Who bore such

contradiction of sinners against himself? Great God, O Jesu,—for such thou art—Great God, there is none like thee in the omnipotence of thine endurance. We have seen thy glory, even when thou didst tabernacle among men.

And we have seen his glory also in his great and blessed perseverance even to the end, having loved his own which were in the world he loved them to the end: having undertaken he went through, he never paused till he could say, "It is finished." Then he gave up the ghost, but not till then. Now to-day behold his perseverance. For Zion's sake he does not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake he never holds his peace day nor night until God shall be pleased to make her glory come forth as the brightness, and her righteousness as a lamp that burneth. On, on, on, neither to the right nor to the left turning for a moment, without pause without making a moment's question, onwards to his destined work he speeds, and never doth he cease till he can say to his Father, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do."

And then, not to keep you too long even upon such a subject as this, we have beheld his glory in his final triumph. Yes, brethren, by faith we have seen in the very moment when the sun was darkened, and when the earth was shaken, and the rocks rent asunder, we have seen Christ darkening the world's glories, we have seen him rending rocky hearts, and bidding the dead arise. We have seen him in the very instant when he gave up the ghost leaping from the cross, pursuing with thunderbolts the prince of hell, and driving him to darker shades below, we have seen him grasping at last the tyrant in his hands, and chaining him to his chariot wheel. Our faith has beheld him riding up the everlasting hills, leading captivity captive, we have seen the gates wide open flung while angels said, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." We have joined by faith the triumph and have swelled the train, we have heard the acclamation of the spirits of the just made perfect; we have heard above all the voice of God, "Well done, thou hast finished thy Father's will." We have seen him ascend in august majesty the throne which is his resting place, and we have seen him sit down on the right hand of the Father, while from heaven and earth, and even hell, there went up one prolonged note of praise, "Hallelujah,

hallelujah, hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Nay, our faith has gone beyond the mere matters of the past. We have beheld his glory, we have seen him as one by one his sheep are brought, and his prayer is heard, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." We have seen him going forth day after day in the chariot of Salvation scattering with both his hands his mercies among the poverty-stricken sons of men, and we have cried unto him, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty." Often has our prayer been, Come forth, O Jesus, heaven obeys thee, earth shakes at thy presence, hell trembles at thee, devils are dismayed. Come forth, put thine arrow to the string, and lift up thy glittering spear. Who, who shall stay thy course, or in thy presence stand. Like chaff before the wind so shall they be driven and as stubble before the flame so shall they be utterly consumed. We have been helped to fly even to the great end of all things, and by faith have seen his second advent. We have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. We have seen him come,—

—"But not the same  
As once in lowliness he came,—  
A silent Lamb before his foes,  
A weary man, and full of woes."

We have seen him come—

—"With dreadful form,  
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm;  
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind!"

We have beheld his millennial reign. We have marked the dwellers in the wilderness blowing before him, the kings of Seba and Sheba offering their gifts; we have heard the universal song from the dwellers in the rocks and the islands of the sea, we have seen the halcyon age of love, when no strife shall vex Messiah's reign. When they shall

--"Hang the useless helmet high  
And study war no more."



And then we have seen the judgment; we have beheld the reeling earth unable to bear the splendor of his triumph; we have heard the wailings of his enemies; we have seen them melt as wax before the flame, utterly consumed like the fat of rams upon his altar. We have at last, by faith, seen the end, when he shall give up the kingdom to God, even our Father; we have heard, I say, the last word of the whole history in the shout of complete victory—

"Lo, Jehovah's banners furled  
Sheathed his sword: he speaks—'tis done!  
And the kingdoms of this world  
Are the kingdoms of his Son.

Then the end,—beneath his rod,  
Man's last enemy shall fall;  
Hallelujah! Christ in God,  
God in Christ is all in all."

IV. Have patience with me while I now conclude. In the fourth place, the text reminds us of **THE TESTIMONY WHICH WE WHO HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY ARE SURE TO BEAR.**

We bear our testimony that he is "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Brothers and sisters, instead of preaching let me bear my testimony; my testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard, and my own heart has tasted—that Christ is the only begotten of the Father. He is divine to me, if he be human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has turned my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy, he hath led my captivity captive, made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of him, to me he must be the only begotten of the Father: blessed be his name.

"O that I could now adore him,  
Like the heavenly host above,

Who for ever bow before him,  
And unceasing sing his love. Happy songsters!  
When shall I your chorus join?"

Thy name is precious even as ointment poured forth. Thou art indeed my Lord and my God, as certainly as ever thou wast the God of Thomas. Like Paul, my soul shall say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Again, I bear my testimony that he is full of grace. Ah! had he not been, I should never have beheld his glory. I was full of sin to overflowing. I was condemned already, because I believed not upon him. He drew me when I wanted not to come, and though I struggled hard, he continued still to draw; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to his mercy-seat, he said, "Thy sins which were many are all forgiven thee be of good cheer." "He took me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. He hath set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth, and established my goings." Let others despise him; but I bear witness that he is full of grace. Oh, I would that some poor sinner here who is full of sin, would remember that Christ is full of grace: I would that thou, poor despairing one—thou who hast given thyself up as a lost soul, wouldst remember that—

"Plenteous grace with him is found,—  
Grade to pardon all thy sin:  
May the healing streams abound,  
Make and keep thee pure within."

Finally I bear my witness, that as he is full of grace he is full of truth. True have his promises been, not one has failed. I have often doubted him, for that I blush; he has never failed me, in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yea and amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have; never brother had such a kinsman as he has been to me; never spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Savior; never soldier

a better captain; never mourner a better comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside him. In life he is my life, and in death he shall be the death of death; in poverty Christ is our riches, in sickness he makes our bed; in darkness he is our star, and in brightness he is our sun; he is the manna of the camp in the wilderness, and he shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan. He is the rock that follows them today; he is the rock on which they shall rest, and within which they shall dwell for ever.

"All hail Immanuel, all divine  
In thee thy Father's glories shine;  
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest one,  
That eyes have seen or angels known.  
O may I live to reach the place  
Where he unveils his lovely face.  
Where all his beauties saints behold,  
And sing his name to harps of gold.-

So be it, Lord. Amen.

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## **Go Back? Never!**

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly...city. - Hebrews 11:15-16

Abraham left his country at God's command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which doth run well for a while, but it is soon ended, and it doth not obey the truth. The Apostle tells us, however, that the people of God were not

forced to continue, because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to return. Frequent opportunities came in their way. There was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padan-Aram. They had news concerning the family house. More than that, there were messages exchanged; servants were sometimes sent. There was also a natural relationship kept up. Did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land; but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, until at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back to the proper life, the life that he had chosen—the life that God had commanded him to live—of a pilgrim and stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled down comfortably and tilled the ground which their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwell in tents, who own no plot of land. They were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now our position is a very similar one. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus have been called out. The very meaning of a church is called out—by Christ; we have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth in this world we have no home, no true abiding home for our spirits. Our home is beyond the flood. We are looking for it among the unseen things. We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were; dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance. I shall this evening first speak to you upon:

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I. THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH WE HAVE HAD, AND STILL HAVE, TO RETURN to the old house if we were mindful of it. Indeed, in the text it seems to me as if the word "opportunities" were not in our case nearly strong enough. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, and to our own sin. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere, but when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world a single hour. It is nothing short of

Godhead's utmost stretch of might that preserves a Christian from going back to his old unregenerate condition. We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such opportunities in our daily calling. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men. You have opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excess, into their forgetfulness of God, or even into their blasphemies. Oh! have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are. Or if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to keep us company and to seek our mischief—the destroyer, the tempter. And how frequently will even solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring! There are snares in company, but there are snares in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour—in conversation, perhaps, in the kitchen about the day's work—or in the field, or on the mart, on land, and on sea. Where can we go to escape from these opportunities to return? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find "a lodge in some vast wilderness" where we could be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No; each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellows, but it is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all. And all of us might say that we find in our avocations from hour to hour many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our calling—the mischief lies in our bones and in our flesh. Opportunities to return in our own nature. Ah! who that knows himself does not find strong incentives to return? Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colours, and though we loathe the sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, "Had it not been for divine grace, my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." How strong is the evil in the best man, how stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail! You may be diligent in secret prayer, and perhaps the devil may have been asleep till you begin to pray, and when you are most fervent then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearest to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return as long as you are in this body will be with you to the very edge of Jordan. You will meet with temptations when you sit

gasping on the banks of the last river, waiting for the summons to cross; it may be that your fiercest temptation may come even then. Oh! this flesh, this body of this death—wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me I shall find opportunities to return.

And, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are prepared for us in any condition of life and any change through which we may pass. For instance, how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return? I sigh to think of how many that appeared very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread have become very dull and cold now that they have become rich. How often does it happen that the poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but when he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, he could not go with God's people any longer. He must seek out the world's fashionable church and join in it to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always gather there, and he has turned aside from the faith—if not altogether, in his heart at least, in the defence of it in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment that you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease, but, on the contrary, luxury often puffeth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospered in this world, oh! watch, lest ye be mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But it is just the same with adversity. Alas! I have had to mourn over Christian men—at least I thought they were—who have grown very poor, and when they have grown poor they hardly felt they could associate with those whom they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should be ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in providence, yet there is that feeling in the human heart, and though there may be no unkind treatment, yet often times the spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have known some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God. It is smoothing the way to return to your old places. And, indeed, I have not wondered when I

have seen some professors grow cold when I have thought how they were compelled to live. Perhaps they lived in a comfortable home before, and now they have to take a room where there is no comfort, and where sounds of blasphemy meet them. Or in some cases, perhaps, they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only grace that can keep grace alive under such circumstances. You see, then, whether you grow rich, or whether you become poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities. It will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful indeed.

Opportunities to return—let me say just this much more about them—are often furnished by the example of others.

"When any turn from Zion's way,  
Alas! what numbers do!  
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,  
Wilt thou forsake me too?"

Departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We cannot think that religion can be true if such a man is a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now, but ah! may grace be given you so that if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And oh! my brethren and sisters, if some of us wished to return, we should have this opportunity to return in a certain sense. We should find that none of our old friends would refuse to receive us. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world receive him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ballroom once; he was the wit that set the table on a roar; he was the man who, above all, was courted when he moved in the circle of the vain and frivolous; glad enough would they be to see him come back. What shouts of triumph would they raise, and how would they welcome him! Oh! may

the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world; but may you for ever forget also your own kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is your Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world shall endear you to the Saviour, and bring you conscious enjoyment of his presence; but opportunities to return I have shown you now are plentiful enough.

Perhaps you will say, "Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?" There is no doubt he could, but it never was the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but at the same time he does lead us there, and intends to do it; and this is for the proving of our faith to see whether it be true faith or not. Only he bids us also pray, "Deliver us from evil." Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless things. He intends that the faith which he gives should have its test, and should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you so that you could not leave your Lord, if it had become a physical impossibility for you to forsake your Saviour, there would be no credit in your abiding faithful to him. He that does not run away because his legs are weak, does not prove himself a hero, but he that could run, but won't run, that could desert his Lord, but won't desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be—the highest, strongest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Saviour. By this you shall know whether you are Christ's or not when you have opportunity to return—if you don't return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and they have got a dog behind them. I do not know to whom that dog belongs, but I'll tell you directly. They are coming to a cross road. One goes to the right, and other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. Now when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which a man is following; but when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest, your pleasure seems to go the other way, if you can part with the world, and keep with Christ, then you



are one of his. So that these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose by trying our faith, and helping us to see whether we are, indeed, the Lord's or no. But we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text tonight) to notice the second point.

II. WE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK BECAUSE WE DESIRE SOMETHING BETTER than we could get by going back. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace, which urges us to: -

"Forget the steps already trod,  
And onward press our way."

Notice how the text puts it, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brethren, we desire something better than this world. Do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart, but ever since you have known something of better things have you ever been contented with the world? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with worldly things. God has prospered you, and you have said, "Oh! this is well!" Your children have been about you; you have had many household joys, and you have said, "I could stay here for ever." Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever get a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Have you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"? I am sure it has been so with you. All God's saints will confess that if the Lord were to say to them, "You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion," they would be broken-hearted men. "Nay, my Lord," they would say, "don't put me off so, don't give me these husks, though thou give mountains of them. Thou art more glorious than all the mountains of praise. Give me thyself, and take these all away if it so please thee, but don't my Lord, don't think I can fill myself with these things." We desire something better.

Notice, next, that there is this about a Christian, that even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, "Now they desire a better"—the word "country" has been inserted by our

translators—they desire something better. I know I do. I do not always enjoy something better. Dark is my path. I cannot see my Lord, I cannot enjoy his presence, and though it may be a little thing to desire, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew. Grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. They desire a better country. And because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled, for a while he is uneasy in it. Abraham's slips—for he made one or two—were made when he had left the land and gone down among the Philistines. But he was not easy there; he must come back again. And Jacob, he had found a wife, nay, two, in Laban's land, but he was not content. No; no child of God can be. Whatever we may find in this world, we shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, "This looks like a little paradise," but there is no paradise this side of the skies—for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farmyard for the hogs, but there is not for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but there is not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them, and they desire a better country; and even if they get entangled for a while in this country, and in a certain measure become citizens of it, they are still uneasy; their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess tonight, and rejoice in the confessions, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight. Our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have, that we value, are ours today by faith. We don't enjoy them yet, but when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age, oh! then we shall come into our wealth, to the mansions and to the glory and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then, you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back, though he has many opportunities, lies in this, that through divine grace he has had produced in his heart desires for something better, and even when he does not as yet enjoy that something better, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to what he was. Dear brethren, cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating effect upon our character in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we

meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up tonight, and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep downstairs, and he goes to see. He looks to that iron safe to be quite sure that it is well secured—he cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, of all the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake. The more they draw us to heaven the more we shall be separated from earth. But I must close with the sweetest part of the text.

### III. WE HAVE FOR THIS REASON GREAT BLESSEDNESS.

"Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Because they are strangers, and because they will not go back to their old abode, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He might be. What poor people God's people are—poor many of them in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things! I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has we should ever have patience with them. We cannot even have, when we judge ourselves rightly, patience with ourselves; but how is it that God bears with the ill-manners of such a froward, weak, foolish, forgetful people as his people are? He might well be ashamed to be called their God if you look upon them as they are. Own them—how can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, "How can I put thee among the children?" and yet he does. Viewed as they are, they are such a rabble in many respects that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them; and yet he never is; and to prove that he is not ashamed of them we have this fact, that he calls himself their God, "I will be your God," and he oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and while he calls himself their God he never forbids them to call him their God; and in the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God—anywhere. He is not ashamed that it should be so. We have sometimes heard of a brother who has become great and rich in the world, and he has had some poor brother or some distant relative, and when he has seen him in the street he has been obliged just to speak to him and own him; but I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if some rich acquaintance happened to be with him who should say,

"Why, Smith, who was that wretched seedy-looking fellow that you spoke to?" He does not like to say, "That is my relation," or "That is my brother." But we find that Jesus Christ, however low his people may sink, and however poor they may be, is not ashamed to call them brethren, nor to let them look up to him in all the depths of their degradation and call him "brother born for adversity." He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And one reason seems to me to be because he does not judge them by what they are, but by what he has prepared for them. Notice the text, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them—he hath prepared for them a city." They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in the poor child of God is a hard-working, labouring man, who is mocked at and despised, but what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory second only to himself. He hath put all things under the foot of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honour in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such a one as that. You see his clothes, you see not him; you see but his earthly tabernacle, but the Spirit, twice born immortal and divine, you see not that. God does. Or if you spiritually perceive that part, you see it as it is, but God sees it as it will be when it shall be like unto Christ, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest child of God as he will be in that day when he shall be like Christ, for he shall see him as he is. It seems in the text that God looks to what he has prepared for these poor people—"he hath prepared for them a city." And methinks that by what he has prepared for them he esteems them and loves them; esteeming them by what he means them to be rather than by what they appear to be.

Now let us look at this preparation just a minute; "he hath prepared for them"—them. I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven; but we must never forget the speciality—"he hath prepared for them a city." That is, for such as are strangers and foreigners, for such as have faith, and therefore have left the world and gone out to follow Christ. He hath prepared for them, not for all of you, but only for such as he has prepared for the city, has he prepared the city. But note what it is. It is a city, which indicates, first, an abiding happiness. They dwelt in tents—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he has

prepared for them a city. Here we are tent-dwellers, but the tent is soon to be taken down. "We know that this earthly house of our tent shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." "He hath prepared for them a city." A city is a place of social joy. In a lonely hamlet one has little company, but in a city much. There all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood—the true Communism; Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, in the highest possible degree. There shall be delightful intercourse. "He hath prepared for them a city." It is a city, too, for dignity. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honour, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but we shall have the highest honour that can be given when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

But I must not dwell on this, delightful theme as it is, for I must close by noticing you, who are the children of God. Don't wonder, don't wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers. Don't expect the men of this world to treat you as one of themselves—if they do, be afraid. Dogs don't bark when a man goes by that they know—they bark at strangers. When people slander and persecute you no longer, be afraid. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Don't expect to find comforts in this world that your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry here a night; we are away in the morning. We may bear the discomforts of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy while you are a pilgrim is your God. So the text says, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Do you want a greater source of consolation than you have got? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the creature streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and you will find it ever springing up. Your God is your true joy: make your joy to be in your God.

Now what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Oh! you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose, but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is the City of Destruction, and as is its name such shall be its end. The king will send his armies against that

wicked city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls, you will lose yourselves. "Whither away?" saith one. "Where can I find comfort then, and security?" You must do as Lot did when the angels pressed him and said, "Haste to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else, but there is life in his death. Oh! fly to him! "But how?" saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burdens of human sin, and he died a substitute for sinners, a real substitute, an efficient substitute for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him. It is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances to his cross. Trust him now and ye are saved. That is, you shall henceforth become a stranger and a pilgrim, and in the better land you shall find the rest which you never shall find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted. Let us away from it. The curse has fallen. Let us get away to the uncursed and ever blessed, where Jesus Christ dwells for ever. God add his blessing on these words for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **Go In Peace**

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. - Luke 7:50

There appear to have been four stages in Christ's dealing with this woman. I know not what had preceded the narrative as we have it

recorded in this chapter; I need not enter into that question now. There had, doubtless, been a work of the Spirit of God upon that woman's heart, turning her from her sin to her Saviour; but when she stood at our Master's feet, raining tears of penitence upon them, wiping them with the hairs of her head, giving to them kisses of love, and anointing them with the ointment from the alabaster box, there were four stages in his gracious dealings with her.

The first was, when he silently accepted her manifestations of love. When the copious tears from her eyes fell upon his feet, he did not withdraw them. When those feet were wiped with the luxuriant tresses of her hair, still he did not withdraw them; and when she ventured upon a yet closer familiarity, and not only kissed his feet, but did not cease to kiss them, he still did not withdraw them, but quietly accepted all that she did. And when the precious ointment was poured in lavish abundance upon those precious feet of his, he did not upbraid her, he did not refuse her gifts, but tacitly accepted them, though without a word of acknowledgment just then. And I think it is a very blessed thing for any one of you to be accepted before God, even though no word has come from his lips assuring you that it is so. When your tears, and cries, and secret love, and earnest seeking,—when your confession of sin, your struggle after faith, and the dawnings of your faith are just accepted by the Lord, though as yet he has not said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," it is a very blessed stage for you to have reached, for the Lord does not begin to accept anyone, even by a silence which means consent, and then draw back. He accepted this woman's love and gifts, though, for a time, he gave her no assurance of that acceptance, and that fact must have greatly cheered her. Manoah's wife said to him, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands;" and I feel sure that, if the Lord had not meant to bestow his mercy upon this woman, he would not have submitted to her washing of his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, and the subsequent continual kissing of them, and anointing of them with the precious ointment.

Our Lord's favourable inclination towards this woman was still more marked in the second stage of his dealings with her, when he began to

defend her against her accuser. When Simon's evil thoughts had condemned her, and her Lord also, Jesus spoke that wonderful parable which set forth the greatness of this woman's love, and justified the extraordinary way in which she manifested it. Christ did not speak to her, but he spoke up for her; and such action as that should be quite sufficient to stay the soul of a believer in him. What though my Lord has not revealed himself to me? He has revealed himself to the Father for me. What if he has not spoken to me? Yet, if he has spoken to God on my behalf,—if he has Spoken in the Scriptures in defence of poor sinners, and advocated their cause in the High Court of Heaven, then how thankful I may be, and how thankful they may be!

In the third stage, our Lord did still more for this woman, for he spoke to her these gracious words, "Thy sins are forgiven." Oh, how they must have dropped like dew into her poor soul! How she must have been refreshed by them! She, who was a sinner,—a great sinner, a public sinner,—ay, a professional sinner, hears her Saviour say to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." The absolution pronounced by the man who calls himself a priest is utterly worthless; but it would be worth while to give a thousand worlds, if we had them, for absolution from our great High Priest! Yes, he who knew all about the woman's sin, he who had power on earth to forgive sins, had said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Was not that enough for her? Would not that short sentence set all the bells of her heart ringing as long as ever she lived?

Ay, but there was still more to follow, for the Lord spoke to her a second time, and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." So she was not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but she was also delivered from the power of sin. Her faith had saved her; she was a saved woman, so she might go in peace. Now she is enjoying the sunlight of full assurance, the bright clear noontide of acknowledged acceptance: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Some of us have this great blessing, and we rejoice in it; but if others of you have not come quite so far on the heavenly road, do not begin murmuring, or doubting. Bless the Lord Jesus Christ for any favour that he has shown to you, a poor unworthy sinner; and if you have even the faintest ray of light, pray him to make your path like that of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If you have



received any token for good from your Lord, be thankful for it, and expect ere long to hear in your soul the sweet music of this gracious word, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

So we have come to our text, in which two things are, very clearly revealed. The first is, an assurance: "Thy faith hath saved thee and the second is, a dismissal: "Go in peace."

I. First, then, here is AN ASSURANCE: "Thy faith hath saved thee."

That assurance teaches us, first, that salvation is a present thing: "Thy faith hath saved thee." This is something that is already accomplished. You are saved; not, you shall be saved; but you are even now in possession of the priceless boon of salvation: "Thy faith hath saved thee." All through the Scriptures, and especially in the New Testament, it is plainly asserted that believers in Christ are already in possession of salvation. I will not stay to prove that it is so, but will rather explain it. If anyone says to me, "In what respect are believers saved?" I answer, that they are saved in the price, in the promise, in the principles, and in the pledge of salvation. The alliteration will help you to remember these four points.

First, they are saved in the price of salvation. All that was necessary to save them from the result of sin has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has ransomed them by his death upon the cross. He has stood in their stead, and borne their sin in his own body on the tree, and suffered the full penalty for it. He has finished the transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in for them everlasting righteousness; so that they are saved. The great work of their salvation was completed by Christ upon the cross when he laid down his life for them, and now they are "bought with a price," even "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Next, they are saved in the promise of salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, hath declared "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God's promise is certain of fulfilment, so that every believer in Jesus may be absolutely sure of

salvation. We often take the cheque of a man who is known to be in a good financial position, and we consider his cheque to be as good as if it were hard cash; and, in like manner, we accept God's promise of salvation as being just as sure as the salvation itself. Paul tells us that God's promise has been confirmed by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Then, thirdly, we have salvation in the principles of it; that is to say, all those graces, which constitute the essentials of a perfect character, are in every true child of God. There is given to us, when we are regenerated, the very same life which we are to live for ever in heaven. We have now the root, the bulb, the seed, out of which immortality and perfection will most surely grow; we may not yet be perfect, but we have that which will come to perfection. We have within us a new nature, which cannot sin, because it is born of God; and this will gradually overcome the old nature, as the Israelites drove out the Canaanites, and we shall be perfect before the throne of the Most High. A man may have, in a very small room, a whole field of wheat lying in embryo, in the seed which is to be sown in the springtime, and reaped in the autumn; and we have, in the gift of God's grace, all heaven in embryo, in the seeds of faith and love, and the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. Thus, we have salvation in the principles of it.

And, once more, we have salvation in the pledge of it; for, when the Holy Spirit enters our heart, his coming there is the pledge and the earnest of heaven. There is a difference between a pledge and an earnest, and what I really mean is rather an earnest than a pledge. A pledge is taken back again, but an earnest is retained. A man, who has his wages to take at the end of the week, may get some earnest money in the middle of the week; and, if his master is what he should be, that will be a pledge that he will get the rest. So, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who virtually puts heaven into us, and makes us fit to be in the heaven which Christ has gone to prepare for us. What a mercy it is to have the witness of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Father, to have aspirations after holiness which we never had in our

unregenerate state! All this is the pledge of heaven; and in having the pledge, we have practically the salvation itself. The Holy Spirit would not have come into our hearts, and given us all these blessings, if he had not meant to "perfect that which concerneth us," and to save us in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Salvation, then, is a present thing, in price, in promise, in principles, and in pledge; but the important question for each of you to answer is,—Have you obtained that salvation? If you have not, you are in a truly terrible condition, for you are "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." But if you have obtained this salvation, then you are indeed rich to all eternity. Perhaps you live in one poor room, and have to work very hard for a livelihood, yet you are much richer than those emperors and kings, who have much earthly pomp and state, but who are not the subjects of God's grace, for you are saved; the Lord has given you that salvation which can never be taken away from you. So, rejoice in this salvation; and, if you have little else to cover you, let this salvation be your royal apparel; let this salvation load your table with heavenly dainties; let this salvation smooth your path, however rough it may be, and cheer your heart, however great your trials may be.

So, this assurance means that salvation is a present thing.

Next, it teaches us that salvation is obtained by faith: "Thy faith hath saved thee." "But," says someone, "was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who saved her?" Yes, certainly it was; but do you see what Christ does? He is so fond of faith that he takes the crown from his own head, and puts it on the head of faith, as he says to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Is that a safe thing for Christ to do? Oh, yes! because faith at once removes the crown from her own head, and puts it back upon Christ's, saying, "Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory." Christ loves to crown faith because faith loves to crown Christ. As for boasting,—faith cannot tolerate that for a moment; she hurls it out of the window, and will have nothing further to do with it. Our Saviour speaks thus, "Thy faith hath saved thee," because he knows that it will be understood that faith is only the connecting link with himself,—that he really works the

salvation, but that the faith of the believer is the means of obtaining it.

There are four things concerning this faith, which I want you to notice, and I will put them under the same letter that I used before, so that it may be the easier for you to remember them. First, this woman's faith was a personal faith: "Thy faith hath saved thee." O dear friends, I implore you to give up all idea, of being saved by anybody else's faith! Thou must believe in Jesus for thyself, or thou wilt be a lost man for ever. What a dreadful falsehood it is when men stand up, as sponsors for a child, and promise and vow various things, none of which are within their power to perform! As to anything that anybody ever promised with regard to your soul, what can another person do for you in such a matter as that? The most earnest faith in your parents can never bring you to heaven, unless you also have faith in Jesus. There is a great blessing which may come to us through the faith of others, if they exercise it in prayer on our behalf; but, still, salvation can never come to us apart from our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee;"—not Peter's faith, nor James's faith, nor John's faith, but her own; and thou also must have faith for thyself, or thou wilt assuredly be lost. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but if thou dost not personally believe on him, thou canst not be saved.

Notice, next, that this woman's faith was a practical faith. She was saved by faith, and not by works; but, she was not saved by a faith which did not produce works. Think of her works,—she washes the Master's feet with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head; she kisses them repeatedly, and anoints them with her precious ointment. I may truly say of her, "She hath done what she could." All that her affection prompted, her devotion performed; for she had the faith which works by love; and if you, dear friends, have a faith that never works for Christ, I beg you to get rid of it at once, for it will turn out to be a bastard faith. The faith that never kisses his feet is a faith that he will tread under his feet. The faith that never anoints him is a faith that will have no fragrance in his esteem, and he will not accept it. We are not saved by works and faith combined, much less by works alone; but, nevertheless, the faith which saves is not a barren faith; it produces the good fruit of love and service for Christ,

So this woman's faith was personal and practical. It was also a penitent faith. While she stood at Christ's feet, behind him, her eyes showered tears upon them as she wept over her sin. I am always doubtful of the genuineness of a dry-eyed faith. The longer I live, the more I am afraid of those people who profess to leap into faith without any repentance; and there seem to be some, in these days, who do not believe in the old-fashioned sorrow for sin. I would rather see some men less confident than they are if they were more humbled on account of their past transgressions. This woman manifested a truly penitent faith.

And, once more, it was a pure faith;—I use that word pure to help your memory, and I mean that her faith was perfectly simple. She wept, but she did not trust in her weeping. She anointed Christ's feet with the ointment, but she did not rely upon her self-sacrifice. She kissed his feet, but she did not depend upon her kisses. Where was her trust all placed? Why, upon Christ, and-upon him alone. I do not know that she had ever read the Old Testament; certainly, she could not have read the New Testament, for it was not written then. She may not have known much about the Bible, but she knew him who is the very sum and substance of the Bible. I have heard people talk about a Body of Divinity; but there never was but one in the highest sense of the term, and Jesus Christ is that Body of Divinity. He is, in the truest sense, "the Word of God." This woman had seen him, she had learned to know him, he had forgiven her sin, and she had come into that house full of love to him, and full of trust in him, and now from his own lips she receives this gracious assurance, "Thy faith hath saved thee." It was faith in him, and in nothing else. There was not, and there could not, have been, in her case, anything to trust to but Christ. She was, in a very emphatic sense, a sinner; she had not set herself up as being a person of good character; there were, no doubt, scores of people in the city who could have borne lamentable evidence of her sinfulness. But she trusted herself absolutely to Jesus Christ, the sinners' Saviour, and she trusted him alone, and so her faith was proved to be of that pure kind that saves all who exercise it. Let yours be like that, dear friend,—personal, practical, penitential, and pure.

Further, upon this first point, note that salvation may be a matter of

assurance. This woman had the assurance from Christ's own lips, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Those of you who were at the prayer-meeting here, last Monday night, will remember that one of our brethren, when he was giving an address, made you smile when he said, "He that believeth On the Son hath everlasting life," and then added, "h-a-t-h,—that spells 'got it.'" That is a queer mode of spelling, which is not taught at the Board School; yet it is a heavenly way of spelling, and it is perfectly correct. "H-a-t-h;—that spells 'got it.'" If you have the blessing of salvation, there is a possibility of knowing that you have it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" he has got it; he has got it now.

"I should believe it," says one, "if Jesus Christ spoke to me, and said so." My dear friend, he has said it in his Word. Is that Word a lie, or is it true? If it is true, then what more do you want? Christ has written it in his Word; and I like a thing that is written even better than that which is spoken. You know how a man says, when he wants a guarantee about a bargain, "Give it to me in writing; for some people will swear that they never said what we ourselves heard them say, so give it me in black and white." Well, here it is in black and white: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and again, "There is therefore now"—"now," mark,—"no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" and yet again, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, cannot you also say, "got it"?

Oh, but!" says someone, "I want evidence that it is so." Very well, you shall have evidence; you shall have the witness of the Spirit who has renewed you; you shall have the witness of your changed life; you shall have the witness of your new character; but, first of all, is not Christ's Word sufficient for you? Is not Christ's written Word enough? Is not this Book, which you believe to have been inspired by the Holy Ghost, and which reveals the Word of the Lord, enough for you? It is enough for me. If all the men in the world were to come, one after another, after I had read something in the Bible, and were all to say, in their different languages, "That is a lie," I should not believe it an atom the less; and suppose they were all to stand up, and say, "It is true," I should reply, "Of course it is, but I do not need your word to confirm what Christ has said." I am perfectly satisfied if he has said it; and there it stands, and all the

powers of hell cannot prevail to overthrow it. Here is the solid rock for a soul to rest upon. Christ says, at this moment, to everyone who believes in him, and trusts in his blood and righteousness, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

II. So we come to the latter part of our text, which is, A DISMISSION: "Go in peace." What did Our Lord mean by saying this?

I think he meant, first, "Quit this place of controversy, and go in peace." Do you notice that it was when those, who sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" that he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace"? See the black looks of those Jews, those Pharisees, round about Simon's table. Why, they are as sour as vinegar, and full of all kinds of scepticism, so the Saviour says to the woman, "Go home good soul, away from all of them." So, dear friends, whenever you meet with a book that is full of scepticism and unbelief,—especially you who have lately found the Saviour,—you had better throw it away. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Unbelief will be no help to thee; thy faith hath already saved thee; then, what more dost thou want? Thou hast the assurance within thine own soul that thou art saved; do not go anywhere, or do anything to damage that assurance. I do not think it is worth while to go through a horse pond, and get covered with filth, just for the pleasure of being afterwards washed. It may be that some strong man, like another Samson, may have to go in among the Philistines, and pull their temple down about their ears; but poor Hannah could not do that, and those who are like her—the women of a sorrowful spirit,—had better go home, and get out of the way of that set of wranglers. They may even be wrangling professors, squabbling about this doctrine and that, and perhaps not understanding any of them properly; so the Saviour says to you, "You have the assurance of salvation; do not let anybody worry you out of that. Go in peace." This is what the apostle means when he says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Then, next, I think our Saviour meant his words to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace;" to be a kind of dismissal of her case from the Court. Here is Simon in thought accusing her, and thinking that she

ought not to be permitted to come and touch the Master's feet, and here is the Lord Jesus Christ not only becoming a pleader for her, but deciding the case in her favour as he says to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." This was in effect saying, "Your case is dismissed; there is nothing against you. The Court clears you; go home, good soul." What a mercy it is when the Lord speaks thus to anyone! "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Christ has given us our dismissal from the Court of Justice, so let us "go in peace."

May not our Lord also have meant something more than we see upon the surface of these words? May he not have meant, "Go home in peace to thy daily avocations"? Ah! she had done a deal of mischief in that home of hers by her sin; for there never was a fallen woman who brought a blessing to her family while she lived in sin. And now that the Saviour has given to her the assurance of salvation, he says to her, "Go home, and attend to your ordinary household duties. Go and act as a woman should. Fulfil your part as a mother, or a daughter, or a servant, or whatever your calling may be. Go in peace."

Do you not also think that this dismissory word would last her as long as ever she lived,—and that, all her life through, she would seem to hear the Saviour saying to her, "Go in peace"? Perhaps she was to go upstairs, and lie there ill; but she was to "go in peace." Possibly, she was to come down, and to confront opposition and persecution; if so, she was still to hear this message, "Go in peace." I think that word would come to her every morning as soon as ever she woke; and when she was about to close her eyes, and go to sleep, she would still hear it. With such a gracious message as that, she could even go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and "fear no evil." It may be that is just what the Lord meant it for,—that, when she came to die,—and she may have died a martyr's death, we cannot tell,—at any rate, whenever she came to die, this message was ringing in her ears, "Go in peace."

The practical point that I want to bring home to you Christian people, to



you who are saved, is this. Beloved friends, as you go to your families, as you go through life, as you go into eternity, I pray you to "go in peace." It is heaven begun below to possess "the peace Of God, which passeth all understanding." Peace should be the continual portion of all believers. This is what the angels sang when our Lord Jesus appeared on earth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to-ward men." And as it was at the beginning Of Our Saviour's life, so it was at the end, for this was our Lord's legacy to all his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." That which gives one of his titles even to God himself—for he is called "the God of peace,"—should be very precious to your soul.

Peace is the fit result of what the Saviour has done for you. Has he forgiven you? Then you have peace. Has he saved you? Oh, then, feel an inward peace which none can take from you! Did he die for you? Then you can never die, in the full meaning of the word, so be at rest about that matter. Has he risen for you? Then, because he lives, you shall live also; so, let not your heart be troubled, but be at peace. Will he come again to receive you unto himself? Oh, then, let your peace be like a river flowing from the very throne of God!

This peace within your heart is the blessed fruit of the Spirit of peace. Where the Spirit of God is, there must be peace, for he is the Sacred Dove. The fruit of the Spirit within us should be "quietness and assurance for ever." Do not despise this priceless boon of peace; but, as saved souls, covet more and more of it. Do you know what I mean by talking thus to you? Suppose you are thinking to yourself, "Alas! I am going home to an ungodly husband;" never mind, dear wife, "go in peace." "Oh, but! tomorrow, I have to go out among ungodly men." Never mind; "go in peace." Do not go among them disturbed and fluttered, but sing to yourself softly, -

"My heart is resting, O my God!"

"Go in peace." Perhaps you are going to the sick-bed of one of your dearest friends. Possibly, there is one at home, who is so depressed in spirit as to depress you too. Never mind; "go in peace." It will strengthen

you to have your own heart at peace. I remember once seeing an accident on a hill. I feared that a man had broken his leg, and I know that someone ran to fetch a doctor, and when he came, to my surprise, he walked coolly up to where the man was. If I had been sent for, I should have ran myself out of breath to get to the poor man; and when I reached him, I should have been all of a tremble, and should not have been able to do anything properly. But when the doctor heard that there was a man with his leg broken, he walked quietly to the spot, and the result was that he was able to do his work properly. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry. It is marvellous to contemplate the leisure of the greatest Worker who ever lived. He always moved along with a holy calm and quiet dignity, and he therefore did everything well. Do you likewise; "go in peace," for it shall be your strength. Sometimes, your strength is to sit still; and, always, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength.

This is the way in which you are to glorify God in your life,—by going in peace. When this woman went back to her home,—that same woman who had been such a poor, trembling, broken, bruised reed, because of her sin,—those who knew her enquired, "What has come to Mary?"—if that was her name; I do not know;—"What has come to her? Why, she looks so placid, so calm, she is not like the same woman that she used to be." I have no doubt that she was rather quick-tempered, for most very loving spirits are like that. "But now," say her friends, "she takes things so differently; she is so still, and quiet, and restful." Just so; and then they took knowledge of her, that she had been with Jesus, and had learned of him, for that was his style and his manner also.

Ah, dear hearts! if Christ has saved you, you have the best reason in all the world for being the quietest, happiest people who ever lived. One said, one day, to a person who had spoken of his salvation in tones of assurance, "You ought to be the happiest man that lives;" and he answered, "So I am." It was well known that he was very poor, that he did not know where he would get a second coat to his back; but, then, he thought that he did not want a second coat till he had worn out the first one. They said that he did not know where he would get his next breakfast; but he had had his supper, so he was quite content to wait till God should give him his breakfast. He had such simple faith in God that,

though he was so very poor, yet he said he was the happiest man in all the world. Go in for that, beloved, for surely you have a right to it if you are a believer in Jesus. Your greatest sorrows are over, your heaviest burdens Christ has carried; the most terrible disaster that could ever happen to you has been averted by him; the most fearful calamity that you once had cause to dread can never come to you. You are an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You shall have all you really need in this life, and you shall have the heaven of God in the life to come. The supreme act of God, by which he blesses eternally, has been performed upon you already. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have all united to bless you; and the covenant of peace is signed, and sealed, and ratified, and you must and shall conquer at the last. So, "Let not Your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid;" but say to yourself,--

"All that remains for me  
Is but to love and sing,  
And wait until the angels come  
To bear me to the King."

God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **God Alone The Salvation Of His People**

He only is my rock and my salvation. - Psalm 92:2

How noble a title. So sublime, suggestive, and overpowering. "MY ROCK." It is a figure so divine, that to God alone shall it ever be applied.

Look on yon rocks and wonder at their antiquity, for from their summits a thousand ages look down upon us. When this gigantic city was as yet unfounded they were grey with age; when our humanity had not yet breathed the air, 'tis said that these were ancient things; they are the

children of departed ages. With awe we look upon these aged rocks, for they are among nature's first-born. You discover, embedded in their bowels, the remnants of unknown worlds, of which, the wise may guess, but which, nevertheless, they must fail to know, unless God himself should teach them what hath been before them. You regard the rock with reverence, for you remember what stories it might tell, if it had a voice; of how through igneous and aqueous agency, it has been tortured into the shape it now assumes. Even so is our God pre-eminently ancient. His head and his hair are white like wool, as white as snow, for he is "the ancient of days," and we are always taught in Scripture to remember, that he is "without beginning of years." Long ere creation was begotten, "from everlasting to everlasting," he was God.

"My rock!" What a history the rock might give you of the storms to which it has been exposed; of the tempests which have raged in the ocean at its base, and of the thunders which have disturbed the skies above its head; while it, itself, has stood unscathed by tempests, and unmoved by the buffetings of storms. So with our God. How firm hath he stood—how steadfast hath he been—though the nations have reviled him, and "the kings of the earth have taken counsel together!" By merely standing still he hath broken the ranks of the enemy, without even stretching forth his hand! With motionless grandeur like a rock he hath broken the waves, and scattered the armies of his enemies, driving them back in confusion. Look at the rock again: see how firm and unmoved it stands! It doth not stray from place to place, but it abideth fast for evermore. Other things have changed, islands have been drowned beneath the sea, and continents have been shaken; but see, the rock stands as steadfast as if it were the very foundation of the whole world, and could not move till the wreck of creation, or the loosening of the bands of nature. So with God: how faithful he is in his promises! how unalterable in his decrees! how unswerving! how unchanging!

The rock is immutable, nought hath been worn from it. Yon old granite peak hath gleamed in the sun, or worn the white veil of winter snow—it hath sometimes worshipped God with bare uncovered head, and at other times the clouds furnished it with veiling wings, that like a cherub, it might adore its Maker, but yet itself hath stood unchanged. The frosts of

winter have not destroyed it, nor have the heats of summer melted it. It is the same with God. Lo, he is my rock; he is the same, and his kingdom shall have no end. Unchangeable he is in his being, firm in his own sufficiency; he keeps himself immutably the same; and "therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The ten thousand uses of the rock, moreover, are full of ideas as to what God is. You see the fortress standing on a high rock, up which the clouds themselves can scarcely climb, and up whose precipices the assault cannot be carried, and the armed cannot travel, for the besieged laugh at them from their eminence. So is our God a sure defence; and we shall not be moved if he hath "set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings." Many a giant rock is a source of admiration from its elevation; for on the summit we can see the world outspread below, like some small map; we mark the river or broadly spreading stream, as if it were a vein of silver inlaid in emerald. We discover the nations beneath our feet, "like drops in a bucket," and the islands are "very little things" in the distance, while the sea itself seems but a basin of water, held in the hand of a mighty giant. The mighty God is such a rock; we stand on him, and look down on the world, counting it to be a mean thing. We have climbed to Pisgah's top, from the summit of which we can see across this world of storms and troubles to the bright land of spirits—that world unknown to ear or eye, but which God hath revealed to us by the Holy Ghost. This mighty rock is our refuge, and it is our high observatory, from which we see the unseen, and have the evidence of things which as yet, we have not enjoyed. I need not, however, stop to tell you all about a rock, we might preach for a week upon it; but we give you that for your meditation during the week. "He is my rock." How glorious a thought! How safe am I, and how secure: and how may I rejoice in the fact, that when I wade through Jordan's stream he will be my rock! I shall not walk upon a slippery foundation, but I shall tread on him who cannot betray my feet; and I may sing, when I am dying, "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

We now leave the thought of the rock, and proceed to the subject of our discourse, which is this: that God alone is the salvation of his people.

"He ONLY is my rock and my salvation."

We shall notice, first, the great doctrine, that God only is our salvation;

secondly, the great experience, to know and to learn that "he only is my rock and my salvation"; and, thirdly, the great duty, which you may guess at, which is, to give all the glory and all the honor, and place all our faith on him who "only is our rock and our salvation."

I. The first thing is, THE GREAT DOCTRINE—that God "only is our rock and our salvation." If any one should ask us what we would choose for our motto, as preachers of the gospel, we think we should reply, "God only is our salvation." The late lamented Mr. Denham has put at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "Salvation is of the Lord." Now, that is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and the substance of it. If any one should ask you what you mean by a Calvinist, you may reply, "He is one who says, salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything that departs from this and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rocky truth, "God is my rock and my salvation." What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ—the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? and what is that heresy of Arminianism but the secret addition of something to the complete work of the Redeemer? You will find that every heresy, if rough to the touchstone, will discover itself here, it departs from this, "He only is my rock and my salvation."

Let us now explain this doctrine fully. By the term "salvation" here, I understand not simply regeneration and conversion, but something more. I do not reckon that to be salvation which regenerates me, and then puts me in such a position that I may fall out of the covenant and be lost; I cannot call that a bridge which only goes half-way over the stream; I cannot call that salvation, which does not carry me all the way to heaven, wash me perfectly clean, and put me among the glorified who sing constant hosannahs around the throne. By salvation, then if I may divide it into parts, I understand deliverance, preservation continually through life, sustentation, and the gathering up of the whole in the perfecting of the saints in the person of Jesus Christ at last.

1. By salvation, I understand deliverance from the house of bondage,

wherein by nature I am born, and being brought out into the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free, together with a putting "on a rock, and establishing my goings." This I understand to be wholly of God. And I think I am right in that conclusion, because I find in Scripture that man is dead; and how can a dead man assist in his own resurrection? I find that man is utterly depraved, and hates the divine change. How can a man, then, work that change which he himself hates? I find man to be ignorant of what it is to be born again, and like Nicodemus, asking the foolish question, "How can a man enter again into his mother's womb, and be born?" I cannot conceive that a man can do that which he does not understand: and if he does not know what it is to be born again, he cannot make himself to be born again. No. I believe man to be utterly powerless in the first work of his salvation. He cannot break his chains, for they be not chains of iron, but chains of his own flesh and blood; he must first break his own heart before he can break the fetters that bind him. And how should man break his own heart? What hammer is that which I can use upon my own soul to break it, or what fire can I kindle which can dissolve it? Nay, deliverance is of God alone. The doctrine is affirmed continually to Scripture; and he who doth not believe it doth not receive affirmed continually in Scripture; and he who doth not believe it doth not receive God's truth. Deliverance is of God alone; "Salvation is of the Lord."

2. And if we are delivered and made alive in Christ, still preservation is of the Lord alone. If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful: if I have graces, God gives me graces; if I have fruits, God gives me fruits; if I hold on in a consistent life, God holds me on in a consistent life. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation, except what God himself first does in me. Whatever I have, all my goodness is of the Lord alone. Wherein I sin, that is my own; but wherein I act rightly, that is of God, wholly and completely. If I have repulsed an enemy, his strength nerved my arm. Did I strike a foeman to the ground? His strength sharpened my sword and gave me courage to strike the blow. Do I preach his word? It is not I, but grace that is in me? Do I live to God a holy life? It is not I, but Christ that liveth in me? Am I sanctified? I did not sanctify myself; God's Holy Spirit sanctifies me. Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by God's chastisements. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor

teaches me. I find in God all I want; but I find in myself nothing. "He only is my rock and my salvation."

3. And again: sustentation also is absolutely requisite. We need sustentation in providence for our bodies, and sustentation in grace for our souls. Providential mercies are wholly from the Lord. It is true that rain falls from heaven, and waters the earth, and "maketh it bring forth and bud, that there may be seed, for the sower, and bread for the eater;" but out of whose hand cometh the rain, and from whose fingers do the dew drops distil? It is true, the sun shines, and makes the plants grow, and bud, and bring forth the blossom, and his heat ripens the fruit upon the tree; but who gives the sun his light, and who scatters the genial heat from him? It is true, I work and toil; this brow sweats; these hands are weary; I cast myself upon my bed, and there I rest, but I do not "sacrifice to mine own drag," nor do I ascribe my preservation to my own might. Who makes these sinews strong? who makes these lungs like iron, and who makes these nerves of steel? "God only is the rock of my salvation." He only is the salvation of my body and the salvation of my soul. Do I feed on the word? That word would be no food for me unless the Lord made it food for my soul, and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from heaven? What is that manna, but Jesus Christ himself incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink. Am I continually receiving fresh increase of might? Where do I gather my might? My salvation is of him: without him I can do nothing. As a branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can I except I abide in him.

4. Then if we gather the three thoughts in one. The perfection we shall soon have, when we shall stand yonder, near God's throne, will be wholly of the Lord. That bright crown which shall sparkle on our brow, like a constellation of brilliant stars, shall have been fashioned only by our God. I go to a land, but it is a land which the plough of earth hath never upturned, though it be greener than earth's best pastures, and though it be richer than all her harvests ever saw. I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man hath builded; it is not of mortal architecture; it is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". All I shall know in heaven, will be given by the Lord; and I shall say, when



at last I appear before him, -

"Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise."

II. And now, beloved, we come to THE GREAT EXPERIENCE. The greatest of all experience, I take it, is to know that "he only is our rock and our salvation." We have been insisting upon a doctrine; but doctrine is nothing unless proved in our experience. Most of God's doctrines are only to be learned by practice—by taking them out into the world, and letting them bear the wear and tear of life. If I ask any Christian in this place whether this doctrine is true, if he has had any deep experience, he will reply, "True! ay, that it is; not one word in God's Bible is more true than that, for indeed salvation is of God alone." "He only is my rock and my salvation." But, beloved, it is very hard to have such an experimental knowledge of the doctrine that we never depart from it. It is very hard to believe that "salvation is of the Lord." There are times when we put our confidence in something else but God, and sin by linking hand-in-hand with God—something besides him. Let me now dwell a little upon the experience which will bring us to know that salvation is of God alone.

The true Christian will confess that salvation is of God alone effectively; that is, that "he works in him to will and to do of his own pleasure." Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God; of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun; but the sun did light me. I did not commence my spiritual life—no, I rather kicked and struggled against the things of the Spirit: when he drew me, for a time, I did not run after him: there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me—warnings were cast to the wind—thunders were despised; and as for the whispers of his love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, and of all who know the Lord, "He only is my salvation, and your salvation too." It was he who turned your heart, and brought you down on your knees. You can say in very deed, then -

"Grace taught my soul to pray,  
Grace made my eyes o'erflow."

And coming to this moment, you can say, -

"'Tis grace has kept me to this day,  
And will not let me go."

I remember, when I was coming to the Lord, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of him. One day when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the man's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, "How did you come to be a Christian?" I sought the Lord. "But how did you come to seek the Lord?" The thought flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek him. I am sure you will not be many weeks a Christian, certainly not many months, before you will say, "I ascribe my change wholly to God." I desire to make this my constant confession. I know there are some who preach one gospel in the morning, and another at night—who preach a good sound gospel in the morning, because they are preaching to saints, but preach falsehood in the evening, because they are preaching to sinners. But there is no necessity to preach truth at one time and falsehood at another. "The word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." There no need to put anything else in it, in order to bring sinners to the Saviour. But, my brothers, you must confess that "Salvation is of the Lord." When you turn back to the past, you must say, "My Lord, whatever I have, thou gavest it me. Have I the wings of faith? I was a wingless creature once. Have I the eyes of faith? I was a blind creature once; I was dead, till thou madest me alive; blind, till thou openedst my eyes; my heart was a loathsome dunghill, but thou puttest pearls there, if pearls there be, for pearls are not the produce of dunghills; thou hast given me all I have;" And so, if you look at the present, if you experience be that of a child of God, you will trace all to him; not only all you have had in the past, but all you have now. Here you are, sitting in your pew this morning; now, I just want you to review where you stand. Beloved, do you think you would be where you are now if it were not for divine grace? Only think what a strong temptation you

had yesterday, they did "consult to cast you down from your excellency;" perhaps you were served like I am sometimes. The devil sometimes seems to drag me right to the edge of a precipice of sin by a kind of enchantment, making me forget the danger by the sweetness which surrounds it; and just when he would push me down, I see the yawning gulph beneath me, and some strong hand put out, and I hear a voice saying, "I will preserve him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." Do you not feel, that ere this sun goes down you will be damned, if grace does not keep you? Have you anything good in your heart that grace did not give you? If I thought I had a grace that did not come from God, I would trample it beneath my feet, as not being a godly virtue; I would guess it to be but a counterfeit, for it could not be right if it did not come from the mint of glory. It may look ever so much like the right thing: but it is certainly bad unless it came from God. Christian! canst thou say, of all things past and present, "He only is my rock and my salvation?"

And now look forward to the future. Man! think how many enemies thou hast; how many rivers thou hast to cross, how many mountains to climb, how many dragons to fight, how many lions' teeth to escape, how many fires to pass through, how many floods to wade. What thinkest thou, man? Can thy salvation be of anything except of God! Oh! if I had not that everlasting arm to lean upon, I would cry, "Death! hurl me anywhere; anywhere out of the world." If I had not that one hope, that one trust, bury me ten thousand fathoms deep beneath creation, where my being might be forgotten! Oh! put me far away, for I am miserable if I have not God to help me all my journey through. Are you strong enough to fight with one of your enemies without your God? I trow not. A little silly maid may cast a Peter down, and cast you down too, if God do not keep you. I beseech you, remember this; I hope you know it by experience in the past; but try to remember it in the future, wherever you go, "Salvation is of the Lord." Do not get looking at your heart, do not get examining to see whether you have anything to recommend you, but remember, "Salvation is of the Lord." "He only is my rock and my salvation."

Effectively, it all comes of God; and I am sure we must add, meritoriously. We have experienced that salvation is wholly of him. What

merits have I? If I were to scrape together all I ever had, and then come to you and beg all you have got, I should not collect the value of a farthing among you all. We have heard of some Catholic, who said that there was a balance struck in his favour between his good works and his bad ones, and therefore he went to heaven. But there is nothing of the sort here; I have seen many people, many kinds of Christians, and many odd Christians, but I never yet met with one who said he had any merits of his own when he came to close quarters. We have heard of perfect men, and we have heard of men perfectly foolish, and we have thought the characters perfectly alike. Have we any merits of our own? I am sure we have not, if we have been taught of God. Once we thought we had; but there came a man called Conviction into our house one night, and took away our gloryings. Ah! we are vile still. I don't know whether Cowper said quite right, when he said, -

"Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,  
And cut up all my follies by the root,  
I never trusted in an arm but thine—  
Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine!"

I think he made a mistake, for most Christians get trusting in self at times, but we are forced to own that "salvation is of the Lord," if we consider it meritoriously.

My dear friends, have you experienced this in your own hearts? Can you say "amen" to that, as it goes round? Can you say, "I know that God is my helper?" I dare say you can, most of you; but you will not say it so well as you will by-and-bye, if God teach you. We believe it, when we commence the Christian life; we know it afterwards; and the longer we live, the more we find it to be the truth—"Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, but blessed is he who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." In fact, the crown of Christian experience is to be delivered from all trust in self or man, and to be brought to rely wholly and simply on Jesus Christ. I say, Christian, thy highest and noblest experience is not to be groaning about thy corruption, is not to be crying about thy wanderings, but is to say -

"With all my sin, and care, and woe,

His Spirit will not let me go."

"Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." I like what Luther says: "I would run into Christ's arms if he had a drawn sword in his hands." Trust is called venturesome believing; but as an old divine says, there is no such thing as venturesome believing; we cannot venture on Christ; it is no venture at all; there is no hap-hazard in the least degree. It is a holy and heavenly experience, when we can go to Christ, amid the storm, and say, "Oh! Jesus, I believe I am covered by thy blood;" when we can feel ourselves to be all over rages, and yet can say, "Lord, I believe that through Christ Jesus, ragged though I am, I am fully absolved." A saint's faith is little faith when he believes as a saint; but a sinner's faith is true faith when he believes as a sinner. The faith, not of a sinless being, but the faith of a sinful creature—that is the faith which delights God. Go, then, Christian: ask that this may be thy experience, to learn each day, "He only is my rock and my salvation."

III. And now, in the third place, we speak of THE GREAT DUTY. We have had the great experience; now we must have the great duty.

The great duty is—if God only be our rock, and we know it, are we not bound to put all our trust in God, to give all our love to God? If God be all I have, sure, all I have shall be God's. If God alone is my hope, sure, I will put all my hope upon God; if the love of God is alone that which saves, sure, he shall have my love alone. Come, let me talk to thee, Christian, for a little while, I want to warn thee not to have two Gods, two Christs, two friends, two husbands, two great Fathers; not to have two fountains, two rivers, two suns, or two heavens, but to have only one. I want to bid thee now, as God hath put all salvation in himself, to bring all thyself unto God. Come, let me talk to thee!

In the first place, Christian, never join anything with Christ. Wouldest thou stitch thy old rags into the new garment he giveth? Wouldest thou put new wine into old bottles? Wouldest thou put Christ and self together? Thou mightest as well yoke an elephant and an emmet; they could never plough together. What! wouldest thou put an archangel in the same harness with a worm, and hope that they would drag thee through the sky! How inconsistent! how foolish! What! thyself and Christ? Sure,

Christ would smile; nay, Christ would weep, to think of such a thing! Christ and man together? CHRIST AND CO? No, it never shall be; he will have nothing of the sort; he must be all. Note how inconsistent it would be to put anything else with him; and note, again, how wrong it would be. Christ will never bear to have anything else places with him. He calls them adulterers and fornicators that love anything else but him; he will have thy whole heart to trust in him, thy whole soul to love him, and thy whole life to honor him. He will not come into thy house, till thou putttest all the keys at his girdle; he will not allow thee to give him all the keys but one; he will not come till thou givest him garret, parlour, drawing-room, and cellar too. He will make thee sing -

"Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I should give him all."

Mark thee, Christian; it is a sin to keep anything from God.

Again, Christ is very grieved if you do it. Assuredly you do not desire to grieve him who shed his blood for you. Surely there is not one child of God here who would like to vex his blessed elder Brother. There cannot be one soul redeemed by blood who would like to see those sweet blessed eyes of our best beloved bedewed with tears. I know ye will not grieve your Lord; will ye? But I tell you ye will vex his noble spirit if ye love aught but him; for he is so fond of you, that he is jealous of your love. It is said, concerning his Father, that he is "a jealous God," and he is a jealous Christ you have to deal with; therefore, put not your trust in chariots, stay not yourselves in horses, but say, "He only is my rock and my salvation."

I beg thee, mark also, one reason why thou shouldest not look at anything else; and that is, if thou lookest at anything else thou canst not see Christ so well. "Oh!" thou sayest, "I can see Christ in his mercies;" but thou canst not see him so well there, as if you viewed his person. No man can look at two objects at the same time, and see both distinctly. You may afford a wink for the world, and a wink for Christ; but you cannot give Christ a whole look and a whole eye, and the world half an eye too. I beseech thee, Christian, do not try it. If thou lookest on the world, it will

be a speck in thine eye; if thou trustest in anything but him, betwixt two stools thou wilt come to the ground, and a fearful fall wilt thou have. Therefore, Christian, look thou only on him. "He only is my rock and my salvation."

Mark thee, again, Christian, I would bid thee never put anything else with Christ; for as sure as ever thou dost, thou wilt have the whip for it. There never was a child of God who harboured one of the Lord's traitors in his heart, but he always had a charge laid against him. God has sent out a search warrant against all of us; and do you know what he has told his officers to search for? He has told them to search for all our lovers, all our treasures, and all our helpers. God cares less about our sins as sins, than he does about our sins, or even our virtues, as usurpers of his throne. I tell thee, there is nothing in the world thou settest thy heart upon that shall not be hung upon a gallows higher than Haman's. If thou lovest anything but Christ, he will make it to do penance; if thou lovest thy house better than Christ, he will make it a prison to thee; if thou lovest thy child better than Christ, he will make it an adder in thy breast to sting thee; if thou lovest thy daily provisions better than Christ, he will make thy drink bitter and thy food like gravel stones in thy mouth, till thou comest to live wholly on him. There is nothing which thou hast, which he cannot turn into a rod, if thou lovest it better than him; and rest assured he will do so, if thou makest it anything to rob thy Christ.

And, mark thee, once again, if thou lookest at anything save God, thou wilt soon go into sin. If the mariner will steer by the pole-star he shall go to the north; but if he steers sometimes by the pole-star and sometimes by another constellation, he knoweth not where he shall go. If thou dost not keep thine eye wholly on Christ, thou wilt soon be wrong. If thou ever dost give up the secret of thy strength, namely, thy trust in Christ; if thou ever dalliest with the Delilah of the world, and lovest thyself more than Christ, the Philistines will be upon thee, and shear thy locks, and take thee out to grind at the mill, till thy God give thee deliverance by means of thy hair growing once more, and bringing thee to trust wholly in the Saviour. Keep thine eye, then, fixed on Jesus; for if thou dost turn away from him, how ill wilt thou fare! I bid thee, Christian, beware of thy graces; beware of thy virtues; beware of thy experience; beware of thy

prayers; beware of thy hope; beware of thy humility. There is not one of thy graces which may not damn thee, if they are left alone to themselves. Old Brooks saith, when a woman hath a husband, and that husband giveth unto her some choice rings, she putteth them on her fingers; and if she should be so foolish as to love the rings better than her husband; if she should care only for the jewels, and forget him who gave them; how angry would the husband be, and how foolish she would be herself! Christian! I warn thee, beware of thy graces; for they may prove more dangerous to thee than thy sins. I warn thee of everything in this world; for everything has this tendency, especially a high estate. If we have a comfortable maintenance, we are most likely not to look so much to God. Ah! Christian, with an independent fortune, take care of thy money; beware of thy gold and silver; it will curse thee if it comes between thee and thy God. Always keep thine eye to the cloud, and not to the rain,—to the river, and not to the ship that floateth on its bosom. Look thee not to the sunbeam, but to the sun; trace thy mercies to God, and say perpetually, "He only is my rock and my salvation."

Lastly, I bid thee once more to keep thine eye wholly on God, and on nothing in thyself, because what art thou now, and what wast thou ever, but a poor damned sinner if thou wert out of Christ! I had been preaching the other day all the former part of the sermon, as a minister; presently I thought I was a poor sinner, and then, how differently I began to speak! The best sermons I ever preach are those I preach, not in my ministerial capacity, but as a poor sinner preaching to sinners. I find there is nothing like a minister recollecting that he is nothing but a poor sinner, after all. It is said of the peacock, that, although he has fine feathers, he is ashamed of his black feet: I am sure that we ought to be ashamed of ours. However gay our feathers may appear at times, we ought to think of what we should be if grace did not help us. Oh! Christian, keep thine eye on Christ, for out of him thou art no better than the damned in hell; there is not a demon in the pit but might put thee to the blush, if thou art out of Christ. Oh that thou wouldest be humble! Recollect what an evil heart thou hast within thee, even when grace is there. Thou hast grace—God loves thee; but recollect, thou hast a foul cancer in thy heart still. God has removed much of thy sin, but still the corruption remains. We feel that though the old man is somewhat choked, and the fire somewhat damped



by the sweet waters of the Holy Spirit's influence, yet it would blaze up worse than before, if God did not keep it under. Let us not glory in ourselves, then. The slave need not be proud of his descent: he has the brand-mark upon his hand. Out upon pride! Away with it! Let us rest wholly and solely upon Jesus Christ.

Now, just one word to the ungodly—you who do not know Christ. You have heard what I have told you, that salvation is of Christ alone. Is not that a good doctrine for you? For you have not got anything, have you? You are a poor, lost, ruined sinner. Hear this, then, sinner: thou hast nothing, and thou dost not want anything, for Christ has all. "Oh!" sayest thou, "I am a bond slave." Ah! but he has got the redemption. "Nay," sayest thou, "I am a black sinner." Yes, but he has got the bath that can wash thee white. Sayest thou, "I am leprous?" Yes, but the good Physician can take thy leprosy away. Sayest thou, "I am condemned?" Ay, but he has got the acquittal warrant signed and sealed, if thou dost believe in him. Sayest thou, "But I am dead?" Ay, but Christ has life, and he can give thee life. Thou wantest nothing of thine own—nothing to rely on but Christ; and if there be a man, woman or child here, who is prepared to say solemnly after me, with his or her heart, "I take Christ to be my Saviour, with no powers and no merits of my own to trust in; I see my sins, but I see that Christ is higher than my sins; I see my guilt, but I believe that Christ is mightier than my guilt;"—I say, if any one of you can say that, you may go away and rejoice, for you are heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

I must tell you a singular story, which was related at our church meeting, because there may be some very poor people here who may understand the way of salvation by it. One of the friends had been to see a person who was about to join the church; and he said to him, "Can you tell me what you would say to a poor sinner who came to ask you the way of salvation?" "well," said he, "I do not know—I think I can hardly tell you; but it so happened that a case of this sort did occur yesterday. A poor woman came into my shop, and I told her the way; but it was in such a homely manner that I don't like to tell you." "Oh, yes, tell me; I should like to hear it," Well, she is a poor woman, who is always pawning her things, and by-and-bye she redeems them again. I did not know how to

tell her better than this. I said to her:—'Look here; your soul is in pawn to the devil; Christ has paid the redemption money; you take faith for your ticket, and so you will get your soul out of pawn.'" Now, that was the most simple, but the most excellent way of imparting a knowledge of salvation to this woman. It is true our souls were pawned to Almighty vengeance; we were poor, and could not pay the redemption money; but Christ came and paid it all, and faith is the ticket which we use to get our souls out of pawn. We need not take a single penny with us; we have only to say, "Here, Lord, I believe in Jesus Christ. I have brought no money to pay for my soul, for there is the ticket; the money has been paid long ago. This is written in thy word: 'The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.'" If thou takest that ticket, thou wilt get thy soul out of pawn; and thou wilt say, "I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm a miracle of grace." May God bless you, my friends, for Christ's sake.

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## **God Hath Spoken - Rejoice!**

God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. - Psalm 108:7

There is an old promise, concerning God's people, which says, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." This text is one of the instances in which the Lord has dealt with his saints upon the lines of that promise. Read the preceding verse. David there prays, "Save with thy right hand, and answer me;" and while he is waiting for God to answer him, he remembers that God has already spoken. In effect, he says to himself, "I am waiting for an answer, but God has given it to me." Very often, the response to a believer's petition has been

practically received before he presents his request, and he only needs that God should open his eyes for him to see that, before he called, God had answered his supplication. Indeed, brethren and sisters in Christ, in one sense, all your prayers—that is, your prayers that ought to be answered,—are already answered; for, whatsoever there may be that you may rightly ask of God, you really have it, since, in giving us Christ, he has already given us all things. An important part of the duty of faith is to believe that you have what you ask in prayer, and then you shall have it. This is blessed philosophy; may we all learn it! Oftentimes, when we are crying to God, and waiting for an answer to our petition, if we did but look around us, and if we had more acute powers of observation—if our spiritual faculties were keener and quicker, we should perceive that we already have the very thing for which we are asking. Some of you have, perhaps, been saying, "Oh, that we were indeed the Lord's people, who have their prayers answered even before they offer them! Well, then, turn to the Book, and you will find that the Lord has there told you that you are his if, indeed, you are believing in his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has given you, by that most sure word of testimony, the clearest possible evidence of your personal interest in Christ already. If you are asking for some further kind assuring word, to soothe your fears to rest, turn to the Bible, for there is in it the very word you need. So, seek it out, for I may truly say of God's revelation in this blessed Book,—

"What more can he say than to you he hath said,  
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

This leads me to the practical remark that, possibly, the very thing that you have been praying for so long, you may already have obtained; and God may not intend you to pray any longer about it, but may say to you, as he did to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Believe that you have the blessing for which you are asking, and go forward in that belief. The time for praying about it has passed; this is the time for grasping the blessing by faith, and using it to my praise and glory." So it seems to me, in our text, that David had prayed, and then suddenly recollected that he had already received the very thing for which he had asked. So he shakes

himself from the dust, and cries, confidently and jubilantly, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

I. Three things are clear in the text; and the first is, that GOD'S WORD IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness." That is the solid basis on which faith builds.

To me, this is a very precious truth, even for the very childhood of Christian life: "God hath spoken." He has not merely put before us his works, which are like hieroglyphs, difficult to read at times; but he has actually broken what else had been the eternal silence, and spoken to us in words that even a child can comprehend. Unbelieving men still say, as they did of old, "'Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' If there is a God at all, there is a great gulf fixed between him and men; how can we know anything about him?" Ah, sirs! that great gulf will always be between you and your God if you do not believe in the revelation that he has given you in his inspired Word. Until that terrible day comes, when he shall speak in thunder-tones of wrath, and summon his guilty creatures to appear at his judgment bar, you will not hear his voice, except as it speaks to you in his Word.

But "God hath spoken in his holiness;" and we ought to be thankful that we have not to serve a God who is dumb. He spake, in the garden of Eden, when our first parents sinned against him. To the serpent he said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It was a message of hope to the world when God spake that great promise concerning his Son. Since then, "at sundry times and in divers manners," God hath spoken unto men by his servants, and "by his Son," of which we have the record in this blessed Book; and, since it is a message of mercy and love to us, we ought at once to rejoice that "God hath spoken." Sinner, you are pleading with God for mercy; and he might well refuse to answer you even a word; but "God hath spoken" already, and the answer to your petition is already recorded in his Word. If, when Adam sinned, he had turned away from our rebellious race, and said, "Henceforward, I

will hold no communication with you until that day when, with fire and sword, I punish you for your many transgressions;" we should have had no cause for complaining against him; certainly, we could not have impeached his justice, or found fault with his severity. But "God hath spoken;" he hath broken the silence which would have been death to us; and, blessed be his name, he hath divinely spoken to us by him who is THE WORD OF GOD,—by God's great logos,—the only voice by which he could fully speak out his whole soul so that men might be able to comprehend him; and it is upon what God hath spoken unto us, by his Son, that we have to place our faith; so that, had he not spoken, we should not have had any foundation for our faith; but this is our joy, that "God hath spoken."

Many of us are, I trust, at least somewhat acquainted with what God hath spoken; though I wish that we were all more perfectly acquainted with his Word, and that our confidence more fully rested upon what the Lord has therein revealed to us.

Why is it that you are able to confide in God's Word? Surely, it is because you know that, for God to speak, is for him to do as he hath said. By his Word, he made the heavens and the earth; and it is by his Word that the heavens and the earth continue as they are to this day. When he shall "once more" speak, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, then shall he unmake what he made, and cast away the worn-out vesture, for, as the Old Hundredth Psalm reminds us—

"He can create and he destroy."

God's speaking is very different from man's. Very often, man talks about something that he says he will do, but when he has talked about it, there is an end of the matter so far as he is concerned. Man hath spoken; oh, yes! but you can never be sure that, with the talking tongue will go the working hand. He who is quick to promise is not always so prompt to perform. We have many proverbs which remind us that men set light by one another's promises, and well they may; but we must never set light by the promises of God. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it

stood fast." So, beloved brother, if there is a promise of God to help you in a time of trouble, or to preserve you in the hour of temptation, or to deliver you out of trial, or to give you grace according to your day, that promise is as good as if it had been already performed, since God's Word shall certainly be followed by the fulfillment of it in due season. I beseech you, then, as you read the promise, to say to yourself, "It is done as God hath said." If any man of means, with whom you do business, gives you his cheque for the amount he owes you, do you not say that he has paid you? Yet he has not handed to you even a penny in cash; no notes or gold and silver coins have passed between you; but you rightly say that he has paid you because his signature on the cheque is as good as money; and is not God's Word as good as man's? Ay, that it is, and far better! Then, so regard it; oh, for faith to do so at this very moment!

Further, what God hath spoken shall never be reversed. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." What he hath spoken in public, he does not reverse in private. His own declaration is, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." Whatever there may be in the sealed scroll that records God's purposes in predestination, there cannot be anything there to contradict what is written on the open scroll of divine revelation. As to the doctrine of election, which often terrifies seeking souls, it never should do so, since there can be nothing, in the secret counsels of God, contrary to the plain promises of God recorded in his Word. He has not said "Yea" in one place, and "Nay" in another; and if he saith "Yea" to-day, he will not say "Nay" to-morrow. He himself said, long ago, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Once let any message go forth out of his mouth and it shall stand fast for ever.

Oh, then, what a firm foundation for faith this is! First, "God hath spoken;" and that is as good as if he had already done as he hath said; and, secondly, "God hath spoken," and that which he hath said can never be reversed. If there is a promise in the Bible made to a penitent sinner, and thou art a penitent sinner, that promise must be kept to thee. If there is a blessing promised to a believing soul, and thou art a believing soul, that blessing is sure to thee. If God hath promised to sustain thee when

thou dost cast thy burden upon him, and to bring thee through the furnace, with thy hair unsinged, he will do it, for he never yet has been false to his promise, and he never will be. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his Word shall ever fail. It stands, as an immutable decree, that Jehovah's will shall be done; and this is Jehovah's will,—that, of all that he hath promised to the sons and daughters of men, not one syllable shall ever fail. Oh, how blessedly faith ought to rest on such a foundation as this!

Our text saith, "God hath spoken in his holiness." Now, it sometimes happens that our greatest difficulty in believing a promise of God lies in his holiness. There is, for instance, a promise of pardon to the soul that believeth in Jesus. We think of stern justice, with her majestic yet severe look. In our heart of hearts we reverence her, and we ask, "How can God be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" We have, at times, had some idea of the perfect purity of God,—the purity of him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly. We have trembled, sometimes, as though we were dissolved into nothingness, when we have thought of his spotless purity, and we have said, "Can this holy God really mean to receive such sinners as we are whose very clothes, as Job says, do abhor us? Can he purpose to bring us to his own right hand in glory that we may be among the courtiers in his heavenly kingdom?" Yes, he does mean to do even that; yet the thought of his purity makes us wonder how it can be done. Now, the joy of David was that, when God spoke concerning that glorious—

"Stem of Jesse's rod,"—

he spoke it "in his holiness," that is, in his whole-ness, with his whole perfectly pure nature. He knew all that David then was, and all that David would be; yet he saw it to be consistent with his infinite perfections to make, even with such a man, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" and, beloved brethren, when the Lord entered into covenant with Christ concerning those whom he gave to him to be his portion for ever, and when, in that covenant, he wrote down blessings exceedingly great and precious, and made promises so vast that we cannot at present form any estimate of their full value, he knew quite well

what he was doing, and he did it, knowing all about your doubts and fears concerning your sinfulness and his own holiness. And now, without in the least marring his perfect purity, and inflexible justice, "God hath spoken in his holiness" to poor lost sinners, and said that he will save all of them who trust in Jesus Christ, his Son; and he has also "spoken in his holiness" to his poor imperfect children, and said that he will bless them, and that he will not turn away from them to do them good. This is the covenant that he hath made with his people: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." All this, which "God hath spoken in his holiness," he will do without obscuring that wondrous attribute, or marring the glory of his adorable perfections.

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice THE JOY OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

Are any of you heavy of heart just now? If so, I hope you will catch the spirit of David when he uttered these words. You ought to be glad that "God hath spoken in his holiness," and you must be glad if you feel and know that he has spoken to you. "God hath spoken: I will rejoice."

Observe that this joy, which faith has, is a joy in the very face that God, hath spoken. Though nothing may yet have been done for us, God hath spoken, and therefore our heart rejoices. Every divine promise, if it be rightly viewed by faith, will make the heart leap for joy. Suppose you do not need that particular promise just now, rejoice all the same, for you will need it by-and-by. If the promise is not made specially to you, yet it is made to somebody; therefore, rejoice that "God hath spoken" so as to meet the needs of somebody else's case. What if the blessing be too high for you to reach at present? Nevertheless, rejoice that there are mercies stored up for future and more advanced stages of your spiritual growth. And suppose the mercy is one that you long ago enjoyed; still be glad that you did enjoy it in years past, and so rejoice that "God hath spoken." Oh, what hymns of praise there are in this blessed Book, if this be the theme



of our song, "God hath spoken"! Then, the very first pages of Genesis ought to make us rejoice, and we will rejoice because we know how he made the worlds. Pass along through every page, and feast your eyes upon every line of every page, and say all the while, "'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.' This shall be the subject of my joy all the day long; and, in the night watches, will I rejoice in his Word."

You perceive, as I have said, that this joy comes to the believer even before the promise is literally fulfilled to him. It is the joy of faith. You have not yet had the promise fulfilled to your sight; but, seeing that it is fulfilled to your faith, begin to be glad about it. Praise the Lord for all the good things he has laid up in store for you; take upon your lips the words of that sweet singer who wrote,—

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,  
To long-loved music set;—  
Glory to thee for all the grace  
I have not tasted yet."

When you are ill, bless God for the health you will enjoy when you get well. When you are down-hearted, bless God for the joy that you will have when he shall again lift up the light of his countenance upon you. When you go to the grave of a Christian friend, bless God because you will meet that friend again. Though you cannot yet see the joys that await you inside the gates of pearl, begin to bless the Lord for all that he has prepared for them that love him. Borrow from the eternal future; you may, for there is plenty of it. There is an infinity of joy; therefore, antedate it a little while. Send your messengers across the Jordan to bring you some of the Eshcol clusters. You may do so, for they are yours, and you may have some of them, even now, as foretastes of the bliss that is yet to be revealed. "God hath spoken" to his servants of the great things that he will do for them for many years to come, and throughout eternity. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He hath said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Therefore, as "God hath spoken," though as yet my soul abideth in the land of darkness, and drought, and barrenness, yet, because he will fulfill his promise, my heart shall rejoice. David says, in the 11th verse of this Psalm, "O God, who hast

cast us off;" yet here, though he is one of the cast-offs, he says, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

Perhaps I am addressing a minister, whose public labors are apparently unsuccessful. My brother, you have been exceedingly grieved because your people have been like the children of Ephraim who "being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Well now, you must not give way to discouragement, or fall into a dull and sad state of mind, but you must say, 'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.' Though I have not, as yet, seen any success attending my efforts, he has said, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' and I believe I shall do so, for I have often sowed in tears, and sowed the good seed of the kingdom with many tears and many prayers. Therefore, though I seem, at present, like one of the cast-offs, and little good has come of all that I have done, yet 'God hath spoken in his holiness;' and therein I will rejoice."

I may be speaking to a brother who is tried in another way. You, dear friend, have not enjoyed the means of grace as you used to do. You blame yourself for the change, and it is right and proper that you should do so. You have not now those happy experiences that you once had; neither do you enjoy such blessed visits from your Lord as you had a year or so ago. You know that the fault lies with you; still, remember that faith is never dependent upon feeling, and our confidence is never to rest upon our inward condition. Otherwise, it rests on the shifting sand; but, if this is the case with you, now is the time for you to exercise faith, and to say, "Though I am, as it were a cast-off and the Word of the Lord is not just now solacing my heart, yet 'God hath spoken,' and, sinner as I am, if I be not a saint, I trust to what God has said to believing sinners, and 'I will rejoice,' even though I seem to be only a cast-off."

Once more, notice that David, at the time he wrote this Psalm, had discovered the vanity of human confidence. He says, in the 12th verse, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." "My best friend has proved to be a traitor; he that ate bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. Those, who said that they would never leave me, and who never did leave me while there was anything to be got out of me, are all gone. I said in my haste, 'All men are liars,' but 'God hath spoken in his

holiness; I will rejoice.'" It is grand faith that can rejoice in God when friends go as the swallows fly away in the autumn, or drop off as the leaves fade when the summer comes to an end. That was the kind of faith that Habakkuk had when he sang, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This is a good crutch for Mr. Ready-to-halt; nay, better than that, surely this will take Ready-to-halt's crutches away and enable him to run without weariness in the ways of the Lord. Why, brethren. Here are the wings of eagles for you, if you only know how to use them: "God hath spoken." What a mighty power your soul will have in prayer if you go to God, and say, "Do as thou hast said." What a sword this is to flash in the face of the foe: "God hath spoken." "It is written" is that which makes old Rome to tremble, and her seven hills to quake for fear. Get you a rejoicing grip of this great truth and the dwarf shall become a giant, the feeblest among us shall be as David, and the house of David shall be like the angel of the Lord.

III. The latter part of the text shows us THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH: "God hath spoken in his holiness: I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

That is, David says "As God has given me these places to be parts of my kingdom, I will go, and take possession of them." Some people's so-called faith is of this order—God has promised a great blessing; let us go,—and sleep." Their philosophy is,—God's promise will be sure to be fulfilled; therefore, let us eat and drink, and not trouble at all about the matter. The Lord will have his own people, and he will carry out his own purposes and decrees. They stand fast for ever, so the best thing for us is to do nothing at all. God says that there shall be a harvest; so there is no need for our sowing, and we can lie abed as late as we like." That is the kind of fatalism that many carry even into their Christianity; they make the eternal purposes and blessed promises of God to become reasons for inaction; but it is not so with any sane child of God. He girds up his loins, and says, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

Whenever you look into the Word of God, and read what "God hath spoken" to you, see that you appropriate it. Suppose that he has promised you comfort, do not rest satisfied without that comfort. Suppose he has promised you joy and peace in believing; never rest till you have that joy and peace. Suppose he has promised you complete sanctification, full deliverance from the power of evil, do not be satisfied till you are delivered from it all. Never say, "Ah, that is a constitutional sin; that is the result of my temperament." No, brother, if the Lord hath promised you the victory over your enemies, be not satisfied till you have planted your foot on their necks, and they are in subjection to you. Some Christian people are living, spiritually, on a penny a week, when their income might be ten thousand a day. You might live like kings, yet you are starving like paupers. Your faith might lay hold on God's exceeding great and precious promises, and so fill her mouth with good things; but, instead of doing so, you are quivering with the palsy of unbelief, and so not grasping what God has put within your reach. There lies Succoth, but you do not mete it out. There lies Shechem, but you do not divide it. Yet they are both of them yours by divine donation. Oh, if our faith did but really grip the promises, and believe in the promise-keeping God, she would never rest till she possessed all the blessings that are really hers! I think that every young Christian should say when he joins the church, "Now, I do not want to be merely an average Christian. I am nothing, and less than nothing, in myself; but, if there is any blessing to be had from God I will have it. If I can have a closer walk with God than others have, I will have it. If there is more of Christ's likeness to be had than others possess, I will have it. By God's grace, 'I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.' If God has given me permission to take anything, why should I not have it? "If you have leave given you to go to Windsor Castle, or Buckingham Palace, as often as you like, and to take whatever you please that is there, and to be treated as a prince, I warrant that you would not need anyone to remind you that you had not been to either place for weeks. If you had such privileges accorded to you, you would be sure to avail yourselves of them; yet here are the gates of the palace of prayer always open to you, and the doors of communion never shut against you, and Jesus, the great King of kings, not only inviting you to come unto him, but even urging you to abide in him, and never to

depart from him,—yet, alas! you do not have fellowship with Christ by the month together. Be no longer like the starveling professors that, now and then, taste a little of the heavenly manna; but, generally, live on the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt.

So, if we have faith in God, we ought to take possession of all that is ours, and, further, we ought to know what we really do possess. It is delightful to see David here mentioning his various possessions: "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver, Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city who will lead me into Edom?" Perhaps you say, "That is very uninteresting; I do not understand it." No, but David did. He had seen Shechem, and he knew that it was a place worth possessing; and Gilead, and Manasseh, and all the other places interested him, if they do not interest you. And when a child of God looks over his spiritual treasures, and mentions them one by one, he takes an interest even in the very mention of them. The Bible is a dull book to a person who has no part or lot in it. There is no drier reading, in all the world, than the reading of a will in which one has no interest; but there is nothing that would interest you more than listening to the will of your old uncle, in which he had left you a large fortune. You would lean forward, and you would put your hand to your ear lest you should lose any of it, and you would think that you had never heard a more eloquent discourse than that, and when a man gets to know what "God hath spoken," what he hath written for him in this blessed Book, which contains his will, every word is music to him, and he is ready to pick out some of the choicest words, and say, "Regeneration is mine; justification is mine; adoption is mine; sanctification is mine; union to Christ is mine; resurrection is mine; eternal life is mine; yea, all things are mine;" and he would dwell upon each one with a holy unction, at least to his own soul.

Then, if you know what God has given you, mind that you use it all. What does David say? "Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe." As an Oriental, who is weary, throws his sandals to one servant, and then puts his foot out, that another servant may lave it with flowing

water, so David says, "I will use Moab and Edom as my servitors." Now, Christian man, if you have true faith, and mean to do real business with God, and for him, say to yourself, "I have this, and that, and the other blessing, and I am going to use them all for his glory. I have been adopted by God; I am his child; so I will plead with him, and will get all I can from my Father to use in his service! I am justified, I have peace with God; so I will go forth, and, in the power of that peace, I will let others see what bliss Christians know. Then I also have sanctification given me in Christ; so I will use that, and seek to be a true saint, that my life may be a blameless, holy, gracious, Christ-like life. By God's grace, I will not have even one unused privilege.

Once more. David, being in the spirit of full faith in God, now manifests the spirit of enterprise, for he says, "God has given me Edom; then I will have it. There is that strong city of Petra, the rock city. It is like an eagle's nest upon a crag; who is the bold man that can capture it, and take the spoil? The fierce sons of Edom, in the defile, will be sure to slay the first men who dare to march into that rocky chasm." "Who will bring me into the strong city?" says he; "who will lead me into Edom?" The spirit of enterprise and of conquest is in his soul; and then he adds, "Wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?" "Since thou hast spoken as thou hast done, thou wilt surely lead us to victory." In like manner, every man, who has faith in God's Word, ought to be a man of enterprise. I wonder, brothers and sisters, how many of you have any enterprise for God in view just now,—storming some rocky sin, some Petra-like evil in your soul, that seems almost impregnable. You know that your Savior's name is "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Then, in the strength of that name, go up, and smite your bosom sin, and your constitutional sin; and never rest till you have driven your dagger through every evil that lurks within your soul.

Then think what room for enterprise you have among your fellowmen. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" yet vast multitudes of mankind still sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Have any of you enterprise enough to go up against the strong cities that are still in rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ? Can any of you go, and look after those who walk the streets, and seek to bring them to Christ? That would

be conquering Edom itself. Have any of you enterprise enough to go down into the slums and dens of London, to seek out the poorest and the vilest of the people? Have you confidence enough to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can give you that Petra-like city, that dark spot where thieves congregate, where blasphemy is the current language, and where profanity seems even to pollute the very air? Have you "pluck" enough to undertake such an enterprise as that? Is there manliness enough in any one of you to attempt it? Then, having asked the question, "Who will lead me into Edom?" do not forget to pray, "Wilt not thou, O God? Thou hast spoken; wilt thou not also act, through thy people, so that all flesh may see the salvation of God?" Let each child of God say, "O my Father, I believe that, weak and feeble as I am, my weakness and feebleness need be no hindrance to me if I go to thy service in thy strength! 'Thou hast spoken in thy holiness; I will rejoice;' and, in thy name, I will conquer the foe, and gather the spoil for thee." "Through God," says David, in the 13th verse, "we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." Therefore, if ye believe in God, haste to the spoil of his enemies; quit you like men; be strong! If you really are linked with omnipotence, prove it. Do not talk about it, but let your deeds show that the Lord of hosts is with you, and that the God of Jacob is your refuge. If, indeed, the Lord's arm be with you, smite as the Lord would smite. If, indeed, he speaks through you, speak as he would speak. Be strong, and very courageous, and press forward; in the name of God, set up your banners; and who knoweth whether even this feeble message of mine, in rousing you to action upon the basis of confidence in the Word of God, may not cast down some stronghold of the enemy, and make the walls of some mighty Jericho to fall flat to the ground? The Lord grant it for his name's sake! Amen.

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## **God In The Covenant**

I will be their God. - Jeremiah 31:33

What a glorious covenant the second covenant is! Well might it be called "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Heb. viii. 6. It is so glorious that the very thought of it is enough to overwhelm the soul, when it discerns the amazing condescension and infinite love of God, in having framed a covenant for such unworthy creatures, for such glorious purposes, with such disinterested motives. It is better than the other covenant, the covenant of works, which was made with Adam; or that covenant which is said to have been made with Israel, on the day when they came out of Egypt. It is better, for it is founded upon a better principle. The old covenant was founded on the principle of merit; it was, "Serve God and thou shalt be rewarded for it; if thou walkest perfectly in the fear of the Lord, God will walk well towards thee, and all the blessings of Mount Gerizim shall come upon thee, and thou shalt be exceedingly blessed in this world, and the world which is to come." But that covenant fell to the ground, because, although it was just that man should be rewarded for his good works, or punished for his evil ones, yet man being sure to sin, and since the fall infallibly tending towards iniquity, the covenant was not suitable for his happiness, nor could it promote his eternal welfare. But the new covenant, is not founded on works at all, it is a covenant of pure unmingled grace; you may read it from its first word to its last, and there is not a solitary syllable as to anything to be done by us. The whole covenant is a covenant, not so much between man and his Maker as between Jehovah and man's representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. The human side of the covenant has been already fulfilled by Jesus, and there remains nothing now but the covenant of giving, not the covenant of requirements. The whole covenant with regard to us, the people of God, now stands thus: "I will give this, I will bestow that; I will fulfill this promise; I will grant that favour." But there is nothing for us to do; he will work all our works in us; and the very graces that are sometimes represented as being stipulations of the covenant, are promised to us. He gives us faith; he promises to give us the law in our inward parts, and to write it on our hearts. It is a glorious covenant, I say, because it is founded on simple mercy and unmixed grace; quite irrespective of creature-doings, or anything that is to be performed by man; and hence this covenant surpasses the other in stability. Where there is anything of man, there is always a degree of mutability; for creatures, and change, and uncertainty always go together. But since this



new covenant hath now nothing whatever to do with the creature, so far as the creature has to do anything, but only so far he is to receive: the idea of change is utterly and entirely gone. It is God's covenant, and therefore it is an unchanging covenant. If there be something which I am to do in the covenant, then is the covenant insecure; and although happy as Adam, I may yet become miserable as Satan. But if the covenant be all on God's part, then if my name be in that covenant, my soul is as secure as if I were now walking the golden streets; and if any blessing be in the covenant, I am as certain to receive that blessing as if I already grasped it in my hands; for the promise of God is sure to be followed by fulfilment; the promise never faileth; it always bringeth with it the whole of that which it is intended to convey, and the moment I receive it by faith, I am sure of the blessing itself. Oh! how infinitely superior is this covenant to the other in its manifest security! It is beyond the risk or hazard of the least uncertainty.

But I have been thinking for the last two or three days, that the covenant of grace excels the other covenant most marvelously in the mighty blessings which it confers. What does the covenant of grace convey? I had thought this morning of preaching a sermon upon "The covenant of grace; what are the blessings it gives to God's children?" But when I began to think of it, there was so much in the covenant, that if I had only read a catalogue of the great and glorious blessings, wrapped up within its folds, I should have needed to occupy nearly the whole of the day in making a few simple observations upon each of them. Consider the great things God has given in the covenant. He sums them up by saying he hath given "all things." He has given you eternal life in Christ Jesus; yea, he has given Christ Jesus to be yours; he has made Christ heir of all things, and he has made you joint-heir with him; and hence he has given you everything. Were I to sum up that mighty mass of unutterable treasure which God has conveyed to every elect soul by that glorious covenant, time would fail me. I therefore commence with one great blessing conveyed to us by the covenant, and then on other Sabbaths I will, by Divine permission, consider separately, one by one, sundry other things which the covenant conveys.

We commence then by the first thing, which is enough to startle us by its

immense value; in fact, unless it had been written in God's Word, we never could have dreamed that such a blessing could have been ours. God himself, by the covenant becomes the believer's own portion and inheritance. "I will be their God."

And now we shall begin with this subject in this way. We shall show you first that this is a special blessing. God is the special possession of the elect, whose names are in the covenant. Secondly, for a moment or two we shall speak of this as being an exceedingly precious blessing, "I will be their God." Thirdly, we shall dwell upon the security of this blessing, "I will be their God." And fourthly we shall endeavour to stir you up to make good use of this blessing, so freely and liberally conveyed to you by the eternal covenant of grace; "I will be their God."

Stop just one moment and think it over before we start. In the covenant of grace God himself conveys himself to you and becomes yours. Understand it: God - all that is meant by that word - eternity, infinity, omnipotence, omniscience, perfect justice, infallible rectitude, immutable love - all that is meant by God - Creator, Guardian, Preserver, Governor, Judge, - all that that great word "GOD" can mean, all of goodness and of love, all of bounty and of grace - all that, this covenant gives you, to be your absolute property as much as anything you can call your own. "I will be their God." We say, pause over that thought. If I should not preach at all, there is enough in that, if opened up and applied by the all-glorious Spirit, to excite your you during the whole of the Sabbath-day. "I will be their God."

"My God! - how cheerful is the sound!  
How pleasant to repeat!  
Well may that heart with pleasure bound,  
Where God hath fixed his seat."

I. How is GOD ESPECIALLY THE GOD OF HIS OWN CHILDREN? For God is the God of all men, of all creatures; he is the God of the worm, of the flying eagle, of the star, and of the cloud; he is God everywhere. How then is he more my God and your God than he is God of all created things? We answer, that in some things God is the God of all his creatures; but even there, there is a special relationship existing between

himself and his chosen creatures, whom he has loved with an everlasting love. And in the next place, there are certain relationships in which God does not exist towards the rest of his creatures, but only towards his own children.

I. First then, God is the God of all his creatures, seeing that he has the right to decree to do with them as he pleases. He is the Creator of us all: he is the potter, and hath power over the clay, to make of the same lump, one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. However men may sin against God, he is still their God in that sense - that their destiny is immovably in his hand; that he can do with them exactly as he chooses; however they may resent his will, or spurn his good pleasure, yet he can make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he can restrain. He is the God of all creatures, absolutely so in the matter of predestination, seeing that he is their Creator, and has an absolute right to do with them as he wills. But here again he has a special regard to his children, and he is their God even in that sense; for to them, while he exercises the same sovereignty, he exercises it in the way of grace and grace only. He makes them the vessels of mercy, who shall be to his honor for ever; he chooses them out of the ruins of the fall, and makes them heirs of everlasting life, while he suffers the rest of the world to continue in sin, and to consummate their guilt by well-deserved punishment, and thus, while his relationship is the same, so far as his sovereignty is concerned and his right of decree, there is something special in its loving aspect towards his people; and in that sense he is their God.

Again: he is the God of all his creatures, in the sense that he has a right to command obedience of all. He is the God of every man that was ever born into this earth, in the sense that they are bound to obey him. God can command the homage of all his creatures, because he is their Creator, Governor, and Preserver; and all men are, by the fact of their creation, so placed in subjection to him, that they cannot escape the obligation of submission to his laws. But even here there is something special in regard to the child of God. Though God is the ruler of all men, yet his rule is special towards his children; for he lays aside the sword of his rulership, and in his hand he grasps the rod for his child, not the sword of punitive vengeance. While he gives the world a law upon stone, he gives to his

child a law in his heart. God is my governor and yours, but if you are unregenerate, he is your governor in a different sense from what he is mine. He has ten times as much claim to my obedience as he has to yours. Seeing that he has done more for me, I am bound to do more for him; seeing that he has loved me more, I am bound to love him more. But should I disobey, the vengeance on my head shall not fall so heavily as on yours, if you are out of Christ; for that vengeance incurred by me has already fallen upon Christ, my substitute, and only the chastisement shall remain for me; so that there again you see where the relationship to all men is universal, there is something special in it in reference to God's children.

Again: God has a universal power over all his creatures in the character of a Judge. He will "judge the world in righteousness and his people with equity." He will judge all men with equity it is true; but, as if his people were not of the world, it is added afterwards, "his people with equity." God is the God of all creatures, we repeat, in the sense that he is their Judge; he will summon them all before his bar, and condemn or acquit them all, but even there, there is something peculiar with regard to his children, for to them the condemnation sentence shall never come, but only the acquittal. While he is Judge of all, he especially is their judge; because he is the judge whom they love to reverence, the judge whom they long to approach, because they know his lips will confirm that which their hearts have already felt - the sentence of their full acquittal through the merits of their glorious Saviour. Our loving God is the Judge who shall acquit our souls, and in that respect we can say he is our God. So, then, whether as Sovereign, or as Governor enforcing law, or as Judge punishing sin; although God is in some sense the God of all men, yet in this matter there is something special towards his people, so that they can say, "He is our God, even in those relationships."

2. But now, beloved, there are points to which the rest of God's creatures cannot come; and here the great pith of the matter lies; here the very soul of this glorious promise dwells. God is our God in a sense, with which the unregenerate, the unconverted, the unholy, can have no acquaintance, in which they have no share whatever. We have just considered other points with regards to what God is to man generally; let us now consider what he

is to us, as he is to none other.

First, then, God is my God, seeing that he is the God of my election. If I be his child, then has he loved me from before all worlds, and his infinite mind has been exercised with plans for my salvation. If he be my God, he has seen me when I have wandered far from him, and when I have rebelled, his mind has determined when I shall be arrested - when I shall be turned from the error of my ways. He has been providing for me the means of grace, he has applied those means of grace in due time, but his everlasting purpose has been the basis and the foundation of it all; and thus he is my God, as he is the God of none else beside his own children. My glorious, gracious God in eternal election; for he thought of me and chose me from before the foundation of the world, that I should be without blame before him in love. Looking back, then, I see election's God, and election's God is my God if I be in election. But if I fear not God, neither regard him, then he is another man's God and not mine. If I have no claim and participation in election, then I am compelled to look upon him as being in that sense the God of a great body of men whom he has chosen, but not my God. If I can look back and see my name in life's fair book set down, then indeed he is my God in election.

Furthermore, the Christian can call God his God, from the fact of his justification. A sinner can call God - God, but he must always put in an adjective, and speak of God as an angry God, an incensed God, or an offended God. But the Christian can say, "my God," without putting in any adjective except it be a sweet one wherewithal to extol him; for now we who were sometime afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; we who were enemies to God by wicked works are his friends; and looking up to him, we can say, "my God;" for he is my friend, and I am his friend. Enoch could say, "my God," for he walked with him. Adam could not say, "my God," when he hid himself beneath the trees of the garden. So that while I, a sinner, run from God, I cannot call him mine; but when I have peace with God, and am brought nigh to him, then indeed is he my God and my friend.

Again: he is the believer's God by adoption, and in that the sinner hath no part. I have heard people represent God as the Father of the whole universe. It surprises me that any reader of the Bible should so talk. Paul

once quoted a heathen poet, who said that we are his offspring; and it is true in some sense that we are, as having been created by him. But in the high sense in which the term "childhood" is used in the Scripture to express the holy relationship of a regenerate child towards his Father, in that sense none can say, "Our father," but those who have the "Abba Father" printed on their hearts by the spirit of adoption. Well, by the spirit of adoption, God becomes my God, as he is not the God of others. The Christian has a special claim to God, because God is his Father, as he is not the Father of any else save his brethren. Ay, beloved, these three things are quite enough to show you, that God is in a special sense the God of his own people; but I must leave that to your own thoughts, which will suggest twenty different ways in which God is special the God of his own children, more than he is of the rest of his creatures. "God," say the wicked; but "my God," say God's children. If then God be so specially your God, let your clothing be according to your feeding. Be clothed with the sun; put on the Lord Jesus. The king's daughter is (and so let all the king's sons be) all glorious within; let their clothing be of wrought gold. Be clothed with humility, put on love, bowels of compassion, gentleness, meekness; put on the garments of salvation. Let your company and converse be according to your clothing. Live amongst the excellent, amongst the generation of the just; get you up to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to that innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just men made perfect. Live in the courts of the great King; behold his face, wait at his throne, bear his name, shew forth his virtues, set forth his praises, advance his honour, uphold his interest; let vile persons and vile ways be contemned in your eyes: be of more noble spirits than to be companions with them. Regard not their societies, nor their scorns; their flatteries or their frowns; rejoice not with their joys, fear not their fear, care not their care, feed not on their dainties; get you up from among them, to your country, your city, where no unclean thing can enter or annoy. Live by faith in the power of the Spirit, in the beauty of holiness, in the hope of the Gospel, in the joy of your God, in the magnificence, and yet the humility of the children of the great King.

II. Now, for a moment, let us consider THE EXCEEDING PRECIOUSNESS OF THIS GREAT MERCY, "I will be their God." I conceive that God, himself, could say no more than that. I do not think if

the Infinite were to stretch his powers, and magnify his grace by some stupendous promise which could outdo every other, I do not believe that it could exceed in glory this promise, "I will be their God." Oh! Christian, do but consider what it is to have God to be thine own; consider what it is, compared with anything else.

"Jacob's portion is the Lord;  
What can Jacob more require?  
What can heaven more afford -  
Or a creature more desire?"

Compare this portion with the lot of thy fellow-men! Some of them have their portion in the field, they are rich and increased in goods, and their yellow harvests are even now ripening in the sun; but what are harvests compared with thy God, the God of harvests? Or, what are granaries compared with him who is thy husbandman, and feeds thee with the bread of heaven? Some have their portion in the city; their wealth is superabundant, and in constant streams it flows to them, until they become a very reservoir of gold; but what is gold compared with thy God? Thou couldst not live on it; thy spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Apply it to thy aching head, and would it afford thee any ease? Put it on a troubled conscience, and could thy gold allay its pangs? Put it on thy desponding heart, and see if it could stay a solitary groan, or give thee one grief the less? But thou hast God, and in Him thou hast more than gold or riches e'er could buy, more than heaps of brilliant ore could ever purchase thee. Some have their portion in this world, in that which most men love, applause and fame; but ask thyself, is not thy God more to thee than that? What, if a thousand trumpets should blow thy praise, and if a myriad clarions should be loud with thine applause; what would it all be to thee if thou hadst lost thy God? Would this allay the turmoils of a soul ill at ease with itself? Would this prepare thee to pass the Jordan, and to breast those stormy waves which ere long must be forded by every man, when he is called from this world to lands unknown? Would a puff of wind serve thee then, or the clapping of the hands of thy fellow-creatures bless thee on thy dying bed? No, there are griefs here with which men cannot intermeddle, and there are griefs to come with which men cannot interfere to alleviate the pangs, and pains, and agonies, and dying strife.

But when thou hast this - "I will be thy God" - thou hast as much as all other men can have put together; for this is all they have, and more. How little ought we to estimate the treasures of this world compared with God, when we consider that God frequently gives the most riches to the worst of his creatures! As Luther said, God gives food to his children, and husks to his swine; and who are the swine that get the husks? It is not often that God's people get the riches of this world, and that does but prove that riches are little worth, else God would give them to us. Abraham gave the sons of Keturah a portion and sent them away; let me be Isaac and have my Father, and the world may take all the rest. Oh! Christian, ask for nothing in this world, but that thou mayest live on this, and that thou mayest die on this, "I will be their God." This exceedeth all the world besides.

But compare this with what thou requirest, Christian. What does thou require? Is there not here all that thou dost require? To make thee happy thou wantest something that shall satisfy thee; and come I ask thee, is not this enough? Will not this fill thy pitcher to its very brim, aye, till it runs over? If thou canst put this promise inside thy cup, will not thou be forced to say, with David, "My cup runneth over; I have more than heart can wish?" When this is fulfilled, "I am thy God," let thy cup be ever so empty of earthly things, suppose thou hast not one solitary drop of creature joy, yet is not this enough to fill it until thy unsteady hand cannot hold the cup by reason of its fulness? I ask thee if thou art not complete when God is thine. Dost thou want anything but God? If thou thinkest thou dost, it were well for thee still to want; for all thou wantest save God, is but to gratify thy lust. Oh! Christian, is not this enough to satisfy thee if all else should fail?

But thou wantest more than quiet satisfaction; thou desirest, sometimes, rapturous delight. Come, soul, is there not enough here to delight thee? Put this promise to thy lips; didst e'er drink wine one-half so sweet as this, "I will be their God?" Didst ever harp or viol sound half so sweetly as this, "I will be their God?" Not all the music blown from sweet instruments, or drawn from living strings, could ever give such melody as this sweet promise, "I will be their God." Oh! here is a very sea of bliss, a very ocean of delight; come, bathe thy spirit in it; thou mayest swim, ay,



to eternity, and never find a shore; thou may'st dive to the very infinite and never find the bottom, "I will be their God." Oh! if this does not make thine eyes sparkle, if this make not thy foot dance for joy, and thy heart beat high with bliss, then assuredly thy soul is not in a healthy state.

But then thou wantest something more than present delights, something concerning which thou mayest exercise hope; and what more dost thou ever hope to get than the fulfilment of this great promise, "I will be their God?" Oh! hope, thou art a great-handed thing; thou layest hold of mighty things, which even faith hath not power to grasp; but though large thine hand may be, this fills it, so that thou canst carry nothing else. I protest, before God, I have not a hope beyond this promise. "O," say you, "you have a hope of heaven." Ay, I have a hope of heaven, but this is heaven - "I will be their God." What is heaven, but to be with God, to dwell with him, to realize that God is mine, and I am his? I say I have not a hope beyond that; there is not a promise beyond that; for all promises are couched in this, all hopes are included in this, "I will be their God." This is the master-piece of all promises; it is the top-stone of all the great and precious things, which God has provided for his children, "I will be their God." If we could really grasp it, if it could be applied to our soul and we could understand it, we might clap our hands and say, "Oh! the glory, oh! the glory, oh! the glory of that promise!" it makes a heaven below, and it must make a heaven above, for nothing else will be wanted but that, "I will be their God."

III. Now, for a moment, dwell on the CERTAINTY OF THIS PROMISE; it does not say, "I may be their God;" but "I will be their God." There is a sinner who says he won't have God for his God. He will have God to be his preserver, to take care of him, and keep him from accident. He does not object to having God to feed him, to give him his bread, and water, and raiment; nor does he mind making God somewhat of a showthing, that he may take out on Sunday, and bow before it, but he will not have God for his God; he will not take him to be his all. He makes his belly his God, gold his God, the world his God. How then is this promise to be fulfilled? There is one of God's chosen people there; he does not know that he is chosen yet, and he says he will not have God; how then is this promise to be carried out? "Oh!" say some, "if the man wont have God, then, of

course, God cannot get him;" and we have heard it preached, and we read it frequently, that salvation entirely depends upon man's will - that if man stands out and resists God's Holy Spirit, the creature can be the conqueror of the Creator, and finite power can overcome the infinite. Frequently I take up a book and I read, "Oh! sinner, be willing, for unless thou art, God cannot save thee;" and sometimes we are asked, "How is it that such an one is not saved?" And the answer is, "He is not willing to be; God strove with him, but he would not be saved." Ay, but suppose he had striven with him, as he did with those who are saved, would he have been saved then? "No, he would have resisted." Nay, we answer, it is not in man's will, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of the power of God; and we never can entertain such an absurd idea as, that man can conquer Omnipotence, that the might of man is greater than the might of God. We believe, indeed, that certain usual influences of the Holy Spirit may be overcome; we believe that there are general operations of the Spirit in many men's hearts which are resisted and rejected, but the effectual working of the Holy Ghost with the determination to save, could not be resisted, unless you suppose God overcome by his creatures, and the purpose of Deity frustrated by the will of man, which were to suppose something akin to blasphemy. Beloved, God has power to fulfil the promise, "I will be their God." "Oh!" cries the sinner, "I will not have thee for a God." "Wilt thou not?" says he, and he gives him over to the hand of Moses; Moses takes him a little and applies the club of the law, drags him to Sinai, where the mountain totters over his head, the lightnings flash, and thunders bellow, and then the sinner cries, "O God, save me!" "Ah! I thought thou wouldst not have me for a God?" "O Lord, thou shalt be my God." says the poor trembling sinner, "I have put away my ornaments from me; O Lord, what wilt thou do unto me? Save me! I will give myself to thee. Oh! take me!" "Ay," says the Lord, "I knew it; I said that I will be their God; and I have made thee willing in the day of my power." "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

IV. Now, lastly, I said we would conclude, by **URGING YOU TO MAKE USE OF GOD**, if he be yours. It is strange that spiritual blessings are our only possessions that we do not employ. We get a great spiritual blessing, and we let the rust get on it for many a day. There is the mercy seat, for instance. Ah, my friends, if you had the cash box as full of riches as that

mercy seat is, you would go often to it; as often as your necessities require. But you do not go to the mercy seat half so often as you need to go. Most precious things God has given to us, but we never over-use them. The truth is, they cannot be over-used; we cannot wear a promise thread-bare; we can never burn out the incense of grace; we can never use up the infinite treasures of God's loving kindness. But if the blessings God gives us are not used, perhaps God is the least used of all. Though he is our God, we apply ourselves less to him, than to any of his creatures, or any of his mercies, which he bestows upon us. Look at the poor heathen; they use their gods, though they be no gods. They put up a piece of wood or stone, and call it God; and how they use it! They want rain: the people assemble and ask for rain, in the firm but foolish hope that their god can give it. There is a battle, and their god is lifted up; he is brought out from the house, where he usually dwells, that he may go before them, and lead them on to victory. But how seldom do we ask counsel at the hands of the Lord! How often do we go about our business without asking his guidance! In our troubles how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that he may sustain us! And this is not because we may not, for the Lord seems to say, "I am thine, soul, come and make use of me as thou wilt; thou mayest freely come to my store, and the oftener the better welcome." Have thou not a God lying by thee to no purpose; let not thy God be as other gods, serving only for a show: have not a name only that thou hast a God. Since he allows thee, having such a friend, use him daily. My God shall supply all your wants: never want whilst thou hast a God, never fear or faint whilst thou hast a God; go to thy treasure and take whatever thou needest; there is bread, and clothes, and health, and life, and all that thou needest. O Christian, learn the divine skill to make God all things, to make bread of thy God, and water, and health, and friends, and ease; he can supply thee with all these; or what is better, he can be instead of all these, thy food, thy clothing, thy friend, thy life of thee. All this he hath said to thee in this one word, I am thy God; and hereupon thou mayest say, as a heaven-born saint once did, "I have no husband, and yet I am no widow, my Maker is my husband. I have no father or friend, and yet I am neither fatherless nor friendless; my God is both my father and my friend. I have no child, but is not he better to me than ten children? I have no house, but yet I have a home, I have made the Most High my habitation. I am left alone,

but yet I am not alone, my God is good company for me; with him I can walk, with him I can take sweet counsel, find sweet repose; at my lying down, at my rising up, whilst I am in the house, or as I walk by the way, my God is ever with me; with him I ravel, I dwell, I lodge, I live, and shall live for ever." Oh! child of God, let me urge thee to make use of thy God. Make use of him in prayer; I beseech thee, go to him often, because he is thy God. If he were another man's God, thou mightest weary him; but he is thy God. If he were my God and not thine, thou wouldst have no right to approach him, but he is thy God; he has made himself over to thee, if we may use such an expression, (and we think we may) he has become the positive property of all his children, so that all he has, and all he is, is theirs. O child, wilt thou let thy treasury lie idle, when thou wantest it? No; go and draw from it by prayer.

"To him in every trouble flee,  
Thy best, thy only friend."

Fly to him, tell him all thy wants. Use him constantly by faith, at all times. Oh! I beseech thee, if some dark providence has come over thee, use thy God as a sun, for he is a sun. If some strong enemy has come out against thee, use thy God for a shield, for he is a shield to protect thee. If thou hast lost thy way in the mazes of life, use him as a guide, for the great Jehovah will direct thee. If thou art in storms, use him for the God who stilleth the raging of the sea, and saith unto the waves, "Be still." If thou art a poor thing, knowing not which way to turn, use him for a shepherd, for the Lord is thy Shepherd, and thou shalt not want. Whate'er thou art, where'er thou art, remember God is just what thou wantest, and he is just where thou wantest. I beseech thee, then, make use of thy God; do not forget him in thy trouble, but flee to him in the midst of thy distresses, and cry,

"When all created streams are dried,  
Thy fulness is the same;  
May I with this be satisfied,  
And glory in thy name!

No good in creatures can be found  
But may be found in thee;

I must have all things and abound,  
While God is God to me."

Lastly, Christian, let me urge thee again to use God to be thy delight this day. If thou hast trial, or if thou art free from it, I beseech thee make God thy delight; go from this house of prayer and be happy this day in the Lord. Remember it is a commandment, "Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, rejoice." Do not be content to be moderately happy; seek to soar to the heights of bliss and to enjoy a heaven below; get near to God, and you will get near to heaven. It is not as it is with the sun here, the higher you go the colder you find it, because on the mountain there is nothing to reflect the rays of the sun; but with God, the nearer you go to him the brighter he will shine upon you, and when there are no other creatures to reflect his goodness, his light will be all the brighter. Go to God continually, importunately, confidently; "delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall bring it to pass;" "commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall "guide thee by his counsel, and afterwards receive thee to glory."

Here is the first thing of the covenant; the second is like unto it. We will consider that another Sabbath-day. And now may God dismiss you with his blessing. Amen.

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## **God Justified, Though Man Believes Not**

For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. - Romans 3:3-4

The seed of Israel had great privileges even before the coming of Christ. God had promised by covenant that they should have those privileges; and they did enjoy them. They had a revelation and a light divine, while all the world beside sat in heathen darkness. Yet so many Jews did not believe, that, as a whole, the nation missed the promised blessing. A great multitude of them only saw the outward symbols, and never understood their spiritual meaning. They lived and died without the blessing promised to their fathers. Did this make the covenant of God to be void? Did this make the faithfulness of God to be a matter of question? "No, no," says Paul, "if some did not believe, and so did not gain the blessing, this was their own fault; but the covenant of God stood fast, and did not change because men were untrue." He remained just as true as ever; and he will be able to justify all that he has said, and all that he has done, and he will do so even to the end. When the great drama of human history shall have been played out, the net result will be that the ways of God shall be vindicated notwithstanding all the unbelief of men.

I am going to talk of our text, at this time, first, as giving to us a sorrowful reminder: "For what if some did not believe?" It is sad to be reminded that there always have been some who did not believe. Next, here is a horrible inference, which some have drawn from this grievous fact, that is, because some did not believe, it has been hinted that their unbelief would make the faith of God or the faithfulness of God without effect; to which, in the third place, the apostle gives an indignant reply: "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justifies in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

I. Well now, first, we have here A SORROWFUL REMINDER. There always have been some who have not believed.

When God devised the great plan of salvation by grace; when he gave his own Son to die as the Substitute for guilty men; when he proclaimed that whosoever believed in Jesus Christ should have everlasting life; you would have thought that everybody would have been glad to hear such good news, and that they would all have hastened to believe it. Christ is so suitable to the sinner. Why does not the sinner accept him? The way of

salvation is so simple, so suitable to guilty men, it is altogether so glorious, so grand, that if we did not know the depravity of the human heart, we should expect that every sinner would at once believe the gospel, and receive its boons. But, alas, some have not believed!

Now, this is stated very mildly. The apostle says, "For what if some did not believe?" He might have said, "What if many did not believe?" But he is talking to his Hebrew friends, and he wishes to woo them; so he states the case as gently as he can. Remember, dear friends, the carcasses of all but two who came out of Egypt fell in the wilderness through unbelief. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land; but the apostle does not wish to unduly press his argument, or speak so as to aggravate his hearers; and he therefore puts it, "For what if some did not believe?" Even in his own day, he might have said, "The bulk of the Jewish nation has rejected Christ. Wherever I go, they seek my life. They would stone me to death, if they could, because I preach a dying Saviour's love;" but he does not put it so; he only mentions that some did not believe. Yet this is a very appalling thing, even when stated this mildly. If all here, except one person, were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was announced that that one unbeliever would be pointed out to the congregation, I am sure we would all feel in a very solemn condition. But, dear friends, there are many more than one here who have not believed on the Son of God, and who, therefore, are not saved. If the unconverted were not so numerous, there is all the greater need for our tears and our compassion.

The terms of Paul's question suggest a very sweet mitigation of the sorrow. "What if some did not believe?" Then it is implied that some did believe. Glory be to God, there is a numerous "some" who have believed that Jesus is the Christ; and believing in him, have found life through his name! These have entered into a new life, and now bear a new character, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Beloved, we do thank God that the preaching of the gospel has not been in vain. Up yonder, more numerous than the stars are they that walk in white robes which they have washed in the blood of the Lamb; and down here, despite our mourning, there is a glorious company, who still follow the Lamb, who is

to them, their only hope.

Looking at the other side of the case, it is true that, at times, the "some" who did not believe meant the majority. It must be admitted that, sometimes, unbelievers have preponderated even among the hearers of the precious Word. Read the story of Israel through, in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and you will be saddened to find how again and again they did not believe. The history of Israel, from the moment they became a nation, is a very painful one. It is full of the mercy of God; but it is also full of treachery of the human heart. In the days of the judges, the people served God while a good judge ruled over them; but as soon as he was dead, they went astray after false gods. I almost think that the Christian church is in the period of the judges now. When the Lord raises up, here one and there another, to preach his Word faithfully, the people seem to take heed to it; but when the faithful preachers are gone, many of their hearers turn aside again. Blessed be to God, we expect the coming of the King soon; and when the King comes, and the period of the judges shall have ended, then we shall enter upon a time of rest and peace. It may be that, even among hearers of the gospel, those who do not believe preponderate over those who do believe. My text sounds like a solemn knell, and there is something terribly awful about it, like the deep rumbling of underground thunder.

Now, dear friends, this unbelief has usually been the case throughout all ages among the great ones of the earth. In our Saviour's day, they said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" The gospel has usually had a free course among the poor and among those who some call "the lower orders", though why they are said to be lower than others, I do not know, unless it is because the heavier and more valuable things generally sink to the bottom. The church of God owes very little to kings and princes and nobles. She owes far more to fishermen and peasants. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.: I suspect that, until the King himself shall come, we shall still find that the common people will gladly hear the gospel; and that, while Christ the Lord will choose for his own some from all ranks and conditions of men,



it will still be true that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

I think we may also say, with deep solemnity that some who have not believed have belonged to the religious and to the teaching class. In the days of our Lord and his apostles, the scribes and Pharisees were the greatest haters of the doctrine of Christ. Those whom you might have supposed, being most familiar with the Scriptures, the scribes, would soonest have recognized the Messiah, were the men who would not acknowledge him. So it was with the priests, even the chief priests, the men who had to do with the sacrifices and with the temple. They rejected Christ, although they were the religious leaders of the people. Do you suppose it is very different now? Alas, my friends, we may be preachers, and yet not preach the gospel of Christ; we may be members of the church, and yet not savingly know the gospel; we may go in and out of the house of God, and seem to take part in its holy service, and yet, all the while, we may be strangers and foreigners in the presence of the Most High. Believers are not always those whom you would suppose to be believers. The Lord often brings to himself, as in the case of the centurion, of whom we read this morning, far-off ones, rough soldiers, who were not thought likely to feel the power of such gentle teaching as the doctrine of the cross; and they bow before the Saviour. But alas! Alas! Among those who appear to be the children of the kingdom, brought up in the worship of God, there are some, yea, many, who have not believed on Christ; and, saddest of all, even among those who are the teachers of others in the things of God, there are some that have not savingly believed.

Now, dear friends, if we take the whole range of the nations favoured with the gospel, we shall have to say, and say it, as it were, in capital letters, "SOME DO NOT BELIEVE," and that "some" is a very large number. The question of the apostle is, "What if some did not believe?" Well, if I had to ask and answer that question, at this time, I would say, "What if some do not believe?" Then they are lost. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing in the name of the only-begotten

Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing, they shall find life through the sacred name. Let us pray for them. If some do not believe, let us, who do believe, make them the constant subject of our prayers; and then let us tell them what is it to be believed, and bear our witness to the saving power of the gospel. When we have done that, let us scrupulously take care that our life and conduct are consistent with the doctrine that we teach, so that, if some do not believe, they may be won to Christ by the example of those who believe in him. Oh, that every Christian here would seek to bring another person to Christ! I pray you, beloved, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, be not barren nor unfruitful. If you know the great secret, tell it to others. Tell it out; tell it out; we all want stirring up to this blessed work; I am sure we do. I heard of a Christian who always spoke about Christ to, at least, one person every day. I commend the example for your imitation. How many of us could say that we do that? I know there are some here who do ten times as much as that. It has grown to be a habit with them to speak of Christ to every one they meet; but it is not the habit even of all who believe. It takes some Christians a long time to begin to say anything for their Lord. Let us try and labour hard, that, if some people do not believe, we may bring them to the Saviour, that God may have praise from them also.

II. But now I advance a step further, and dwell upon A HORRIBLE INFERENCE drawn from the fact that some did not believe. The inference was, that their unbelief had made the faith of God, or the faithfulness of God, altogether without effect. I will translate what Paul said without dwelling on his words.

Some will say, "If So-and-so, and So-and-so do not believe the gospel, then religion is a failure." We have read of a great many things being failures nowadays. A little time ago, it was a question whether marriage was not a failure. I suppose that, by-and-by, eating our dinners will be a failure, breathing will be a failure, everything will be a failure. But now the gospel is said to be a failure. Why? Because certain gentlemen of professed culture and supposed knowledge do not believe it. Well, dear friends, there have been other things that have not been believed in by very important individuals, and yet they have turned out to be true. I am

not quite old enough to remember all that was said about the introduction of the steam-engine, though I remember right well going to see a steam-engine and a railway-train as great wonders when I was a boy. Before the trains actually ran, all the old coachmen, and all the farmers that had horses to sell, would not believe for a moment that an engine could be made to go on the rails, and to drag carriages behind it; and in parliament they had to say that they thought they could produce an engine that could go at the speed of eight miles an hour. They dare not say more, because it would have been incredible if they did. According to the wise men of the time, everything was to go to the bad, and the engines would blow up, the first time they started with a train. But they did not blow up, and everybody now smiles at what those learned gentlemen (for some of them were men of standing and learning) ventured then to say. Look at the gentlemen who now tell us that the gospel is a failure. They are the successors of those who have risen up, one after the other; whose principal object has been to refute all that went before them. They call themselves philosophers; and, as I have often said, the history of philosophy is a history of fools, a history of human folly. Man has gone from one form of philosophy to another, and every time that he has altered his philosophy, he has only made a slight variation in the same things. Philosophy is like a kaleidoscope. The philosopher turns it round, and exclaims that he has a new view of things. So he has; but all that he sees is a few bits of glass, which alter their form at every turn of the toy. If any of you shall live fifty years, you will see that the philosophy of today will be a football of contempt for the philosophy of that period. They will speak, amidst roars of laughter, of evolution; and the day will come, when there will not be a child but will look upon it as being the most foolish notion that ever crossed the human mind. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I know what has befallen many of the grand discoveries of the great philosophers of the past; and I expect that the same thing will happen again. I have to say, with Paul, "What if some did not believe?" It is no new thing; for there have always been some who have rejected the revelation of God. What then? You and I had better go on believing, and testing for ourselves, and proving the faithfulness of God, and living upon Christ our Lord, even though we see another set of doubters, and another, and yet another ad infinitum. The gospel is no failure, as many of us know.

Is the gospel to be disbelieved because some people will not receive it? I trow not, dear friends. As I have already said, many other things have been believed, although some people have not believed them; and the believers have had the best of it, and so they always will. Has the gospel changed your character? Has the gospel renewed you in the spirit of your mind? Does the gospel cheer and comfort you in the day of sorrow? Does it help you to live, and will it help you to die? Then do not give it up, even though some do not believe it.

Again, dear friends, has God failed to keep his promise to Israel because some Israelites did not believe? That is the point that Paul aims at, and the answer is, "No." He did bring Israel into the promised land, though all but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. He did give that promised land to Israel, albeit that, through their unbelief, God smote them, and they were destroyed; yet a nation came up again from their ashes, and God kept his covenant with his ancient people; and to-day he is keeping it. The "chosen seed of Israel's race" is "a remnant, weak and small"; but the day is coming when they shall be gathered in, and we shall then rejoice; for then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also, When Israel has come to her own Lord and King. God has not cast away his people, whom he did foreknow; nor has he broken his covenant made with Abraham, nor will he while the world standeth, even though many believe not on him.

Will God fail to keep his promise to anyone who believes on him? Because some do not believe, will God's promise therefore fail to be kept to those who do believe? I invite you to come and try. When two of John's disciples enquired of Jesus where he dwelt, he said to them, "Come and see." If any person here will try Christ, as I tried him, when yet a youth, as miserable as I could be, and ready to die with despair, if they shall feel in believing such joy as I felt, if they shall experience such a change of character as passed over me when I believed in Christ, they would not tolerate a doubt. What they have known, and felt, and tasted, and handled of the good Word of God, will prove to them that, if some believe not, yet God abideth faithful, he will never deny himself. One said that she believed the Bible because she was acquainted with the Author of it,

which is an excellent reason for believing it. You will believe the gospel if you are so acquainted with the Saviour who brings that gospel to us. Personal dealings with God in Christ, personal trust in the living Saviour, will put you out of reach of this strange inference that God will be unfaithful because some do not believe in him.

I am going a step further. Will God be unfaithful to his Son if some do not believe? I have heard sometimes, a fear expressed that Christ will lose those for whom he dies. I thank God that I have no fear about that. "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." I never come to you, and, in forma pauperis, ask you to accept Christ, begging and praying you to take Christ, because otherwise he will be a loser by you. It is you who must beg of him. He giveth grace as a king bestows his favours; nay more, he lovingly condescends to entreat you to come to him. Suppose that you wickedly say, "We will not have Christ to reign over us." If you think that you will rob him of honour, and bring disgrace upon him by your rejection, you make a great mistake. If you will not have him, others will. If you who are so wise will not have Christ, there are plenty, whom you reckon to be fools, who will take him to be their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If you who are so gay and frivolous will not have my Lord, you will die in your sins; but there are others who will have him. Do not think that you can by any possibility rob him of his glory. "For what if some did not believe?" This word shall yet become true. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." If myriads reject him, there will be myriads who will receive him, and in all things he shall have the preeminence; and he will return to his Father not defeated, but more than a conqueror over all his foes.

To put the question in another shape, "For what if some did not believe?" Will God alter his revealed truth? If some do not believe, will God change the gospel to suit them? Will he seek to please their depraved taste? Ought we to change our preaching because of "the spirit of the age"? Never; unless it be to fight "the spirit of the age" more desperately than ever. We ask for no terms between Christ and his enemies except these, unconditional surrender to him. He will bate not jot of tittle of his claims; but he will still come to you, and say, "Submit yourselves; bow down, and

own me King and Lord, and take me to be your Saviour. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else." If you wait till there is a revised version of the gospel, you will be lost. If you wait till there is a gospel brought out that will not cost you so much of giving up sin, or so much of bowing your proud necks, you will wait until you find yourself in hell. Come, I pray you, come even now, and believe the gospel. It cannot be altered to your taste; therefore alter yourself so as to meet its requirements.

Now suppose that these men, who will not believe, should all concert together to proclaim new views in order to upset the gospel. You see, up to the present time, they never have agreed. One wing of Satan's army of doubters always destroys the other. Just now the great scientists say to the modern-thought gentlemen, and say to them very properly, "If there is no serpent, and no Eve, and no Adam, and no flood, and no Noah, and no Abraham. As you tell us now that all this is a myth, then your whole old Book is a lie." I am very much obliged to those who talk thus to the disciples of the higher criticism. They thought that they were going to have all the scientists on their side, to join them in attacking the ancient orthodoxies. There is a split in the enemy's camp; Amalek is fighting Edom, and Edom is contending against Moab.

But suppose they were all to agree. Well, what would happen then? I thought I saw a vision once, when I was by the seaside. To my closed eyes, there seemed to come down to the beach at Brighton a huge black horse, which went into the water, and began to drink; and I thought I heard a voice that said, "It will drink the sea dry." My great horse grew, and grew, till it was such a huge creature that I could scarcely measure it; and still it drank, and drank, and drank. All the while the sea did not appear to alter in the least, the water was still there as deep as ever. By-and-by the animal burst, and its remains were washed up on the beach, and there it lay dead, killed by its own folly. That will be the end of this big black horse of infidelity that boasts that it is going to drink up this everlasting gospel.

I remember that Christmas Evans put this truth rather roughly on one occasion. He said, "There was a dog on the hearthrug, and there was a

kettle of boiling water on the fire. As the kettle kept puffing out steam and hot water, the dog sat up and growled. The more the kettle kept on puffing, the more the dog growled; and at last he seized the kettle by the throat, and of course the boiling water killed him." Thus will unbelievers do with the gospel. They growl at it to-day; but if they ever join together, and really make an attack upon it, the gospel will be a savour of death unto death to those who oppose it, as it is a savour of life to those who receive it.

Thus I have mentioned this horrible inference.

III. Now I close by speaking very briefly upon AN INDIGNANT REPLY to this horrible inference.

In reply to this question, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Paul give a solemn negative: "God forbid." All the opponents of the gospel cannot move it by a hair's breath; they cannot injure a single stone of this divine building. It remains ever the same. Let them do what they may, they cannot alter it.

Then Paul utters a vehement protestation: "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Can you picture this great host? Here they come, all the men who ever lived, unnumbered millions! They come marching up; and we stand like the inspecting general at a review, and see them all go by; and as every man passes, he shouts, "The gospel is not true. Christ did not die. There is no salvation for believers in him." The apostle Paul, standing as it were at the saluting-point, and seeing the whole race of mankind go by, says, "God is true, and every one of you is a liar." "Let God be true, but every man a liar." You know the way that we have of counting beads, and if the majority goes in a particular direction, we almost go that way. If you count the heads, and there is a general consensus of opinion, you are apt to say, "It must be so, for everybody says so." But what everybody says is not therefore true. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." It is a strange, strong expression; but it is non too strong. If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, God is true, and all men are false. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. God cannot change; his word, like himself, is immutable. We are to believe God's truth if nobody else

believes it. The general consensus of opinion is nothing to a Christian. He believes God's word, and he thinks more of that than of the universal opinion of men.

Paul next uses a Scriptural argument. Whenever he gets thoroughly redhot, and wants an overwhelming argument, he always goes to the divine treasury of revelation. He quotes what David had said in the fifty-first Psalm, "That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

God will be justified in everything that he has said. You may take every line of the Word of God, and rest assured that God will be justified in having directed the sacred penman to write that line.

God shall also be justified when he judges, and when he condemns men. When he pronounces his final sentence upon the ungodly, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" he shall be justified even in that dreadful hour.

A very startling expression is used here: "That thou mightest overcome when thou art judged." Think of this enormous evil; here are men actually trying to snatch the balance and the rod from the hand of God; and presuming to judge his judgments, and to sit as if they were the god of God. Suppose that they could be daring enough to do even that, the verdict would be in God's favour. It would be proved that he had neither said anything untrue, nor done anything unjust. We are confident that, although some do not believe God, he will be justified before men and angels, and we shall have nothing to do but to admire and adore him world without end.

Now, I could say much more; but I will not except just this, I want those who are the Lord's people to be very brave about the things of God. There has been too much of yielding, and apologizing, and compromising. I cannot bear it; it grieves me to see one truth after another surrendered to the enemy. A brother writes to me, saying, "You do not put so much mirth into your preaching as you used to do. When the captain at sea whistles, then all the sailors feel more cheerful." My friend adds, "Whistle a bit." I



will do so. This is my way of whistling to cheer my shipmates. I believe in the everlasting God, and in his unchanging truth; and I am persuaded that the gospel will win the day, however long and stern the conflict rages. Therefore, my brethren, be not ashamed of the gospel, nor of Christ your Lord, who died that he might save you eternally. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Even if it did come to this, that every other man in the world were against the truth of God, stand you to his word, and say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

The other word that I have to say is a message to the unsaved. If you are opposed to God, I beseech you give up your opposition at once. The battle cannot end well for you unless you yield yourself to God. He is your Maker and Preserver; every argument we can use ought to convince you that you should be on his side. I pray you remember that, for you to contend with God, is for the gnat to contend with the fire, or the wax, to fight with the flame. You must be destroyed if you come into collision with him. Then yield to him at once. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." What is it to kiss the Son? Why, to accept the Lord Christ as your King and Saviour. To ask him to be your peace and your salvation. Ask him now, before that clock ceases striking. I pray that some may at this moment say, "I will have Christ, and I will be Christ's." The Lord grant it! This great transaction done now, it shall be done forever; and you and I will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the blessed, and eternally praise him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God. The Lord be with you, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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## The God Of The Aged

Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. - Isaiah 46:4

Those will be peculiar circumstances under which I shall stand up to address the people next Tuesday; circumstances which perhaps seldom occur,—possibly may never have occurred before. It might have been more in order that the aged minister should himself address the people; but nevertheless, as it is his own choice, so it must be; and I shall draw my consolation from the third verse, where it is declared, that though God be the God of the close of our life, yet he is also the God of its beginning. He carries us from the very womb; therefore the child may trust in God, as well as the grey head; and he who giveth special blessings to the hoary hairs does also crown the head of the young with his perpetual favor, if they be his children.

"Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

Will you allow me to expound the doctrine of this text, and then to show you how it is carried out, especially in the time of old age?

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT I hold to be, the constancy of God's love, its perpetuity, and its unchangeable nature. God declares that he is not simply the God of the young saint; that he is not simply the God of the middle-aged saint: but that he is the God of the saints in all their ages from the cradle to the tomb. "Even to old age I am he;" or, as Lowth beautifully and more properly translates it: "Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you."

The doctrine, then is twofold: that God himself is the same, whatever may be our age; and that God's dealings towards us, both in providence and in grace, his carryings and his deliverings, are alike unchanged.

As to the first part of the doctrine, that God himself is unchanged when we come to old age, surely I have no need to prove that. Abundant testimonies of Scripture declare God to be an immutable being, upon whose brow there is no furrow of old age, and whose strength is not enfeebled by the lapse of ages; but if we need proofs, we might look even abroad on nature, and we should from nature guess that God would not change during the short period of our mortal life. Seemeth it unto me a hard thing, that God should be the same for seventy years, when I find things in nature that have retained the same impress and image for many more years? Behold the sun! The sun that led our fathers to their daily labour, lighteth us still; and the moon by night is unchanged,—the self-same satellite, glittering with the light of her master, the sun. Are not the rocks the same? And are there not many ancient trees, which remain well nigh the same for multitudes of years, and outlive centuries? Is not the earth, for the most part, the same? Have the stars lost their light? Do not the clouds still pour their rain upon the earth? Does not the ocean still beat with its one great pulse of ebb and flow? Do not the winds still howl, or breathe in gentle gales upon the earth? Doth not the sun still shine? Do not plants grow as heretofore? Hath the harvest changed? Hath God forgotten his covenant of day and night? Hath he yet brought another flood upon the earth? Doth it not still stand in the water and out of the water? Surely, then, if changing nature, made to pass away in a few more years, and to be "dissolved with fervent heat," remains the same through the cycles of seventy years, may we not believe that God, who is greater than nature, the creator of all worlds, would still remain the same God, through so brief a period? Does not that suffice? Then, we have another proof. Had we a new God, we should not have the Scriptures: had God changed, then we should need a new Bible. But the Bible which the infant readeth is the Bible of the grey head; the Bible which I carried with me to my Sunday School, I shall sit in my bed to read, when, hoary-headed, all strength shall fail save that which is divine. The promise which cheered me in the young morning of life, when first I consecrated myself to God, shall cheer me when my eyes are dim with age, and when the sunlight of heaven lights them up, and I see bright visions of far-off worlds, where I hope to dwell for ever. The word of God is still the same; there is not one promise removed. The doctrines are the same; the truths are the same; all God's declarations remain unchanged for ever; and I argue, from the very

fact that his years do not change him. Look at our worship—is not that the same? Oh! hoary heads! well can ye remember how ye were carried to God's house in your childhood; and ye heard the self-same hymns that now ye hear. Have they lost their savour? Have they lost their music? At times, when prayer is offered, ye remember that your ancient pastor prayed the same petition fifty years ago; but the petition is as good as ever. It is still unchanged; it is the same praise, the same prayer, the same expounding, the same preaching. All our worship is the same. And with many it is the same house of God, where first they were dedicated to God in baptism. Surely, my brethren, if God had changed, we should have been obliged to make a new form of worship; if God had not been immutable, we should have needed to have sacrificed our sacred service to some new method; but since we find ourselves bowing like our fathers, with the same prayers, and canting the same psalms, we rightly believe that God himself must be immutable.

But we have better proofs than this that God is still unchanged. We learn this from the sweet experience of all the saints. They testify that the God of their youth is the God of their later years. They own that Christ "hath the dew of his youth." When they saw him first, as the bright and glorious Immanuel, they thought him "altogether lovely;" and when they see him now, they see not one beauty faded, and not one glory departed: he is the self-same Jesus. When they first rested themselves on him, they thought his shoulders strong enough to carry them; and they find those shoulders still as mighty as ever. They thought at first his bowels did melt with love, and that his heart was beating high with mercy; and they find it is still the same. God is unchanged; and therefore they "are not consumed." They put their trust in him, because they have not yet marked a single alteration in him. His character, his essence, his being, and his deeds are all the same; and, moreover, to crown all, we cannot suppose a God, if we cannot suppose a God immutable. A God who changed would be no God. We could not grasp the idea of Deity if we once allowed our minds to take in the thought of mutability. From all these things, then, we conclude that "even from old age he is the same, and that even to hoary hairs he will carry us."

2. The other side of the doctrine is this, not only that God is the same in

his nature, but that he is the same in his dealings; that he will carry us the same, that he will deliver us the same, that he will bear us the same as he used to do. And here, also, we need scarcely to prove to you that God's dealings towards his children are the same, especially when I remind you that God's promises are made not to age, but to people, to persons, and to men. It has been recently declared by some ministers, that certain ages are more likely to be converted than other ages. We have heard persons state, that should a man outlive thirty years of life, if he has heard the Gospel, he is not at all likely to be saved; but we believe a more palpable, bare-faced lie was never uttered in the pulpit, for we have, ourselves, known multitudes who have been saved at forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, and even bordering on the grave at eighty. We find some promises in the Bible made to some particular conditions; but the main, the great, the grand promises, are made to sinners as sinners; they are made to the elect, to the chosen ones, irrespective of their age or condition. We hold, that the man who is old, can be justified in the same way as the way who is young; that the robe of Christ is broad enough to cover the strong full-grown man as well as the little child. We believe the blood of Christ avails to wash out seventy years, as well as seventy days of sin; that "with God there is no respect of persons," that all ages are alike to him, and that "whosoever cometh unto Christ, he will in no wise case out," and sure we are, that all the good things of the Bible are as good at one time as at another. The perfect robe of righteousness that I wear, will that change by years? The sanctification of the Spirit, will that be destroyed by years? The promises, will they shake? The covenant, will that be dissolved? I can suppose that the everlasting hills shall melt; I can dream that the eternal mountains shall be dissolved, like the snow upon their peaks; I can conceive that the ocean may be licked up with tongues of forked flame; I can suppose the sun stopped in his career; I can imagine the moon turned into blood; I can conceive the stars falling from the vault of night; I can imagine "the wreck of nature and the crash of worlds;" but I cannot conceive the change of a single mercy, a single covenant blessing, a single promise, or a single grace, which God bestows upon his people, for I find every one of them in itself stamped with immutability, and I have no reason to put this merely upon guess-work. I find, when I turn over the whole Bible that the experience of the saints, one thousand, two thousand, three thousand years ago, was just the same as the experience

of the saints now; and if I find God's mercy is unchanged from David's time till mine, can I conceive that God, who lasts the same for thousands, would change during the brief period of seventy? Nay, still we hold that he will carry us, and he will bear us in old age as well as in our youth. But, besides that, we have living witnesses, living testimonies. I could fetch up from the ground floor of this place, and from the galleries, not one or two, but twenty, yea a hundred living witnesses, who, rising up, would tell you that God doth carry them now, as he did of old, and that he still doth bear them. I need not appeal to my friends, or they would stand up in their pews, and with tears trickling down their cheeks, they would say, "Young men, young women, trust your God! he hath not forsaken me!" I find that

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"Even down to old age, all his people do prove,  
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs do their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they now still in his bosom are borne."

Ask yon aged friend, ask any aged Christian, whether he finds God has, in the least forsaken him, and you will see him shake his head, and hear him say, "O young man, if I had another seventy years to live, I would trust him still, for I have not found him fail all the way that the Lord God hath led me. Not one promise hath failed, but all hath come to pass;" and I think I see him lifting up his hand in the midst of the assembly, and saying, "I have nothing to regret but my sin. If I had to live over again, I should only want to put myself into the hands of the same Providence, to be led and directed by the self-same grace." Beloved, we need not prove to you farther, for living witnesses do testify, that God carries out his promise, "I have made and will bear; even I will carry and deliver you."

II. But now we come to our real subject, which is, to consider THE TIME OF OLD AGE AS A SPECIAL PERIOD, and to mark, therefore, the constancy of divine love—that God bears and succours his servants in their later years. I cannot imagine or dream that I need offer any apology for preaching to aged people. If I were in sundry stupid circles where people call themselves ladies and gentlemen, and always want to conceal their ages, I might have some hesitation; but I have nothing to do with that here. I call an old man, an old man, and an old woman, an old

woman; whether they think themselves old or not is nothing to me. I guess they are, if they are getting anyway past sixty, on to seventy or eighty. Old age is a time of peculiar memories, of peculiar hopes, of peculiar solitudes, of peculiar blessedness, and of peculiar duties; yet in all this, God is the same, although man be peculiar.

(1.) First, old age is a time of peculiar memory; in fact, it is the age of memory. We young men talk of remembering such-and-such things a certain time ago; but what is our memory, compared to our father's? Our father looks back on three or four times the length of time over which we cast our eyes. What a peculiar memory the old man has! How many joys he can remember! How many times has his heart beat high with rapture and blessedness! How many times has his house been gladdened with plenty! How many harvest homes has he seen! How many treadings of the vintage! How many times has he heard the laugh run round the ingle fire! How many times have his children shouted in his ear, and rejoiced around him! How many times have his own eyes sparkled with delight! How many hill Mizars has he seen! How many times has he had sweet banquetting with the Lord! How many periods of communion with Jesus! How many hallowed services hath he attended! How many songs of Zion hath he sung! How many answered prayers have gladdened his spirit! How many happy deliverances have made him laugh for joy! When he looks back, he can string his mercies together by the thousand! and looking upon them all, he can say, though he will think of many troubles that he has had to pass through, "Surely, goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." God hath been with him to hoary hairs, and even to old age he hath carried him. His joys he looks back upon as proof of God's constancy.

And how many griefs hath he had! How many times hath that old man been to the chamber of sickness! How many times hath that aged sister been stretched on the bed of affliction! How many diseases can he or she look back upon! How many hours of bitter travail and pain! How many seasons of trouble, infirmity, and approachings to the grave? How many times hath the old man tottered very near that bourne from which no traveller can return? How many times hath he had the Father's rod upon his shoulders? And yet, looking back upon all, he can say, "Even to old

age he is the same; and even to hoary hairs he hath carried me." How frequently, took, hath that old man gone to the grave where he hath buried many he has loved? There, perhaps, he has laid a beloved wife, and he goes to weep there; or, the husband sleeps, while the wife is yet alive. Sons and daughters, too, that old man can remember—snatched away to heaven almost as soon as they were born; or, perhaps, permitted to live until their prime, and then cut down just in their youthful glory. How many of the old friends he hath welcomed to his fireside hath he buried? How frequently has he been forced to exclaim, "Though friends have departed, yet 'there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother,' on him I still trust, and to him I still commit my soul."

And mark, moreover, how many times temptation hath shattered that venerable saint! how many conflicts hath he had with doubts and fears! how many wrestlings with the enemy! how often he hath been tempted to forsake his faith! how frequently he hath had to stand in the thickest part of the battle; but yet he has been preserved by mercy, and not quite cut down. He has been enabled to persevere in the heavenly road. How travel-sore are his feet! how blistered by the roughness of the way, but he can tell you, that notwithstanding all these things, Christ hath "kept him till this day, and will not let him go;" and his conclusion is, "even to old age God hath been the same, and even to hoary hairs he hath carried him."

There is one said reflection which we are obliged to mention when we look upon the bald head of the aged saint, and that is, how many sins he hath committed! Ah! my beloved, however pure may have been your lives, you will be obliged to say, "Oh! how have I sinned, in youth, in middle age, and even when infirmities have gathered around me! Would to God I had been holy! How often have I forsaken God! how frequently have I wandered from him! alas! how often have I provoked him! How frequently have I doubted his promises, when I had no cause whatever to distrust him! how frequently has my tongue sinned against my heart! how constantly have I violated all I knew to be good and excellent! I am forced to say now, in my grey old age, -

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling."



I am still -

"A monument of grace,  
A sinner saved by blood"

I have no hope now, save in the blood of Christ, and can only wonder how it is that Christ could have preserved me so long. Truly, I can say, "Even to old age he is the same, and even to hoary hairs he hath carried me."

(2.) The aged man, too, hath peculiar hopes. He hath no such hopes as I or my young friends here. He hath few hopes of the future in this world; they are gathered up into a small space, and he can tell you, in a few words, what constitutes all his expectation and desire. But he has one hope, and that is the very same which he had when he first trusted in Christ; it is a hope "undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them that are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Let me talk a little of that hope, and you will see from it that the Christian is the same as ever he was; and even down to hoary hairs God deals the same with him. My venerable brother, what is the ground of thy hope? Is it not the same as that which animated thee when thou wast first united with the Christian Church? Thou saidst then, "My hope is in the blood of Jesus Christ." I ask thee, brother, what is thy hope now, and I am sure thou wilt answer, "I do not hope to be saved because of my long service, nor because of my devotedness to God's cause."

"All my hope on Christ is staid,  
All my help from him I bring:  
He covers my defenceless head  
With the shadow of his wing."

And, my brother, what is the reason of thy hope? If thou art asked what reason thou hast to believe thou art a Christian, thou wilt say, "The self-same reason I gave at the Church-meeting." When I came before it, I said, then "I believe myself to be a child of God, because I feel myself to be a sinner, and God has given me grace to put my trust in Jesus." I think that is all the reason you have to believe yourself a child of God now. At times you have some evidence, as you call it; but there are hours when your

graces and virtues are obscured, and you cannot see them, for gloomy doubts prevail, and you will confess, I am sure, that the only way to get rid of your doubts will be, to come and say, again -

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
He's still my strength and righteousness,  
My Saviour and my all."

And the object or end of hope, is not that the same? What was your hope when you first went to the wicket gate? Why, your hope was that you might arrive at the land of the blessed. And is it not the same now? Is your hope of heaven changed? Do you wish for anything else, or for anything better? "No," you will say, "I thought when I started I should one day be with Jesus; that is what I expect now. I feel that my hope is precisely the same. I want to be with Jesus, to be like him, and to see him as he is." And is not the joy of that hope just the same? How glad you used to be when your minister preached about heaven, and told you of its pearly gates and streets of shining gold! and has it lost any of its beauty in your eyes now? Do you not remember, that in your father's house, at family prayer, one night, they sang, -

"Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Name, ever dear to me!  
When shall my labors have an end.  
In joy, and peace, and thee"?

Cannot you sing that now? Do you want any other city besides Jerusalem? Do you remember how they used to rise up sometimes in the house of God, when you were children, and sing, -

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
And cast a wishful eye!"

Will not that hymn do for you now even better than it did for you then? You can now sing it, as your old father used to sing it, with a firm heart, and yet with a quivering lip. The hope that ravished you then ravishes you now. You start at the same watchword. Heaven is your home still.

"There your best friends, your kindred dwell,  
There, God your Saviour reigns."

Does not all this prove, again, that though our hopes are somewhat more contracted than they were, yet "God is still the same, and even to hoary hairs he will carry us."

(3.) Again, old age is a time of peculiar solicitude. An old man is not anxious about self. He hath not the cares of starting in business, as he once had. He hath no children to launch out in business. He hath not to cast his anxious eyes on his little family. But his solicitude hath somewhat increased in another direction. He hath more solicitude about his bodily frame than he once had. He cannot now run as he used to do; but he must walk with more sober gait. He fears every now and then that the pitcher will be "broken at the cistern;" for "the noise of the grinders is low." He hath no longer that strength of desire he once possessed; his body begins to totter, to shake, and to quiver. The old tenement has stood these fifty years; and who expects a house to last for ever? A bit of mortar has gone off from one place, and a lath out of another; and when a little wind comes to shake it about, he is ready to cry out, "The earthly house of my tabernacle is about to be dissolved." But I told you before, this peculiar solicitude is but another proof of divine faithfulness; for now that you have little pleasure in the flesh, do you not find that God is just the same? and that, though the days are come when you can say, "I have no pleasure in them," yet the days are not come when you can say, "I have no pleasure in him;" but, on the contrary,

"Though all created streams are dry,  
His goodness is the same:  
With this you still are satisfied,  
And glory in his name."

If he had only been your God when you were a strong young man, you might have thought that he loved you for what you could do for him; but, now you have become a poor worn-out pensioner, have you any better proof that he is an unchanging God, because he loves you when you can do so little for him? I tell you, even your bodily pains are but proofs of his love; for he is taking down your old tenement stick by stick, and is

building it up again in brighter worlds, never to be taken down any more.

And remember, too, there is another solicitude—a failure of mind, as well as of body. There are many remarkable instances of old men, who have been as gifted in their old age as in their youth; but with the majority the mind becomes somewhat impaired, especially the memory. They cannot remember what was done yesterday, although it is a singular fact that they can remember what was done fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago. They forget much which they would wish to remember; but still they find that their God is just the same; they find that his goodness does not depend on their memory; that the sweetness of his grace does not depend upon their palate. When they can remember but little of the sermon, they still feel that it leaves as good an impression on their heart as when they were strong in their memories; and thus they have another proof that God, even when their mind faileth a little, carries them down to their hoar hairs, their old age, and that to them he is ever the same.

But the chief solicitude of old age is death. Young men may die soon. Old men must die. Young men, if they sleep, sleep in a siege; old men, if they sleep, sleep in an attack, when the enemy has already made a breach, and is storming the castle. A greyheaded old sinner is a greyheaded old fool; but an aged Christian is an aged wise man. But even the Christian hath peculiar solitudes about death. He knows he cannot be a long way from his end. He feels that, even in the course of nature, apart from what is called accidental death, there is no doubt but in a few more years he must stand before his God. He thinks he may be in heaven in ten or twenty years; but how short do those ten or twenty years appear! He does not act like a man who thinks a coach is a long way off, and he may take his time; but he is like one who is about to go a journey, and hears the post-horn blowing down the street, and is getting ready. His one solicitude now is, to examine himself whether he is in the faith. He fears that if he is wrong now, it will be terrible to have spent all his life dabbling in profession, and to find at last that he hath got nothing for his pains, except a mere empty name, which must be swept away by death. He feels now how solemn a thing the Gospel is; he feels the world to be as nothing; he feels that he is near the bar of doom. But still, beloved, mark, God's faithfulness is the same; for if he be nearer death, he has the sweet

satisfaction that he is nearer heaven; and if he has more need to examine himself than ever, he has also more evidence whereby to examine himself, for he can say, "Well, I know that on such-and-such an occasion the Lord heard my prayer; at such-and-such a time he manifested himself to me, as he did not unto the world," and, though examination presses more upon the old, still they have greater materials for it. And here, again, is another proof of this grand truth. "Even unto old age I am the same," says God; "and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

(4.) And now, once more, old age hath its peculiar blessedness. Some time ago I stepped up to an old man whom I saw when preaching at an anniversary, and I said to him, "Brother, do you know there is no man in the whole chapel I envy so much as you!" "Envy me," he said—"why, I am eighty-seven." I said, "I do, indeed; because you are so near your home, and because I believe that in old age there is a peculiar joy, which we young people do not taste at present. You have got to the bottom of the cup, and it is not with God's wine as it is with man's. Man's wine becomes dregs at the last, but God's wine is sweeter the deeper you drink of it." He said, "That's very true, young man," and shook me by the hand. I believe there is a blessedness about old age that we young men know nothing of. I will tell you how that is. In the first place, the old man has a good experience to talk about. The young men are only just trying some of the promises; but the old man can turn them over one by one, and say, "There, I have tried that, and that, and that." We read them over and say, "I hope they are true;" but the old man says, "I know they are true." And then he begins to tell you why. He has got a history for everyone, like a soldier for his medals; and he takes them out, and says, "I will tell you when the Lord revealed that to me; just when I lost my wife: just when I buried my son; just when I was turned out of my cottage, and did not get work for six weeks; or, at another time, when I broke my leg." He begins telling you the history of the promises, and says, "There, now. I know they are all true." What blessed thing, to look upon them as paid notes; to bring out the old cheques that have been cashed and say, "I know they are genuine, or else they would not have been paid." Old people have not the doubts young people have about the doctrine. Young people are apt to doubt; but when they get old, they begin to get solid and firm in the faith. I love to get some of my old brethren, to talk with me concerning the good

things of the kingdom. They do not hold the truth with their two fingers, as some of the young men do; but they get right hold of it, and nobody can take it from their grasp. Rowland Hill once somewhat lost his way in a sermon, and he turned to this text—"Oh, Lord, my heart is fixed." "Young men," he said, "there is nothing like having your hearts fixed. I have been all these years seeking the Lord; now my heart is fixed. I never have any doubts now about election, or any other doctrine. If man brings me a new theory, I say, 'Away with it!' I stand hard and fast by the truth alone." An old gentleman wrote me a little time ago, and said I was a little too high. He said he believed the same doctrine as I do, but he did not think so when he was as old as I am. I told him it was just as well to begin right as to end right, and it was better to be right at the beginning than to have to rub off so many errors afterwards. An old countryman once came to me, and said, "Ah! young man, you have had too deep a text; you handled it well enough, but it is an old man's text, and I felt afraid to hear you announce it." I said, "Is God's truth dependant on age? If the thing is true, it is just as well to hear it from me as from any one else; and if you can hear it better anywhere else, you have got the opportunity." Still, he did not think that God's precious truths were suitable to young people; but I hold they are suitable to all God's children; therefore I love to preach them. But how blessed it is to come to a position in life where you have good anchorage for your faith,—where you can say,

"Should all the forms that hell devise,  
Assail my faith with treacherous art."

I shall not be very polite to them -

"I'll call them vanity of lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

And I think there are peculiar joys which the old Christian has, of another sort; and that is, he has peculiar fellowship with Christ, more than we have. At least, if I understand John Bunyan rightly, I think he tells us that when we get very near to heaven there is a very glorious land. "They came into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant; the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yes, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day

the flowers appear on the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting-castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to: also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof: for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed; yea, here, 'as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so doth their God rejoice over them.' Here they had not want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages. Here they heard voices from out of the City, loud voices, saying, 'Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh! Behold, His reward is with him!' Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, 'the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.'" There are peculiar communings, peculiar openings of the gates of paradise, peculiar visions of glory, just as you come near to it. It stands to reason that the nearer you get to the bright light of the celestial city, the clearer shall be the air. And therefore there are peculiar blessednesses belonging to the old, for they have more of this peculiar fellowship with Christ. But all this only proves that Christ is the same; because, when there are fewer earthly joys, he gives more spiritual ones. Therefore, again, it becomes the fact—"Even to old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

(5.) And now, lastly, the aged saint has peculiar duties. There are certain things which a good man can do, which nobody else ought to do, or can do well. And that is one proof of divine faithfulness; for he says of his aged ones, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age;" and so they do. I will just tell you some of them.

Testimony is one of the peculiar duties of old men. Now, suppose I should get up, and say, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," some one would reply, "Why, you are not twenty-two yet; what do you know about it?" But if an old man gets up, and says, "I have been young, and now am I old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," with what power that testimony comes!

Suppose I say to you, "Trust in God, with all thy troubles and trials; I can bear witness that he will not forsake you;" you will reply, "Oh! yes, young man, but you have not had many troubles; you have not been a child of God above these six years; how should you know?" But up gets an old Christian—and well do I remember an ancient Christian rising up at the sacramental table, and saying, "Dear brethren, we are met again around this table, and I think all an old man can do is to bear testimony to his master. These five-and-forty years, I have walked in his truth. Young people, hear what I have to say. He has been my God these five-and-forty years, and I have no fault to find with him; I have found religion's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and her paths to be paths of peace." You know, if you hear an old man talk, you pay greater attention to what he says, from the fact that he is old. I remember hearing the late Mr. Jay. I fancy that if I had heard the same sermon preached by a young man, I should not have thought so much of it; but there appeared such a depth in it because it came from an old man, standing on the borders of the grave; it was like an echo of the past, coming to me, to let me hear my God's faithfulness, that I might trust for the future. Testimony is the duty of old men and women; they should labour whenever they can to bear testimony to God's faithfulness, and to declare that now also, when they are old and grey-headed, their God forsakes them not.

There is another duty which is peculiarly the work of the aged, and that is, the work of comforting the young believer. There is no one more qualified than I know of than a kindhearted old man to convert the young. I know that down in some parts of the country there is a peculiar breed of old man, who for the good of the Church I heartily hope will soon become extinct. As soon as they see a young believer, they look at him with suspicion, expecting him to be a hypocrite; they go off to his house, and find everything satisfactory; but they say, "I was not so confident as that when I was young; young man, you must be kept back a bit." Then there are some hard questions put, and the poor young child of God gets hardly pressed, and is looked upon with suspicion, because he does not come up to their standard. But the men I allude to are such as some I have here, with whom I delight to speak, who tell you not hard things, but utter gentle words: who say, "I was imprudent when I was a young man. I know that when I was a little child I could not have answered these



questions; I do not expect so much from you as from one who is a little older." And when the young Christian comes to them they say, "Do not fear; I have gone through the waters, and they have not overflowed me; and through the fire, and have not been burned. Trust in God; 'for down to old age he is the same, and to hoar hairs he will carry you.'"

Then there is another work that is the work of the old, and that is, the work of warning. If an old man were to go out in the middle of the road, and shout out to you to stop, you would stop sooner than you would if a boy were to do it; for then you might say, "Out of the way, you young rascal," and go on still. The warnings of the old have great effect; and it is their peculiar work to guide the imprudent, and warn the unwary.

Now I have done, except the application. And I want to speak to three classes of persons.

What a precious thought, young men and women, is contained in this text—"That even to old age God will be the same to you; and even down to you hoar hairs he will not forsake you!" You want a safe investment; well, here is an investment safe enough. A bank may break; but heaven cannot. A rock may be dissolved, and if I build a house on that it may be destroyed; but if I build on Christ, my happiness is secure for ever. Young man! God's religion will last as long as you will; his comforts you will never be able to exhaust in all your life; but you will find that the bottle of your joys will be as full when you have been drinking seventy years, as it was when you first began. Oh! do not buy a thing that will not last you: "eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Oh! how pleasant it is to be a young Christian! How blessed it is to begin in the early morning to love and serve God! The best old Christians are those who were once young Christians. Some aged Christians have but little grace, for this reason—that they were not young Christians. Oh! I have sometimes thought, that if there is any man who will have an abundant entrance into heaven, it is the man who in early life was brought to know the Lord. You know, going into heaven will be like the ships going into harbour. There will be some tugged in almost by miracle, "saved so as by fire;" others will be going in just with a sheet or two of canvas—they will "scarcely be saved!" but there will be some who will go in with all their canvas up, and unto these "an abundant entrance shall be

ministered into the kingdom of their God and Saviour." Young people! it is the ship that is launched early in the morning that will get an abundant entrance, and come into God's haven in full sail.

Now, you middle aged men, you are plunged in the midst of business, and are sometimes supposing what will become of you in your old age. But is there any promise of God to you when you suppose about to-morrows? You say, "Suppose I should live to be as old as so-and-so, and be a burden upon people, I should not like that." Don't get meddling with God's business; leave his decrees to him. There is many a person who thought he would die in a workhouse, that has died in a mansion; and many a woman that thought she would die in the streets, has died in her bed, happy and comfortable, singing of providential grace and everlasting mercy. Middle aged man! listen to what David says, again, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Go on, then, unsheath thy sword once more. "The battle is the Lord's;" leave thy declining years to him, and give thy present years to him. Live to him now, and he will never cast you away when you are old. Do not lay up for old age and keep back from the cause of God; but rather trust God for the future. Be "diligent in business;" but take care you do not hurt your spirit, by being too diligent, by being grasping and selfish. Remember you will

"Want but little here below,  
Nor want that little long."

And lastly, my dear venerable fathers in the faith, and mothers in Israel, take these words for your joy. Do not let the young people catch you indulging in melancholy, sitting in your chimney corner, grumbling and growling, but go about cheerful and happy, and they will think how blessed it is to be a Christian. If you are surly and fretful, they will think the Lord has forsaken you; but keep a smiling countenance, and they will think the promise is fulfilled. "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Do, I beseech you, my venerable friends, try to be of a happy temperament and cheerful spirit, for a child will run away from a surly old man; but there is not a child in the world but loves his grand-papa if he is cheerful and happy. You can lead us to heaven if

you have got heaven's sunlight on your face; but you will not lead us at all if you are cross and ill-tempered, for then we shall not care about your company. Make yourselves merry with the people of God, and try to live happily before men; for so will you prove to us—to a demonstration, that even to old age God is with you, and that when your strength faileth, he is still your preservation. May God Almighty bless you, for the Saviour's sake! Amen.

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## **The God Of Peace**

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen, - Romans 15:33

Paul once advised the Romans to strive. Three verses before our text he actually gives them an exhortation to strive, and yet he here utters a prayer that the God of peace might be with them all. Lest you should think him to be a man of strife, you must read the verse. He says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." That is a holy strife, and such a strife as that we wish always to see in the church, a strife in prayer, a surrounding the throne together, besieging God's mercy seat, a crying out before God, until it actually amounts to a striving together in our prayers. There is also another kind of striving which is allowed in the church, and that is striving earnestly after the best gifts: a sweet contention which of us shall excel all others in love, in duty, and in faith. May God send us more strife of that kind in our churches, a strife in prayer, a strife in duty; and when we have mentioned these strifes we find them of so peaceable a kind that we come back to the benediction of our text: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Without any preface, we shall consider, first, the title - "the God of peace;" and secondly, the benediction - "the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

I. First of all, the title. Mars amongst the heathens was called the god of war; Janus was worshipped in periods of strife and bloodshed; but our God Jehovah styles himself not the God of war, but the God of peace. Although he permits war in this world, sometimes for necessary and useful purposes; although he superintends them, and has even styled himself the Lord, mighty in battle, yet his holy mind abhors bloodshed and strife; his gracious spirit loves not to see men slaughtering one another, he is emphatically, solely, and entirely, and without reserve, "the God of peace." Peace is his delight; "peace on earth and goodwill towards men." Peace in heaven (for that purpose he expelled the angels): peace throughout his entire universe, is his highest wish and his greatest delight.

If you consider God in the trinity of his persons for a few moments, you will see that in each - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost - the title is apt and correct, "the God of peace." There is God the everlasting Father, he is the God of peace, for he from all eternity planned the great covenant of peace, whereby he might bring rebels nigh unto him, and make strangers and foreigners fellow-heirs with the saints, and joint-heirs with his Son Christ Jesus. He is the God of peace, for he justifies, and thereby implants peace in the soul, he accepted Christ, and, as the God of peace, he brought him again from the dead; and he ordained peace, peace eternal with his children, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; he is the God of peace. So is Jesus Christ, the second person, the God of peace for "he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He makes peace between God and man. His blood sprinkled on the fiery wrath of God turned it to love, or rather that which must have broken forth in wrath, though it was love for ever, was allowed to display itself in loving-kindness through the wondrous mediatorship of Jesus Christ; and he is the God of peace because he makes peace in the conscience and in the heart. When he says, "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden "he gives "rest," and with that rest he gives; the peace of God which passeth all understanding," which keeps

our heart and mind. He is moreover the God of peace in the Church, for wherever Jesus Christ dwells, he creates a holy peace. As in the case of Aaron of old, the ointment poured upon the head of Christ trickles down to the very skirts of his garments, and thereby he gives peace, - peace by the fruit of the lips, and peace by the fruit of the heart, unto all them that love Jesus Christ in sincerity. So is the Holy Ghost the God of peace. He of old brought peace, when chaotic matter yeas in confusion, by the brooding of his wings: he caused order to appear where once there was nothing but darkness and chaos. So in dark chaotic souls he is the God of peace. When winds from the mountains of Sinai, and gusts from the pit of hell sweep across the distressed soul; when, wandering about for rest, our soul fainteth within us, he speaks peace to our troubles, and gives rest to our spirits. When by earthly cares we are tossed about, like the sea-bird, up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billows' crown, he says, "Peace be still." He it is who on the Sabbath-day brings his people into a state of serenity, and bids them enjoy

"That holy calm, that sweet repose  
Which none but he that feels it knows."

And he shall be the God of peace when at life's latest hour he shall still the current of Jordan, shall hush all the howlings of the fiends, shall give us peace with God through Jesus Christ, and land us safe in heaven. Blessed Trinity! however we consider thee, whether as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, still is thy name thrice well deserved, the God of peace, and the God of love.

Let us now enter into the subject, and see wherein God is a God of peace. We remark that he is the God of peace, for he created peace originally. He is the God of peace, for he is the restorer of it; though wars have broken out through sin. He is the God of peace, because he preserves peace when it is made; and he is the God of peace because he shall ultimately perfect and consummate peace between all his creatures and himself. Thus he is the God of peace.

First of all, he is the God of peace because he created nothing but peace. Go back in your imagination to the time when the majestic Father

stepped from his solitude and commenced the work of creation. Picture to yourself the moment when he speaks the word and the first matter is formed. Before that time there had been neither space, nor time, nor aught existing, save himself. He speaks and it is done, he commands and it stands fast. Behold him scattering from his mighty hands stars as numerous as the sparks from an anvil. Witness how by his word worlds are fashioned, and ponderous orbs roll through that immensity which first of all he had decreed to be their dwelling place. Lift up now your eyes and behold these great things which he has created already, let the wings of your fancy carry you through the immensity of space and the vast profound, and see if you can discover anywhere the least sign or trace of war. Go through it from the north even to the south, from the east even unto the west, and mark well if ye can discover one sign of discord; whether there is not one universal harmony, whether everything is not lovely, pure, and of good report. See if in the great harp of nature, there is one string which when touched by its Maker's finger giveth forth discord, see if the pipes of this great organ God has made do not all play harmoniously, mark ye well, and note it. Are there bulwarks formed for war? Are there spears and swords? Are there clarions and trumpets? Hath God created any material with which to destroy his creatures and desolate his realms? No; everything is peaceable above, beneath, and all around; all is peace, there is nothing else but calm and quietness. Hark when he makes the angels. He speaks - winged seraphs fly abroad, and cherubs flash through the air on wings of fire. He speaks, and multitudes of angels in their various hierarchies are brought forth, while Jesus Christ as a mighty Prince of angels is decreed to be their head. Is there now in any one of those angels one sign of sorrow? When God made them did he make one of them to be his enemy? Did he fashion one of them with the least implacability or ill-will within his bosom? Ask the shining cohorts, and they tell you, "We were not made for war, but for peace. He has not fashioned us spirits of battle, but spirits of love, and joy, and quietness." And if they sinned, he made them not to sin. They did so; they brought woe into the world of their own accord. God created no war. The evil angel brought it first. Left to his free will, he fell. The elect angels being confirmed by grace, stood fast and firm; but God was not the author of any war, or any strife. Satan of himself conceived the rebellion, but God was not the author of it. He may from all eternity have foreseen it, and it

may even be said in some sense that he ordained it to manifest his justice and his glory, and to show his mercy and sovereignty in redeeming man; but God had no hand in it whatsoever. The Eternal abjures war; he was not the author of it. Satan led the van, that morning star who sang together with the rest, fell of himself, God was not the author of his confusion, but the author of eternal and blessed order. Look, too at God in the creation of this world. Go into the garden of Eden: walk up and down its bowers; recline under its trees, and partake of its fruits. Roam through the entire world. Sit down by the sea-shore, or stretch yourself upon the mountain. Do you see the least sign of war? Nothing like it. There is nothing of tumult and of noise no preparation of destruction. See Adam and Eve: their days are perpetual sunshine, their nights are balmy evenings of sweet repose. God has put nothing in their hearts which can disturb them; he has no ill will towards them, but on the contrary, he walks with them in the evening under the trees in the cool of the day. He condescends to talk with his creatures, and hold fellowship with them. He is in no sense whatever the author of the present confusion in this world; that was brought about by our first parents through the temptation of the evil one. God did not create this world for strife. When he first fashioned it, peace, peace, peace, was the universal order of the day. May there come a time when peace once more shall be restored to this great earth, and tranquility to this world! Do you not observe that God is the God of peace because he created it originally? When he pronounced his creation "very good," it was entirely without the slightest exception, a peaceful creation. God is the God of peace.

But, secondly, he is the God of peace because he restores it. Nothing shows a man to be much fonder of peace than when he seeks to make peace between others; or, when others have offended him, he endeavors to make peace between himself and them. If I should be able at all times to maintain peace with myself, and should never provoke a quarrel, I should of course be considered a peaceful spirit, but if other persons choose to quarrel and disagree with me, and I desire and purposely set to work to bring about a reconciliation, then everyone says I am a man of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God." God is the great Peacemaker; and thus he is indeed the God of peace. When Satan fell, there was war in heaven. God made peace there, for he

smote Satan and cast him and all his rebel hosts into eternal fire. He made peace by his might and power and majesty, for he drove him out of heaven, and expelled him by his flaming brand, never again to pollute the sacred floor of bliss, and never more to endanger Paradise by misleading his peers in heaven. So he made peace in heaven by his power. But when man fell, God made peace not by his power, but by his mercy. Man transgresses. Poor man! Mark how God goes after him to make peace with him! "Adam, where art thou?" Adam never said "God, where art thou?" But God came after Adam, and he seemed to say with a voice of affection and pity, "Adam, poor Adam, where art thou? Hast thou become a God? The evil spirit said thou wouldst be a God, art thou so? Where art thou now poor Adam? Thou wast once in holiness and perfection, where art thou now?" And he saw the truant Adam running away from his Master, running away from the great Peacemaker, to hide himself beneath the trees of the garden. Again God calls, "Adam, where art thou?" But he says, "I heard thy voice in the midst of the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." And God says, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" How kind it is. You can see he is a Peacemaker even then; but when after having cursed the serpent, and sent the cursed obliquely on the ground, he comes to talk to Adam, you see him as the Peacemaker still more. "I will," said he, "put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." There he was making peace through the blood of the cross. Do not conceive, however that that was the first preparation of peace God ever made. That was the first display of it, but he had been making peace from all eternity. Through the covenant he made with Jesus Christ from all eternity, God's people were at peace with God. Although God saw that man shall fall; though he foresaw that his elect would with the rest depart from rectitude, and become his enemies, yet he did long before the fall draw up a covenant with Jesus, wherein Jesus stipulated that he would pay the debts of all his people, and the Father on their behalf did actually and positively forgive their sins, and justify their persons, take away their guilt, acquit them, accept and receive them unto peace with him. Though that was never developed until the fall, and though to each of us it is not known until we believe, yet there was always peace between God and the elect. I must tell you a tale of a poor bricklayer who met with an accident, and every one



thought he was going to die, and he did die. A clergyman said to him, "My poor fellow, I am afraid you will die. Try to make your peace with God." With tears in his eyes, he looked the clergyman in the face, and said, "Make my peace with God, sir? I thank God that was made for me in the eternal covenant by Jesus Christ, long before I was born." So beloved, it was. There was a peace, a perfect peace which God made with his Son. Jesus was not our ambassador merely, but he was our peace; not the maker of peace merely, but our peace; and since there was a Christ before all worlds, there was peace before all worlds. Since there always will be a Christ, so there always will be peace between God and all those interested in the covenant. Oh, if we can but feel we are in the covenant, if we know we are numbered with the chosen race, and purchased with redeeming blood, then we can rejoice, because God has been to us the Restorer of breaches, the Builder of cities to dwell in, and hath given us peace which once we lost; he is the Restorer of peace.

Thirdly, he is the preserver of peace. Whenever I see peace in the world, I ascribe it to God, and if it is continued, I shall always believe it is because God interferences to prevent war. So combustible are the materials of which this great world is made, that I am ever apprehensive of war. I do not account it wonderful that one nation should strive against another, I account it far more wonderful that they are not all at arms. Whence come wars and fightings? Come they not from your lusts? Considering how much lust there is in the world, we might well conceive that there would be more war than we see. Sin is the mother of wars; and remembering how plentiful sin is, we need not marvel if it brings forth multitudes of them. We may look for them. If the coming of Christ be indeed drawing nigh, then we must expect wars and rumors of wars through all the nations of the earth; but when peace is preserved, we consider it to be through the immediate interposition of God. If then we desire peace between nations, let us seek it of God, who is the great Pacificator; but there is an inward peace which God alone can keep. Am I at peace with myself, with the world, and with my Maker? Oh! if I want to retain that peace, God alone can preserve it. I know there are some people who once enjoyed peace, who do not possess it now. Some of you once had confidence in God, but may have lost it; you once thought yourselves to be in a glorious state from which now you seem to have somewhat

departed. Beloved, no one can maintain peace in the heart but God, as he is the only one who can put it there. Some people talk about doubts and fears and seem to think they are very allowable. I have heard some say, "Well a sailor in the sunshine knows his reckoning, and can tell where he is, he has no doubt; but if the sun withdraws, he cannot tell his longitude and latitude, and he knows not where he is." That is not however a fair description of faith. Always wanting the sun is wanting to live by sight; but living by faith is to say, "I cannot tell my longitude and my latitude, but I know the Captain is at the helm, and I will trust him everywhere." But still you cannot keep in that peaceful state of mind unless you have God in the vessel to help you to smile at the storm. We can be peaceful at times, but if God goes away, how we begin quarrelling with ourselves! God alone can preserve peace. Backslider! hast thou lost it? Go and seek it again of God. Christian! is thy peace marred? Go to God, and he can say to every doubt, "tie down doubt," and to every fear, "Begone." - He can speak to every wind that can blow across thy soul, and can say, "Peace, be still; "for he is the God of peace, since he preserves it. Trust in him.

Fourthly, God is the God of peace because he shall perfect and consummate it at last. There is war in the world now; there is an evil spirit walking to and fro, a restless being, eager, like a lion to devour, walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none; and there are men bewitched by that evil spirit who are at war with God, and at war with one another; but there is a time coming - let us wait a little longer - when there shall be peace on earth and peace throughout all God's dominions. In a few more years we do look for a lasting and perpetual peace on earth. Perhaps, to-morrow, Jesus Christ, the Son of God will come again, without a sin offering unto salvation. We know not either the day or the hour wherein the Son of man shall come; but by-and-bye he shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the noise of a trumpet; he shall come, but not as once he came, a lowly and humble man, but a glorious and exalted monarch. Then he will cause wars to cease. From that day forth and for ever they will hang the useless helm on high, and study war no more; the lion shall lie down with the kid and eat straw like the ox; the cockatrice and the serpent shall lose their hurtful powers; the weaned child shall lead the lion and the leopard, each one by his beard with his little hands. The day is coming, and that speedily, when there

shall not be found on earth a single man who hates his brother, but when each one shall find in every other a brother and a friend; and we shall be able to say, as the old poet did, but in a larger sense, "I know not that there is one Englishman alive with whom I am one jot at odds more than the infant that is born to-night." We shall all be united; rationalities will be levelled, because made into one, and the Lord Jesus Christ shall be king of the entire earth. After that time shall come the consummation of peace, when the last great day shall have passed away, and the righteous have been severed from the wicked, when the monster battle of Armageddon shall have been fought and won when all the righteous shall have been gathered into heaven, and the lost sent down to hell. Where will be the room for the battle then? Look at the foemen, bruised and mangled in the pit, perpetually howling, the victims of God's vengeance; there is no fear of war from them. There is Satan himself, crest-fallen, bruised battered, slain; his head is broken; there he lies despoiled a king without his crown; there can be no fear of war from him; and mark the angels, who were once under his supremacy, can they arise? No; they writhe in tortures, and bite their iron bands in misery; they have no power to lift a lance against the God of heaven; and look on sinful man, condemned for his sin to dwell with those fallen being; can he again provoke his Maker? Will he again blaspheme? Can he oppose the gospel? No, injured in dungeons of hot iron, there he is, an abject, ruined spirit; ten thousand times ten thousand lost and perished sinners are there; but could all unite in solemn league and covenant to break the bands of death and sever the laws of justice, he that sitteth in the heavens would laugh at them, the Lord would have them in derision. Peace is consummated because the enemy is crushed. They look up yonder; there is no fear of war from those bright spirits; the angels cannot fall now; their period of probation is passed for ever, a second Satan shall never drag with him a third part of the stars of heaven; no angel will totter any more, and the ransomed spirits, blood-bought, and washed in the fountain of Jesu's blood, will never fall again. Universal peace is come, the olive branch hath outlived the laurel the sword is sheathed, the banners are furled, the stains of blood are washed out of the world; again it moves in its orb, and sings like its sister stars; but the one song is peace, for the God who made it is the God of peace.

II. Now we come to the benediction. "The God of peace be with you all." I am not about to address you concerning that inward peace which rests in the heart. I am sure I wish above all things that you may always enjoy a peace with your conscience, and be at peace with God. May you always know that you have the blood of Jesus to plead, that you have his righteousness to cover you, that you have his atonement to satisfy for you, and that there is nothing which can hurt you; but I wish to address you as a church, and exhort you to peace.

First, I will remind you that there is great need to pray this prayer for you all, because there are enemies to peace always lurking in all societies. Petrarch says there are five great enemies to peace - avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. I shall alter them a little, but use the same number. Instead of avarice I shall commence with error. One of the greatest means of destroying peace is error. Error in doctrine leads to the most lamentable consequences with regard to the peace of the church. I have noticed that the greatest failings out have been among those who are most erroneous in doctrine. Though I admit that some called Calvinists are the most quarrelsome set breathing, this is the reason - while they have the main part of the truth, many of them are leaving out something important, and therefore God chastices them because they are some of his best children. It may be a sign of life that they are so eager after truth, that they kill one another in order to get it; but I wish they would leave off their quarrelling for it is a disgrace to our religion. If they had more peace I might hope better for the progress of truth. Everyone says to me - "Look there at your brethren! I never saw such a set of cut-throats in my life. I never saw a church, where they have the gospel, where they are not always falling out." Well, that is nearly the truth, and I am ashamed to confess it. I pray God, however, to send a little more peace where he has sent the gospel. There are, however, strifes among our opponents which we do not see. The bishop uses his strong hand, and the people dare not disagree; the pastor has such power and authority, that the crush of his mailed hand is sufficient to put down everything because there is no freedom. Now, I would rather have a row in the church than have the members all asleep. I would rather have them falling to ears than sitting down in indifference. You never expect dead churches to have strife, but where there is a little life, if there is error, it always begets strife. What is

the most litigious denomination now existing? No one would have a difficulty in pointing to our excellent friends the Wesleyans, for just at this moment they are quarrelling and finding fault with one another, splitting up into numberless sections, and making reformed churches, and so on. What is the cause of it? Because they are in the wrong track altogether with regard to church government, and with regard to some other things. John Wesley was a good man at making churches, I dare say; but he did not understand what the church ought to be in these days. He might do for a hundred years ago but he bound his poor followers too tightly, and now they are trying to break out into freedom and liberty. If they had been right at first they might have gone on, and a thousand years would not have spoiled their system. It would have done now as well as then. Error is the root of bitterness in the church. Give us sound doctrine, sound practice, sound church government, and you will find that the God of peace will be with us. My brethren, seek to uproot error out of your own hearts. If one of you do not really believe the great cardinal doctrines of the gospel, I beseech you, then, for the good of the church to leave it, for we want those who love the truth.

The next enemy to peace is ambition. "Diotrephes loveth to have the pre-eminence," and that fellow has spoiled many a happy church. A man does not want, perhaps, to be pre-eminent, but then he is afraid that another should be, and so he would have him put down. Thus brethren are finding fault, they are afraid that such an one will go too fast, and that such another will go too fast. The best way is to try to go as fast as he does. It is of no use finding fault because some may have a little pre-eminence. After all, what is the pre-eminence. It is the pre-eminence of one little animalcule over another. Look in a drop of water. One of these little fellows is five times as big as another, but we never think of that. I dare say he is very large, and thinks, "I have the pre-eminence inside my drop." But he does not think the people of Park Street ever talk about him. So we live in this little drop of the world, not much bigger in God's esteem than a drop of the bucket, and one of us seems a little larger than the other, a worm a little above his fellow worm; but, O how big we get! and we want to get a little bigger, to get a little more prominent but what is the use of it? for when we get ever so big we shall then be so small that an angel would not find us out if God did not tell him where we were.

Whoever heard up in heaven anything about emperors and kings? Small tiny insects: God can see the animalculae, therefore he can see us, but if he had not an eye to see the most minute he would never discover us. O may we never get ambition in this church. The best ambition is, who shall be the servant of all. The strangers seek to have dominion, but children seek to let the father have dominion, and the father only.

The next enemy to peace is anger. There are some individuals in the world that cannot help getting angry very quickly. They grow on a sudden very wrathful; while others who are not passionate, who take a longer time to be angry, are fearful enough when they do speak. Others who dare not speak at all, are worse still, for they get brewing their anger.

"Nursing their wrath to keep it warm."

They go into a sulky fit, disagreeing with everybody, eternally grumbling; they are like dogs in the flock - only barking, and yielding no fleece. O that nasty anger! If it gets into the church it will split it to pieces. Somehow or other we cannot help getting angry sometimes. O that we could come into the church and leave ourselves behind us! There is nobody I should like to run away from half so much as from myself. Try, beloved, to curb your tempers; and when you do not exactly see with another brother, do not think it necessary to knock him on the eyes to make him see, that is the worst thing in all the world to do, he will not see any the better for it, for

"The man convinced against his will,  
Is of the same opinion still."

Then envy is another fearful evil. One minister, perhaps, is envious of another, because one church is full and the other not. How can teachers agree in the Sunday-school if there is any envy there? How can church members agree if envy creeps in? One member thinks another is thought more highly of than he deserves. Why, beloved, you are all too much thought of; but, after all, it does not matter what you are thought of by man, it only matters what God thinks of you - and God thinks as much of Little-faith as of Great-heart; he thinks as much of Mrs. Despondency as

of Christiana herself. Drive, then, that "green-eyed monster" away, and keep him at a distance.

Again, there is pride, which gives rise to ill-feeling and bad blood. Instead of being affable to one another, and "condescending to men of low estate," we want that every punctilio of respect should be given to us, that we should be made lords and masters. That I am sure can never exist in a peaceable church.

Here, then, are our five great enemies. I would I could see the execution of them all Banish them, transport them for ever, send them away amongst lions and tigers; we do not want any of them amongst us; but though I thus speak, it is not because I conceive that any of these have thoroughly crept in amongst you, but because I would have kept them away. I am most jealous in this matter. I am always afraid of the slightest contention, and I desire the God of peace to be ever with us.

Now let me briefly show you the appropriateness of this prayer. We indeed ought to have peace amongst ourselves. Joseph said to his brethren when they were going home to his father's house, "See that ye fall not out by the way." There was something extremely beautiful in that exhortation. "See that ye fall not out by the way." Ye have all one father, ye are of one family. Let men of two nations disagree; but you are of the seed of Israel, you are of one tribe and nation; your home is in one heaven. "See that ye fall not out by the way." The way is rough; there are enemies to stop you. See that if ye fall out when ye get home, ye do not fall out by the way Keep together; stand by one another, defend each other's character, manifest continual affection, for recollect you will want it all. The world hateth you because you are not of the world. Oh! you must take care that you love one another. You are all going to the same house. You may disagree here, and not speak to one another, and be almost ashamed to sit at the same table even at the sacrament; but you will all have to sit together in heaven. Therefore do not fall out by the way. Consider, again, the great mercies you have all shared together. You are all pardoned, you are all accepted, elected, justified, sanctified, and adopted. See that ye fall not out when ye have so many mercies, when God has given you so much. Joseph has filled your sacks, but if he has put

some extra thing into Benjamin's sack, do not quarrel with Benjamin about that, but rather rejoice because your sacks are full. You have all got enough, you are all secure, you have all been dismissed with a blessing, and, therefore, I say once more, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

Now, dear brethren is there anything I can plead with you this morning, in order that you may always dwell in peace and love? God has happily commenced a blessed revival amongst us, and under our means, by the help of God, that revival will spread through the entire kingdom. We have seen that "the word of the Lord is quick and powerful." We know that there is nothing that can stop the progress of his kingdom, and there is nothing that can impede your success as a church except this. If the unhappy day should arrive - let the day be accursed when it does come - when you amongst yourselves should disagree, there would be a stop to the building of the Lord's house at once, when those that carry the trowel and bear the spears do not stand side by side, then the work of God must tarry. It is sad to think how much our glorious cause has been impeded by the different failings out amongst the disciples of the Lamb. We have loved one another, brethren, up till now, with a true heart and fervently and I am not afraid but that we shall always do so. At the same time, I am jealous over you, lest there should come in by any possibility any root of bitterness to trouble you. Let us this morning throw around you the bands of a man, let us unite you together with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken, let us entreat you to love one another; let us entreat you by your one Lord, one faith, one baptism, to continue one; let us beg of you, by our great success, to let our unity be commensurate therewith. Remember "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The devil wants you to disagree, and nothing will please him better than for you to fall at ears among yourselves. The Moabites and Ammonites cut down one another. Do not let us do that.

"Those should in strictest concord dwell,  
Who the same God obey."

It is continual bickering and jealousy that has brought disgrace upon the holy name of Christ. He has been wounded in the house of his friends. The arrows we have shot at one another have hurt us more than all that



ever came from the bow of the devil. We have done more injury to the escutcheon of Christ by our contentions than Satan has ever been able to do. I beseech you, brethren, love one another. I know not how I could endure anything like discord among you. I can bear the scoff of the world, and the laughter of the infidel, methinks I could bear martyrdom; but I could not bear to see you divided. I beseech my God and Master to suffer me first to wear my shroud, before I ever wear a garment of heaviness on account of your divisions. While I feel that I have your love and affection, and that you are bound to one another, I care not for the devils in hell, nor for men on earth. We have been, and we shall be omnipotent, through God; and by faith we will stand firm to one another and to his truth. Let each one resolve within himself - "if there is strife, I will have nothing to do with it." "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of water," and I will not turn the tap. If you will take care not to let the first drop in, I will be surety about the second. Brethren, again I say, for the gospel's sake, for the truth's sake, that we may laugh at our enemies, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, let us love one another.

Though I may not have preached to the worldly this morning, I have been asking you to preach to them, for when you love one another, that is a beautiful sermon to them. There is no sermon like what you can see with your own eyes. I went to the Orphan-house, last Wednesday, on Ashley Down, near Bristol, and saw that wonder of faith - I had some conversation with that heavenly-minded man Mr. Muller. I never heard such a sermon in my life as I saw there. They asked me to speak to the girls, but I said, "I could not speak a word for the life of me." I had been crying all the while to think how God had heard this dear man's prayer, and how all those three hundred children had been fed by my Father through the prayer of faith. Whatever is wanted, comes without annual subscriptions, without asking anything, simply from the hand of God. When I found that it was all correct that I had heard, I was like the queen of Sheba, and I had no heart left in me. I could only stand and look at those children, and think, did my heavenly Father feed them, and would he not feed me and all his family? Speak to them? They had spoken to me quite enough, though they had not said a word - Speak to them? I thought myself ten thousand fools that I did not believe God better. Here am I, I cannot trust him day by day; but this good man can trust him for three

hundred children. When he has not a sixpence in hand he never fears. "I know God," he might say, "too well to doubt him. I tell my God, thou knowest what I want to-day to keep these children, and I have not anything. My faith never wavers, and my supply always comes." Simply by asking of God in this way, he has raised (I believe) £17,000 towards the erection of a new orphan-house. When I consider that, sometimes think we will try the power of faith here, and see if we should not get sufficient funds whereby to erect a place to hold the people that crowd to hear the Word of God. Then we may have a tabernacle of faith as well as an orphan-house of faith. God send us that, and to Him shall be all the glory.

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## **A God Ready To Pardon**

Thou art a God ready to pardon. - Nehemiah 9:17

When a man's conscience is so awakened to the existence of sin that he cannot perceive any plea for mercy within himself, it is his wisdom to look for a plea in the nature and character of God. Now, brethren, if we search ourselves through and through, we cannot find anything in our fallen nature which can recommend us to the Most High. If we think that we have a claim upon God's goodness, we are in darkness, and deceive ourselves. When the true light comes, it reveals our bareness of all merit or excuse, and shows that there is nothing in human nature but that which provokes the Lord. This is the fact as to our condition while we are unregenerate, and oftentimes the true believer, when darkness gathers around him, finds himself to be in much the same condition. His evidences burn dimly, the candle of the Lord seems quenched within his spirit, and, worst of all, the sun of divine favor is not discernible; then groping all around he can discover nothing in himself but that which causes him to sigh and groan, being burdened. In such a plight he should

cast overboard the great anchor of faith, and escape from himself to his God. It were well for him always to do so, but especially in the cloudy and dark day. To whom should he turn for light but to the Sun of Righteousness? Where look for grace but to the God of all grace? Where for all but to the All in all? If what I am makes me despair, let me consider what God in Christ is and I shall have hope.

That God is merciful becomes to sinners the first point upon which they can fix their hope: that the mercy of God endureth for ever affords to the saints a most blessed stronghold when inward sin assails the soul. But whence do we learn this supremely consoling truth? How do we know that God is merciful? I scarcely think we should have inferred from his works the readiness of God to show mercy. I have heard a great deal about the attributes of God in nature: I have, indeed, heard a great deal more than I have ever been able to see. To "go from nature up to nature's God" is a very common expression, but it is a very long step, mark you, from the highest Alp of nature to the footstool of the throne of God. It will be found much easier to go down from God to nature when you once know the Lord than ever it can be to ascend from the works to the Maker. It is more than questionable whether the best instructed mind could have discovered much of God's moral nature from the universe around—his goodness to obedient creatures we might have gathered, but his mercy to the guilty is there but dimly revealed. Look at this visible universe and you perceive that it is governed by certain fixed laws. If a man offends against these laws, do the laws bend, and make allowance for his mistake? Not so, they operate immutably, and every violation of them is avenged. The captain makes a mistake of a few points in his steering—there is a current which he has not perceived, or perhaps his compass itself is out of gear; anyhow, he is, without any fault on his part, drifted upon a rock. Does the rock move, or is it softened? or when the ship strikes is there some miracle by which the timbers are held together? Does some angelic hand undergird the ship and preserve the precious lives? No, amidst the howling of the pitiless storm the vessel breaks up, and those who struggle best are unable to survive the fury of the sea. Is there any sign of mercy here? Or take another case: the simple countryman, in his ignorance of the laws of electricity, is overtaken by a pelting storm, and to escape from the drenching rain he runs beneath

some lofty tree to screen himself beneath its spreading branches. It is a law of nature that elevated points should attract the lightning: the man does not know this, he does not intend to defy his Maker's natural law, but for all that, when the death-dealing fluid splits the tree it leaves a senseless corpse at the foot thereof. The law does not suspend its operations though that man may be the husband upon whose life the bread of many children may depend, though he may have been one of the most guileless and prayerful of mankind, though he may have been utterly unconscious of having exposed himself to the force of a physical law of God, yet still he dies, for he has placed himself in the way of a settled law of nature, and it takes its course. There is scant trace of mercy here. Or it may be that a physician in the pursuit of discoveries which shall alleviate pain, with no ambition except to serve his fellow creatures, no mercenary motive swaying him, endeavors to penetrate into the secrets of nature, and imbibes or inhales a certain noxious drug or pernicious vapor. Will the noxious drug or destructive gas stay its deadly office because of the generosity of the motive of the man who exposes himself to its influence? Ah, not so, the precious life is sacrificed, and we hear the sad news that a great physician is no more; nature having stood fast and firm, and no mercy having been shown to the breaker of her laws. Now, seeing that these laws move on immutably like the great wheels of a mighty machine, and he that is entangled in those wheels is ground to powder, it does seem as if we had slight evidence of the mercy of God if we look to nature alone: certainly not enough to calm the conscience or allay the fears of the guilty. We admit that there are some tokens for good to the offender, even in nature, for does not the Lord teach man to set up his beacons upon the headland and anchor his lightships near the sands, and has he not led us up to the formation of lifeboats whereby multitudes of lives have been saved? In the case of death by lightning there is reason to believe that the death is more certainly painless than any other; and, again, loftiness need not remain a danger, for the lightning conductor has warded off the bolt of heaven from multitudes of elevated buildings. In the case of most poisons there are antidotes which save life if they are taken speedily enough, and even the poisons themselves, in certain compounds, turn out to be healing medicines. So there are traces of the pardon of offenses in the mitigating or the removing of penalties even under the iron rule of natural law.

Never is a law changed, mark you, in nature, except in the few instances of miraculous interpositions; and in the moral universe never is a law changed at all, for heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail. Still there are laws which counteract full frequently the roughness and the crushing power of other laws; and these, like their counterparts in the moral universe, prove that God is merciful. But, all this being allowed, the light which nature affords us is, upon this subject, rather conjecture than assurance. My brethren, let us thank God we are not left to mere guesses upon this point, we are not left to the sun and to the moon to give us light upon this matter; we have a more sure word of testimony whereunto ye do well if ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. We have this book of Holy Scripture written by the pen of the Holy Spirit, which tells us over and over again that the God whom we have offended is a God ready to pardon, a God whose mercy endureth for ever.

I would call your attention to the expression, "a God ready to pardon," not a God who may possibly pardon; neither a God who upon strong persuasion and earnest pleadings may, at length be induced to forgive; not one who, perchance, at some remote period after we have undergone a long purgation may manifest a mercy which is now in the background, but a God "ready to pardon,"—willing and more than willing—ready, standing prepared, or to use another Scriptural expression, "waiting to be gracious." We have a God who stands like a host at a festival, which is all provided and prepared, saying, "My oxen and my fatlings are provided, all things are ready, come ye to the suppers." Not only are all things ready but God himself is ready, his own heart and hand all ready to bestow pardon upon the guilty ones who come before him. There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared.

This blessed truth, in the first place, was remarkably seen in the story of Israel, on that we will dwell; and secondly, it is equally true of the Lord at all times. May the Holy Spirit in mercy lead us to feel the power of mercy while we speak thereon.

I. First, then, I shall ask your attention to THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL AS SINGULARLY ILLUSTRATING THE READINESS OF GOD TO PARDON. Brethren, the Israelites seem to have been set forward as a

picture of all God's people. As the foot of the altar was made of the looking glasses of the women, the polished brass of the mirrors being melted down, so it seems to me as if Israel was intended to be a looking-glass in which every one of us might look and see his own image. Full sure I am that when I speak of Israel you will perceive that the record speaks of you, and draws your portraits to the life.

They were, in the first place, a people very specially favored, but they were a people as specially ungrateful. To what other nation did God give the oracles of his truth? What other tribes did he separate unto himself to be a people in whose midst he would show forth his glory? What other nation did he bring forth out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm? For what other people did he pour out of heaven the dread artillery of all his plagues, smiting their foes with judgments most terrible? For what other race did he divide the sea that he might lead them through the deep as through a wilderness? What other armies of men had food to eat which dropped from heaven? What other hosts were led and guided for forty years, and supplied without their own labor, without sowing or planting, or reaping, or gathering into barns? Surely the Lord himself was with them, and they were favored above all the rest of mankind. Who is like unto thee, O Israel, a people chosen of the Lord! But they were just as specially sinful. It scarcely seems to us as if any other nation ever existed who provoked the Lord so much, for they transgressed against light and love, against instruction and illumination, against wooing and warning, against entreaty and rebuke. They rebelled though they knew that they were highly favored, and were conscious that they were a distinguished and elect people. Their iniquities were committed against a God whose hand they had seen, and whose voice they had heard, as he spoke to them from the top of Sinai. They lived amid a blaze of miracles, and walked a pathway of marvels. God was in the camp, his glory shone forth between the cherubim and under the symbol of the fiery cloudy pillar his presence was revealed to them all. God was round about them for a wall of fire, and as the glory in their midst: and yet with the Lord before their eyes they refused to see him, and with all his wonders before them they refused to believe. You know, dear friends, that we are always particularly wounded by the unkindness of any to whom we have been specially attentive and generous. We

complain, "It was not an enemy for then I could have borne it, but it was thou, a man, mine acquaintance, my friend." Hard is it to be injured by a child for whom you have endured much self-denial, and to whom you have rendered tenderest love. "Sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child." After this fashion Israel offended, and, speaking after the manner of men, the Lord felt it keenly, he was grieved at his heart, because his great goodness to them had been so basely misused. He cries, "O that they had hearkened unto me," and in another place, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." Such is the language which Scripture puts into the mouth of the Lord, and yet he forgave his provoking people times without number—was he not indeed ready to pardon?

Again, the Israelites were absolutely dependent upon God for everything, and yet they were proud. Read in the sixteenth verse, "They and our fathers dealt proudly." If any people in the world ought to have been humble, surely the Israelites were they. They had been slaves in Egypt, and lie among the pots in degraded bondage—brickmakers all of them. Their backs were raw with the lash of the slavedriver, and they cried out under the sore oppression. The Lord chose them in the ignorance and debasement which always come with slavery. When he brought them out they had no treasures but such as they had demanded of their former masters. Their stock of food was very slender, and they had to traverse the arid wilderness. Tied up in bundles on their shoulders, they carried a little food, but that was soon spent, and every day they had to receive bread fresh from God's own ovens, while as for water they would have perished had it not been for the rock whose streams followed them all their way. They were not a people addicted to commerce, they had no opportunities for hunting, there were no means for husbandry; and therefore, if day by day the manna had not fallen, they must have utterly starved. Yet though they were pensioners upon the daily charity of God, and were both fed and clothed by his bounty, still they were proud. I know some others who are much in the same condition, and perhaps they are proud too. Paupers and yet proud! Living on alms and yet boastful! Ah, brethren, but this in Israel was very provoking to God, even as it is in us. Those vagrant mendicants thought themselves somewhat, so that when they were a little tried they began to murmur against Moses, and to

accuse their God of bringing them out into the desert to die. They hector'd it very loudly, and with a high stomach, and thought themselves hardly put upon, and would not do this, and would do that, as though they were some great ones, while all the while they were no better than so many birds of the air, which have to gather what God's generous hand is pleas'd to scatter for their daily food. Was he not a God ready to pardon, to have mercy upon a proud people? Is it not always very hard to forgive a haughty spirited offender? If the offender will humble himself before you there is less difficulty; but if, being absolutely dependent upon you for everything, the offender nevertheless insults you with high words, it becomes very hard to keep your temper with him. Pride is irritating, yea abominable. O Lord, when thou didst forgive the haughtiness of thine erring people, thou wast indeed ready to pardon.

These people, again, deliberately rebelled, for the sixteenth and seventeenth verses tell us they "hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey." It was not that they made mistakes, it was not that they fell into errors or were misled; but they did not want to go right, and refused to know what God's will and mind were. They stopp'd their ears, and clos'd their eyes. When they asked that the words which the Lord spake from Sinai might not be spoken to them any more, it was but natural that they should dread the terror of the trumpet sound; but deep down in their hearts there was also a distaste for a law so pure, so holy. Their hearts were set on mischief, and they were not to be led in the way of obedience. They had a ready ear for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who preach'd sedition, they were ready to be led into idolatrous ceremonies and lustful acts by Moabitish women; but before the Lord they were as bullocks unaccustom'd to the yoke. Anybody and everybody they would hearken to except their God, but to him they had such small regard that they cast his ordinances and precepts behind their backs, and sinn'd again and again with resolute deliberation. They often went astray though often reprov'd. It was not mere error and mistake, but the set and current of their heart was towards evil. Deliberation adds greatly to the heinousness of sin, and it is a sad thing when we have to charge ourselves with this. The repetition of the same offense also shows a state of heart very near akin to determination, for it has all the appearance of a deliberate refusal to watch against temptation, and of a fixed resolve to



treat the voice of God with indifference. Alas, that we should be so readily decoyed by the baits of evil, and so feebly held by the cords of goodness. Lord, when we provoke thee in this way be pleased to show thyself a God ready to pardon.

More than this, we are told that the Israelites were unmindful of what the Lord had done for them: "Neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them." They were by this unmindfulness led into the great crime of unbelief. You think, my brethren, that if you had seen the Red Sea divided and Israel's hosts led through, while Pharaoh's army was drowned, you would have trusted God all your life. "Oh," say you, "if I had been present, and really gathered the manna and eaten it, I could not, I am sure, with such a demonstration before my eyes, have ever fallen into unbelief again." Well, I leave that question whether you would or not; having a very shrewd suspicion that your heart is by no means better than that of the ancient unbelievers. At any rate Israel soon fell back into her chronic unbelief. Within a few days after they had seen the whole host of Pharaoh destroyed, they began to murmur against God and against Moses; and though every day they ate the manna, and drank the miraculously given water, yet continually they asked, "Is the Lord among us or not?" and they were perpetually putting questions such as made Moses demand of them, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" They were cankered to the heart with unbelief. For a moment they had a sort of faith, but in another moment they relapsed into infidelity.

"Now they believe his Word,  
While rocks with rivers flow;  
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,  
And he reduced them low."

The slightest peril, the slightest trouble to themselves, they began to think that now they were come to a difficulty out of which the Lord could not deliver them, and they cried, "Surely, he means to destroy us. He will never bring us into the promised land." Do you know any other people like this? I need to put out my hand to touch one of the same order. At any rate, since the Lord forgave his people Israel, though they angered him with their ungenerous mistrust, we see most clearly that he is "a God ready to pardon."

Further on we read that these people committed in spirit an act of utter apostasy. They made unto themselves a captain to return to their bondage. They said they would go back to Egypt, since there was no hope of their ever conquering Canaan, for the Canaanites were too strong for them. What, back to slavery! Back to making bricks without straw! Leaving God and his tabernacle, and the glory of his presence. What think ye would they go back for? What was the attractive bait which lured them? They would return to their taskmasters for the sake of the leeks and the garlic, and the onions, the flavour of which was still in their mouths. Their soul lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, and they would, to sit down by those savoury cauldrons, go back to the ignoble condition of slavery again, and leave the Lord and all his guardian care, and forego the goodly land, which was but a little way beyond. O foolish people! Ah, brethren, this is madness, but; alas is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and have there not been times when we also have been tempted to return to the beggarly elements of the world, and seek content in the grovelling joys of earth?

Perhaps it was worst of all that the Israelites did actually fall into shameful idolatry. They set up the figure of a calf to represent God; they compared their glory unto the image of an ox that eateth grass, and they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt." God was incensed at this, as well he might be, nevertheless at the entreaty of Moses he did not utterly destroy them. Oh, brethren, it is a shameful thing when we love the creature more than the Creator, and dare to set up anything which is dear to us in Jehovah's place. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," but if you have had idols, and have been forgiven, then you can see in this history, and in your own experience, that the Lord is ready to pardon.

For a minute I desire to show you the opposite side, namely, the divine goodness. While God forgave this people he showed his readiness to pardon in the following ways. First, he continued while they were in all these sins to guide them both by night and by day. The nineteenth verse says, "Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light,

and the way wherein they should go." Only think of it, that very day they made a calf, when the sun went down the fiery pillar still lit up the camp. At that very hour in which they said "We will make to ourselves a captain, and go back to Egypt," the cloud was covering the camp, and screening them from the burning heat of the sun. They sinned beneath the shade of special mercy. Oh, if the Lord had said, "Now I will leave you, I will give you no more guidance. Since you will not follow my commandments, go which way you will," should you have wondered? If he had left them to faint in the heat of the day and grope in the darkness of the night would you have been surprised? Ah, but let us wonder to think that the Lord has guided us as pilgrims through this desert land: he has still been both sun and shade to us, even to this day, notwithstanding all our sin. Had he deserted us what countless evils had befallen us. Blessed be the mercy which faileth not.

Another marvelously gracious fact was that he continued still to teach them. I am more surprised at this than at the other. Read the twentieth verse—"Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them." I should have thought he would have said, "Moses, take down the tabernacle, roll up the curtains, put away the ark, no more morning sacrifices, no more evening lambs. Aaron, go home, take off your breastplate, and your ephod, and all your garments, which were made for glory and for beauty. This people shall be taught no longer, they are incorrigible. It is in vain that I dwell among them and walk among them." No, but still he made known his ways among them, and maintained the testimony of his servant Moses, and gave them still those matchless types which set forth so fully the way of salvation. My brethren, bless ye also the Lord that though he has often smitten you, and given you the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, yet he has not taken away your teachers from you, nor quenched the light of Israel. Still doth his good spirit enlighten and instruct the people. Is he not a God ready to pardon?

Nehemiah also notices that God did not stint them in their daily provisions, notwithstanding their offenses. "Yea," says he, "thou withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." I am struck with wonder to think that God should have caused his manna still to fall. They provoked Moses and they set up

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but that very morning God's bread was in their mouths. They came up to speak against God and against his servant, but their tongues would have been cleaving to the roof of their mouths for thirst if that very morning they had not drunk of the water which God had given them. When dependent persons will persist in disregarding our remonstrances and violating our rules, we are driven to stop the supplies. But the Lord did not stop the supplies even in this urgent case. Would not famine and drought have brought them to their senses? If there had been no food for the women and children, and no drink for the strong men, would not that have tamed them? Even lions and savage beasts may be thus subdued. But no, their bread was given them, and their water was sure. Was he not a God ready to pardon?

One other remark here, and it is this,—he did sustain them to the end and ultimately bring them into the land of promise. "Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing: their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. Their children also multipliedest thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers that they should go in to possess it." Yes, and I know a people who, despite their sins, have already taken possession of many a gracious promise, so that they already dwell in the midst of covenant blessings. I know a people too who, notwithstanding their sins, shall enter into rest. "He shall surely bring them in," for he will bring his chosen into his glory, and they shall see his face with joy. Is he not a God ready to pardon?

My tale is all too long for me to tell it. I must cease from this portion of the history and ask you to meditate upon it, and as you do so to admire our pardoning God.

II. Secondly, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THE LORD AT ALL TIMES IS A GOD READY TO PARDON. It is true of him by nature, for mercy is an essential attribute of God. We must never think that our Lord Jesus died to make God merciful; on the contrary, the death of the Lord Jesus is the result of the mercy of God. When man sinned God was willing enough to pardon him, for the death of a sinner is no pleasure to him. Judgment is his strange work. The way in which the Lord came to Adam at the first showed his mercy. He came, if you remember, in the cool of the day,—not

at the instant the crime was committed. God is not in a hurry to accuse man, or to execute vengeance upon him; he therefore waited until the cool of the day. He did not address rebellious man in the language of indignation, but he kindly said, "Adam, where art thou?" And when he had questioned the guilty pair, and convicted them, and the sentence was passed, it was terrible certainly, but oh how mildly tempered; the curse was as much as possible made to fall obliquely: "cursed is the ground for thy sake." Though the woman was made to feel great sorrows, yet those were connected with a happy event which causes the travail to be forgotten. There was tenderness in the dread utterances of an offended God, and mainly so because almost as soon as he declared that man must labor and die he promised that the "seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Assuredly the Lord our God is by nature very pitiful and full of compassion.

This truth is evident when we remember that God was abundantly ready to pardon, for he himself removed the impediment which lay in the way of forgiveness. Being judge of all the earth it was essential to him in that office that sin should never be treated as a light thing, but should be duly punished, lest others rush into it, hoping to escape judgment. For the good of all his creatures, as well as for the glory of his own character, God must not allow sin to go unpunished. The judge may be willing enough to pardon the culprit, but he is a judge, and as such he must condemn the guilty. The readiness of God to pardon was seen in this that at his own cost he provided a way by which his mercy might be consistent with justice. From his own bosom he took his only begotten Son, his own self, for he was one with him and God, in the person of his Son, suffered that which has honored justice, vindicated the law, and enabled God to be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Oh, as I see the adorable Father giving up his Well-beloved, to bleed and die for men, I know beyond all question that he is a God ready to pardon.

And now, the atonement being made, and justice being unable any longer to offer any protest to boundless mercy, God stands ready to pardon. By the blood of his dear Son he is able to blot out offenses, through the sweet savor of the sacrifice of Jesus he smiles on guilty men. He delights now to blot into oblivion the transgressions of all them that seek his face.

The Lord's readiness to pardon is very conspicuous to sinners, because he sends his message of love to them while they are yet in their sins. He presents perfect pardon through Jesus Christ to them, even while they are sinners, for "Christ died for the ungodly." I love to think that the gospel does not address itself to those who might be supposed to have helped themselves a little out of the mire, to those who show signs of lingering goodness, but it comes to men ruined in Adam and doubly lost by their own sin, it comes to them in the abyss where sin has hurled them and lifts them up from the gates of hell. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus Christ's salvation is like the good Samaritan, it comes where the wounded man is, and pours in its oil and wine into his bleeding wounds.

The readiness of God to pardon is to be seen in the fact that he makes no hard conditions with sinners. He does not say, "I will pardon if you suffer this or endure that penance; I will pardon if you perform this act of heroism or that deed of consecration." No, he himself says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Receive what is freely given—that is the gospel precept, and nothing else. Only confess thy transgressions, or, in other words, own thine emptiness, and then trust thy Savior, and thou art saved.

That he is ready to forgive appears in this yet more glorious fact, that what God demands of man by the gospel he also works in him by his spirit; as for confession of sin he puts the words into the sinner's mouth, repentance he works in the sinner's heart, and saving faith his own Spirit creates in the sinner's soul. Is he not ready to forgive when even what might be called the condition of pardon in one light is under another aspect a gift of free grace?

See ye not his readiness to forgive, when he accepts even the very lowest grade of the necessary graces? Of repentance, so long as it be sincere, he doth accept a tear or a sigh; of faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, he doth accept it if it be but true. And notwithstanding all the faults that are in the sinner, though his heart be neither as tender as it ought to be, nor his knowledge so clear, nor his eye of faith so bright, nor his conversion so complete as it should be, yet God looketh not at any of

these faultinesses except to forgive them. The ignorance and shortcoming God winketh at, and he only looks at what he can see of Christ in the sinner. The sinner's plea on his lip is, "for Jesus' sake," the sinner's hope in his heart is "for Christ's sake,"—and it is this that the Father looks at; when he sees that the poor trembling soul has embraced Jesus, his own dear Son, the Father puts the sin away at once without a word, and says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Oh, he is indeed a God ready to pardon.

Dear child of God, this text has a bearing upon you, and you can see it in your own self. Observe how the Lord chastens you. "Why is that?" say you. Why, because you have been offending him. You are his child, and he is your Father, and he desires to forgive you, but there is a hindrance. Have you never felt a difficulty about expressing forgiveness to your own child when he has done wrong again and again? There is no difficulty in your heart, for you love him well, but still you do not wish him to think lightly of the fault, and you are afraid that if you at once tell him that you forgive him he may, perhaps, think that he may transgress with impunity. Therefore you chasten him, so that after the chastening has been endured it may be safe for you to pardon—I mean safe as far as he is concerned. He will not be tempted to go into the sin through the readiness with which you forgive him, for he will remember the smarts which your love inflicted. Look upon your chastening as a proof that God is ready to forgive because he executes in wisdom that discipline which is necessary for a safe forgiveness.

Think, too, how lightly he chastens.

"He will not always chide,  
And when his strokes are felt,  
His strokes are fever than our crimes,  
And lighter than our guilt."

That rod of his, ah, he never loves it. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. But when he does use it, how quickly he puts it up again. Brethren, note how ready the Lord is to pardon us, for when we have sadly fallen he graciously sets us on our feet again. "He restoreth my soul." If you have wandered, like Noah's dove flying over the waste of

waters, the Lord will receive you, even as Noah received the weary bird. He put out his hand at once and plucked her in unto him, into the ark, and even thus does the good Spirit pluck us in to himself. He fills our empty spirits again, revives our dying hope, relights the candles of our joy, and makes us once again what we had been, and perhaps more. And then he comes and restores to us his own presence, oh so soon. He says, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but in great mercy will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon thee." Very loath is he to hide his face, but very swift is he to come on wings of mercy to restore joy to his mourners. Is he not ready to pardon?

I have almost done when I have answered a question on the behalf of the unconverted, and the same on behalf of the children of God. A poor seeker says to me, "You tell us God is ready to pardon, why is it, then, that I have prayed so long for mercy and have not found it?" That was a question I asked once when my prayers went up to heaven, and seemed to smite upon a dome of brass, and were reverberated in my ears. Listen! Dost thou know to what God has promised to give pardon? To prayer! I think if thou wilt read aright he promised pardon to confession, to repentance, and to faith. Hast thou acknowledged thine iniquity? Wilt thou renounce thy sin? Hast thou believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Come, wilt thou now trust Jesus Christ? Man, thou shalt have pardon now. But if thy prayers are unbelieving prayers thou art going the wrong way to work. Thou mayest as well hope to win heaven by thy works as by thy prayers, for indeed thy prayers are but a kind of work—salvation is by believing, not by praying. If faith be mixed with thy prayer, then wilt thou succeed. Believing is essential, and if thou believest thou shalt have mercy, now at once. "Still," says another, "I have believed in Jesus Christ, and I hope I am saved from guilt, but how is it if God is ready to pardon that I am still suffering from the result of sin." This, my friend, you must bear so long as God wills it. God does not make a man healthy if he has brought his body to sickness by sin, neither does he fill a man's pocket if he has spent his money in profligacy. This, my brother, is left to be a thorn in thy side; not as a token of anger, but because thou art not to be trusted with health or wealth, and God will not lead thee into temptation again. Accept this from the Lord's hand as a gentle chastening.



Remember, if he save thy soul it little matters about the rest, for it will be better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed than to have all thy limbs, and all the world, and lose thy soul. Accept sickness, or whatever else comes, as the result of sin, and do not think it by any means proves that God has not pardoned thee—on the contrary it may be that he loves thee enough to chasten thee.

A child of God now says to me, "If God is so ready to pardon, how is it I am still a sufferer, I am still poor, and so on?" Ah, my dear friend, perhaps that is not a rod at all, for remember "every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it." Not because it did not bear, but to make it bring forth more fruit. You are God's child, and you have a cross to carry. Do not look at it as a token of anger. Was God angry with Simon, the Cyrenean, who carried Christ's cross after him? No, he was conferring an honor upon him.

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone,  
And all the rest go free?  
No, there's a cross for every one,  
And there's a cross for me."

Take it up, for "through much tribulation" we shall "inherit the kingdom." Look at addiction in this light, and you will see that there is nothing of anger in it.

"But," says one child of God, "I am under a cloud. I cannot see the face of God. Why does he hide himself from me?" Not because he is unready to pardon, but, perhaps, because you are not ready to forsake the sin which he is aiming at. Perhaps you have not searched your heart yet. There is still hidden under the camel's furniture some idol or other. Make Rachel get up, and do you search even in the secret places. Cry, "Wherefore dost thou contend with me?" for, if like David and Job you have to say that you are chastened every morning and plagued every evening, there is a reason for it. If you have walked contrary to God he is walking contrary to you. Take your Achan and stone him, and then the Lord will come into the camp again. Tear down the idol and you shall have Jehovah's presence once more! But mark the word—whatever your experience may be, this is true—he delighteth in mercy, and he is a God ready to pardon. May the

Holy Spirit bless this truth to your souls, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **God Rejoicing In The New Creation**

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. -  
Isaiah 65:17-19

This passage, like the rest of Isaiah's closing chapters, will have completest fulfillment in the latter days when Christ shall come, when the whole company of his elect ones shall have been gathered out from the world, when the whole creation shall have been renewed, when new heavens and a new earth shall be the product of the Savior's power, when, for ever and for ever, perfected saints of God shall behold his face, and joy and rejoice in him. I hope and believe that the following verses will actually describe the condition of the redeemed during the reign of Christ upon the earth: "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

But the work which is spoken of in the text is begun already among us. There is to be a literal new creation, but that new creation has commenced already; and I think, therefore, that even now we ought to manifest a part of the joy. If we are called upon to be glad and rejoice in the completion of the work, let us rejoice even in the commencement of it. The Lord himself will joy and rejoice, and we who are in sympathy with him are exhorted and even commanded to be glad; let us not be slack in this heavenly duty.

Do you know what this work of creation is, which is here thrice promised in the words, "I create.. I create.. I create"? It is evidently a second creation, which is altogether to eclipse the first, and put it out of mind. Shall I tell the story?

The first creation was so fair that, when the Lord looked upon it, with man as its climax and crown, he said, "It is very good;" but it failed in man who should have been its glory. Man sinned; and in his sin he was so connected with the whole of the earth, that he dragged it down with him. The slime of the serpent passed over everything. The taint of sin marred the whole of God's work in this lower world. The creation was made subject to vanity, and it groaneth in pain together until now. But the Infinitely Blessed would not be defeated, and in infinite condescension he determined that he would make a new creation which should rise upon the ruins of the first. He resolved that under a second Adam something more than Paradise should be restored to the universe. He purposed that he would undo, through Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, all the mischief that had been wrought by the serpent. He has commenced to undo this mischief, and to work this now creation, and so commenced that he will never withdraw his hand till the work is done. He has commenced it thus—by putting new hearts into as many as he has called by his Spirit, regenerating them, and making them to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. These the apostle tells us are a kind of firstfruits of this now creation. We are the commencement of the future ingathering. Our new-born spirits are the first ripe ears of corn out of a wonderful harvest that will come by-and-by. The saints' spirits are, first of all, new-created; but their bodily parts remain in the old creation. Hence we suffer pain, for though the Spirit is life because of

righteousness, "the body is dead because of sin." By-and-by their bodies shall be new-created, when, from beds of dust and silent clay, they shall upleap into immortal beauty. The resurrection will be to the body what regeneration is to the soul. When body and soul are thus created anew, the whole earth around them, in which they shall dwell, shall be, at the same time, renewed also; and so God shall make the spirits, the minds, the bodies, and the bodies of men, all now. These bodies, quickened by his Spirit who dwelleth in us, and united to souls purified and refined, shall tread upon an earth delivered from the curse, and shall be canopied beneath new heavens. Have they not new desires? Should not all above them be new? They shall tread a new earth for they have new ways.

Inasmuch as this ought to be the subject of joy, and the text invites us to it, I come to press upon you the sweet duty of present delight. Oh, when happiness is made a precept, when joy is made a command, I cannot but hope that God's people, to whom I am now speaking, will answer to the call! Has joy become a duty? Then we will be joyous. Has gladness become a precept? Then we will gladly enough obey, and our heart shall dance for joy. I will read the text again, and then we will consider what sort of joy it is which is to arise out of the work of divine grace in the new creation. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people.

I. First, then, concerning the joy to which we are called, we would say, IT IS A JOY IN CREATION: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

I must confess that I think it a most right and excellent thing that you and I should rejoice in the natural creation of God. I do not think that any man is altogether beyond hope who can take delight in the nightly heavens as he watches the stars, and feel joy as he treads the meadows all bedecked with kingcups and daisies. He is not lost to better things who, on the waves, rejoices in the creeping things innumerable drawn up from the vasty deep, or who, in the woods, is charmed with the sweet carols of

the feathered minstrels. The man who is altogether bad seldom delights in nature, but gets away into the artificial and the sensual. He cares little enough for the fields except he can hunt over them, little enough for lands unless he can raise rent from them, little enough for living things except for slaughter or for sale. He welcomes night only for the indulgence of his sins, but the stars are not one half so bright to him as the lights that men have kindled: for him indeed the constellations shine in vain. One of the purest and most innocent of joys, apart from spiritual things, in which a man can indulge, is a joy in the works of God. I confess I have no sympathy with the good man, who, when he went down the Rhine, dived into the cabin that he might not see the river and the mountains lest he should be absorbed in them, and forget his Savior. I like to see my Savior on the hills, and by the shores of the sea. I hear my Father's voice in the thunder, and listen to the whispers of his love in the cadence of the sunlit waves. These are my Father's works, and therefore I admire them, and I seem all the nearer to him when I am among them. If I were a great artist, I should think it a very small compliment if my son came into my house, and said he would not notice the pictures I had painted, because he only wanted to think of me. He therein would condemn my paintings, for if they were good for anything, he would be rejoiced to see my hand in them. Oh, but surely, everything that comes from the hand of such a Master-artist as God has something in it of himself! The Lord doth rejoice in his works, and shall not his people do so? He said of what he had made, "It is very good;" and he cannot be very good himself who thinks that which God makes is not very good. In this he contradicts his God. It is a beautiful world we live in

"Every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile."

There are lovely spots on this fair globe which ought to make even a blasphemer devout. I have said, among the mountains, "he who sees no God here is mad." There are things that God has made which overwhelm with a sense of his Omnipotence: how can men see them, and doubt the existence of the Deity? Whether you consider the anatomy of the body, or the conformation of the mighty heavens, you wonder that the scorner does not bow his head—at least in silence—and own the infinite

supremacy of God.

Well, now, if there be—and I am sure there is—something pure and elevating in joy in God as the Creator of ordinary things—as the Maker of all this first creation—much more is there something bright, and pure, and spiritually exhilarating, in rejoicing in God's higher works, in God's spiritual works, in God's new creation. Methinks, if a man feels within him a new heart, and rejoices in his new birth; if he sees in others new and holier lives, and rejoices in them; if he listens to the preaching of the gospel, and discovers in it now and better principles, such as the old worn-out world could never have discovered—why, that man is a gracious man. The eye that can see the new nature is an eye that grace has given, and newly opened to new light. The heart that can rejoice in the new creation is a heart that is itself renewed, or else it would not comprehend spiritual things, and could not rejoice in them. I invite you, therefore, dear friends—you that see, and know, and somewhat appreciate the new creation in its beginnings—to joy, and to rejoice in it to-night. It is a delightful thing that God should make a tree, and bid it come forth in the springtide with all its budding verdure. It is a far better thing that God should take a poor thorny heart like yours and mine, and transform it till it becomes like the fir-tree or the pine-tree to his praise. It is a charming sight when bulbs, that have slept under ground through the winter, hold up their golden cups to be filled with the glory of the returning sun. But how much better that hearts that have lain dead in trespasses and sins should be moved by the secret touch of the Spirit of God to welcome the Sun of righteousness, and to rejoice in him! How glorious to see a slum become a sanctuary, a den of thieves a house of God! This is even more wonderful than for darkness to become light, and chaos yield to order. God's new creation, even in its beginnings here, and now, is a something to delight one's soul in. I pray you, delight yourselves therein. Behold, in the creation of a new heart, the manifest finger of God! What power to turn the human will—to subdue fierce passions—to change the very core and center of the heart! This is power in the moral and spiritual world as great as anything which can be seen even in the convulsions of earthquakes. Herein is wisdom too! We speak of the wisdom of God as soon in anatomy, in botany; or in astronomy; yet this wisdom is still more to be seen in regeneration—in the making of the sinner who wandered

from God, to become a saint who follows after holiness, in the bringing of the opposer of Christ to become his friend and advocate. To rule the will, and yet leave it free; to guide the heart, and yet to let it choose; to reverse the law of being, and yet to violate no law of man's nature—herein is the wisdom of the Highest himself. The attributes of God are to be seen in the visible creation; but they are to be seen in a brighter and superior light in the new creation. There is no one of the attributes of God which has not its illustration under the economy of grace; and blessed shall your whole being be if you can to the full rejoice in that which God creates.

There is one reason why you are called upon to rejoice in it, namely, that you are a part of it. When the angels saw God making this world, they sang together, and shouted for joy; but they were not a part of this lower world. They had nothing to do with man's estate, save as a matter of sympathy. But as for this new creation of our gracious God, you and I, beloved, who have believed in Jesus, are part of it. That same grace, which has quickened others into new life, has quickened us. The same Spirit, who has given new principles and new desires to others, has given them to us also. The Father hath begotten us again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are the central beings of the new creation, and so let us joy and rejoice in it with all our soul, and mind, and strength.

I know, when I lay sore sick and tormented in body, it seemed always to be such a joy to me that I myself, my inner self, my spirit, had been new-created, and that my nobler part could rise above the suffering, and soar into the pure heavens of the spiritual realm; and I said of this poor body, "Thou hast not yet been new-created. Still doth the venom of the old serpent taint thee; but thou shalt yet be delivered. Thou shalt rise again if thou diest, and art buried, or thou shalt be changed if the Lord should suddenly come. Thou, poor body, thou that draggest me down to the dust in pain and sorrow, even thou shalt rise, and be made anew in 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body'; for the now creation has begun in me, even the earnest of the Spirit." O beloved, cannot you rejoice in this? I would incite you to do so. Rejoice in what God is doing in this new creation! Let your whole spirit be glad! Overflow with gladness! Let loose the torrents of praise! Leap down, ye cataracts of joy!

Well, that is our first point. It is a joy in creation.

II. And, secondly, IT IS A JOY WHICH WILL ECLIPSE ALL THAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Now, my text is, "And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." God's great new-creating work ought to fill us with such joy as to make us forget the old creation, as though we said to ourselves:—What are the sun and the moon? We shall not have need of these variable lights in the perfection of the new creation, for in heaven, "They need no candle, neither light of the sun." What is the sea, though it be the very mirror of beauty? In that new creation there will be no more sea, and storms, and tempests will be all unknown. What are these luxuries of sight and hearing? We shall not want them when our eyes shall behold the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off, the joy of the spiritual is such that, while it admits the joy of the natural, yet, nevertheless, it swallows it up as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. In those last days we shall be in tune with Dr. Watts when he sang -

"Lo! what a glorious sight appears  
To our believing eyes!  
The earth and seas are pass'd away,  
And the old rolling skies.

"From the third heaven, where God resides,  
That holy, happy place,  
The new Jerusalem comes down,  
Adorn'd with shining grace.

"The God of glory down to men  
Removes his bless'd abode,  
Men the dear objects of his grace,  
And he their loving God.

"His own soft hand shall wipe the tears  
From every weeping eye,



And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,  
And death itself shall die."

As an instance of the expulsive power of a new delight, we all know how the memory of the old dispensation is gone from us. Brethren, did any one of you ever weep because you did not sit at the Passover? Did you ever regret the Paschal lamb? Oh, never, because you have fed on Christ! Was there ever man that knows his Lord that ever did lament that he had not the sign of the old Abrahamic covenant in his flesh? Nay, he gladly dispenses with the rites of the old covenant, since he has the fullness of their meaning in his Lord. The believer is circumcised in Christ, buried in Christ, risen in Christ, and in Christ exalted to the heavenly places. Did you ever regret the absence of the burnt-offering, or the red heifer, or any one of the sacrifices and rites of the Jews? Did you ever pine for the feast of tabernacles, or the dedication? No, because, though those were like the old heavens and earth to the Jewish believers, they have passed away, and we now live under new heavens and a new earth, so far as the dispensation of divine teaching is concerned. The substance is come, and the shadow has gone; and we do not remember it.

Now, I want you to feel just the same with regard to all your former life as you now feel towards that old dispensation. The world is dead to you, and you to the world. Carnal customs and attractions are for you abolished, even as the ancient sacrifices are abolished. What were your sins? They are blotted out: the depths have covered them: you shall see them again no more for ever. Seek not after them as though you had a lingering esteem for them. Let them not come to mind, except to excite you to repentance. What were your pleasures when you lived in sin? Forget them. They were very vapid, deceptive, destructive evils. You have a higher pleasure now which enchants your soul. What have been the sorrows of your past life, especially your sorrows while coming to Christ? You need not remember them; but, like the woman who remembereth no more her travail for the joy that a man is born into the world, so your birth into the new creation causes you to forget all the sufferings of your spirit in coming there. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!" I would to God that the joy of the new creation would so fill us right up to the brim that we should not imagine any other joy.

This puts out all other joy as the sun hides all the stars. Let all go; let all go: rolled up as the heavens and the earth are to be, like vestures all outworn, let all of my past life be laid aside. Now put I on my new dress of sparkling joy and delight in the new things, for has not Christ made all things new to me? A new song is in my mouth, even praise to him for evermore; a new law is in my heart; and a new service engages all my powers.

There is great scope for enlargement here, but I will not linger, lest I chase away your joy by speaking about it unto weariness.

III. In the third place, IT IS A PRESENT AND A LASTING JOY; "But be ye glad and rejoice FOR EVER in that which I create." Be now glad, and now rejoice: it is a present joy. Take a delightful interest in that which God is now creating in the spiritual realm: though the work be only in the doing, yet be glad concerning it. Be glad in anything that the Lord has created in you. Has he created in you so much of the new life as to have produced conviction, repentance, faith in Christ, hope in the promise, longing for holiness? Be glad in this even if you have other circumstances pressing upon you, and causing you to be heavy of heart. Though you might be mourning because you are so sickly, yet be glad that you are born again. If somewhat distressed because you are so poor, yet be glad that you are a child of God, and have a place in the new family of love. Let the old things go, and grasp the new, the heavenly. The old creation—bear with it a little longer, for the time of your redemption from its bondage draweth nigh. Find your joy where God would have you find it, namely, in that part of your nature which is new, in the now principles, the now promises, the now covenant, and the blood of the new covenant, which are yours—all of them. Look no longer for the living among the dead, but let your heart dwell in the living world with your living Lord, and be glad. The kingdom of God is within you, rejoice in it.

And I want you, also, to find your joy in the new creation of God, as you see it in others. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents; surely you and I ought to do so! Try and do good, and bring others to Christ, and when a soul shows signs of turning to its God, let that be your joy. "be glad and rejoice in that which I create." I have had many rich draughts

from this cup. I do not know anything that has made me so happy, hundreds and thousands of times in my life, as to see God at work in men's hearts; and, without exaggeration, to hear of this one and of that brought to Christ through the hearing or the reading of my sermons has been a heaven to me Oh, you may drink as much as you like of this cup of sympathy with God in his now creation-work! There is no intoxication about it—to find a joy in the work of God in the hearts of others is healthy, unselfish delight. I know some snarling people who, if they hear of one being converted, say that "they hope it is genuine," which, being interpreted, means that they do not believe it is, and they almost hope it is not. "Oh, but," they say, if there is a great work done anywhere, "I never did like excitement! When I hear of many conversions, I expect many backsliding." Cold, dead fish that they are, excitement would not hurt them. A little boiling might do them good, perhaps. Ay, but if they meet with one who is an eminent Christian, and whose public character will bear the closest inspection, they say: "Ah, well! we do not know what he is at home;" and so they have always some sly word to say against God's work, just like the serpent in Eden coming, and hissing, "Yea, hath God said?" I would far rather be one of those that can see the beauty of God's handiwork in my fellow-Christians, than one who can spy out their defect. I think it is very beautiful where John Bunyan represents Christiana and Mercy as admiring each other. They had both enjoyed a wash in that wonderful beauty-giving bath, and Mercy said to Christiana, "How beautiful you are! I never saw anyone look so lovely as you are." But Christiana said that she was not beautiful at all; she could not see anything about herself to admire, while in Mercy she saw everything to esteem and love. Oh, to have an eye for the work of God in other people, and to rejoice in it! Such an eye sees not itself, and yet it is itself one of God's loveliest works. "Be ye glad and rejoice," says God, "in that which I create." Can we decline the sacred invitation? Nay, rather let us thankfully enter into the joy of our Lord. Be thankful for what God has done for yourself; be thankful for what God is doing in other people; and recollect that, if you once begin this joy, you need never renounce it, for the text says, "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever." Every day, and all the day, this light of joy is shining, for the Creator stays not his hand. As long as ever you live, there will be something in the new creation that shall be to you a well-spring of fresh joy and delight. Heaven will only enlarge this

self-same joy. Be glad for ever, because God will ever be creating something fresh in which you may be glad.

IV. Again, in the fourth place, it may be said of the joy which we ought to feel, that IT IS A JOY WHICH GOD INTENDED FOR US: "For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." He has made the new city, the new people, the new world to be a source of joy.

Take Jerusalem as the emblem of the church of God. God always intended that his chosen, called, and converted people should be a rejoicing. He created you on purpose that you should yourselves be happy, and bring happiness to others. Do you not know that his name is the happy God, and nothing gives him greater happiness than to give happiness to his creatures? Do you think you were chosen to be a groaner all your days? Were you called to misery, dear brother? Does Jesus Christ say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will make you doleful"? Does he say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find agony in your hearts"? No; but he talks about rest, and peace, and joy, and blessedness. One wrote to me, some years ago, and said that he came into this congregation, and he felt at once that he must be in the wrong place, because he found so large an assembly. God's people, he said, are a small remnant; there are few that shall be saved. He had settled that matter in his own expanded soul. But he was still more sure that he was in the wrong place when he looked at me, for I looked happy; and in his judgment, if I had known anything about the experience of a tried child of God, my face would have been much longer, more wrinkled, and more sadly serious. I confess that my face does betray at times the fact that I am happy; and I cannot help it. But when this good man looked round on the great congregation—you were not all here then—but when he looked round on the vast congregation, and saw them all looking so happy, he felt that he must get out of the building as soon as he could, for such smiling people could not be the afflicted people of God. He walked, he said, some distance along our streets, feeling heavy at heart because of the joy he had witnessed; but at last he reached a little place in a court. The very aspect of the chapel gave him hope—it was so small, and so hidden away. He entered, and, to his satisfaction, he found in the congregation less than a score: here were the faithful few. At any

rate, he could say of this, "Is it not a little one?" The minister was as doleful as could be desired, and the subject was full of lamentation. He tells me that he sat down there in peace, for he found himself at home. I am glad he was suited. Different people have different ways, you know; and some love to be comfortably wretched. But I find myself miserable only when I keep away from my Lord and his work of new-creation. I have always found hitherto that when I can get under the shadow of his wings, my soul is at rest, and I look upon that restfulness and happiness as the work and fruit of the Spirit—"the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace." My impression is that I am not right when I give way to depression and melancholy. I certainly should not go to a place of worship seeking for doubt and despondency. Neither should I conclude that I must be on the way to heaven, because I felt in my own heart some of the miseries of hell. When I am despondent, I say to myself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" I probably know as much about depression of spirit as any man that lives; but I consider myself foolish and blameworthy, a fool for knowing so much darkness, and I do not want to feel any more of it. I would like to drive myself out of it once for all if I could; for we ought to be glad, and rejoice for ever in that which God creates. He has created his people a rejoicing: yea, his people to be a joy. Ours is a heritage of joy and peace. My dear brethren and sisters, if anybody in the world ought to be happy, we are the people. How large our obligations! How boundless our privileges! How brilliant our hopes!

"Bright the prospect soon that greets us  
Of that long'd-for nuptial day,  
When our heavenly Bridegroom meets us  
On his kingly, conquering way;  
In the glory,  
Bride and Bridegroom reign for aye."

What should make us miserable? Shall the children of the bridechamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Sin?—that is forgiven. Affliction?—that is working our good. Inward corruptions?—they are doomed to die. Satanic temptations?—we wear an armor which they cannot penetrate. We have every reason for delight, and we have moreover this command for it, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he

will give thee the desires of thy heart." God bring us into that blessed condition, and keep us there!

God intended not only that we should have joy, but that we should spread it among others. He intends that wherever we go we should be light-bearers, and set other lamps shining. Why are some so afraid of joy? They seem, wherever they go, to be busy in turning out the lambs. The first thing to be done is, "Take that child out." Dear little child, with its pleasant prattle, so happy at your feet!—why send it away? If there is a very happy hymn in the book, do not sing it: it would be presumptuous. Sing -

"Lord, what a wretched land is this."

Crooked metre, key dismal, tune dolorous. I fear that certain Christians go through this world making it miserable as they march through it. Oh, that they could see that Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil, and would have us rejoice in the new creation of our God!

Alas, there are heady, hard-hearted persons abroad who, by their wilfulness and pride, would crush every flower in the garden beneath their wicked hoofs! Wherever they go, everything is despised, ridiculed, and kicked by them! This is the spirit of the evil one. Oh, do not so! Christian people, you dare not be so; you shall not be so: God will not let you be so: you must be gentle, compassionate, generous, kind, gracious. Wherever you go, try to make others happy; for God creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, and his people a joy: a joy to others who have no joy, a source of happiness to the saddest of our race. Help the widow, comfort the fatherless, succor the poor, cheer the desponding, tell the glad news to the weary heart. In the Father's hands, in Christ's hands, in the Spirit's hands, seek to break the prisoner's fetters, and to bring him out into the light of liberty: you, too, are anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives. May the God of infinite mercy help you and help me so to do!

Now, dear friends, just for a minute upon this creation. I want to show how the work of God does create a joy-making people. As soon as ever we are converted, what is one of the first things that comes of it? Why, joy.

The morning I found Christ it snowed very hard. The snow-flakes fluttered around me, like white doves, as I went home; and I felt just as light as those, for my soul was washed whiter than snow. It was not a gloomy winter's day to me: but all nature wore her bridal dress in sympathy with my delight. Was it not so with you on the day of your now birth? Were you not as happy as ever you could be when you first found the Savior? So far, you see, the Lord creates joy; and it is better still further on. When the creation of God goes on, and a man is helped to conquer sin, when the work of grace in his soul grows and increases, he cries, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory," and he gets increased joy in his soul over every conquered sin. When you and I see sin subdued, do we not feel happy? Whenever the news comes to me that a man has been reclaimed from drunkenness, or a woman is saved from the streets, or when I hear of a hard-hearted sinner repenting, I rejoice in the Lord. Conversion-days are our high holidays. Revivals are our jubilees. Thus the Lord gives us opportunities for joy and rejoicing as his new-creation work proceeds stage by stage. Better days are in store, it may be, and I trust that in years to come we shall more and more behold God working, and shall rejoice therein.

But, by-and-by, there ill be a still greater joy. We shall enter into heaven, and there will be joy among the angels, and joy in our heart over God's new-creation work, which will proceed at a glorious rate. Then the nations will be converted to God. I know not when, nor exactly how, but the day shall come when Christ shall reign from pole to pole. And what a joy that will be! We shall indeed be glad in that which God creates, as the islands of the sea shall ring out his praise! Then Christ the Lord will come, and what joy and rejoicing there will be in that day when he has fully fashioned the new earth and the new heavens! His ancient people, the seed of Abraham, shall be gathered in with exultation. We will clap our hands when the longwandering nation shall turn unto the true God, and own the rejected Messiah, of the house of David! the Gentiles will not be jealous. They will rejoice as the Jew comes in; and then will the Jews rejoice over the Gentiles, as they see them worshipping Abraham's God. Everything that is to come in the eternal future flashes light into the eyes of believers, and calls upon them to rejoice in anticipation. Nothing prophesied should be dreaded by us. There is nothing foretold by seer, or

beheld in vision, that can alarm the Christian. He can stand serenely on the brink of the great eternity, and say, "Come on! Let every event foretold become a fact! Pour out your vials, ye angels! Fall, thou star called Wormwood! Come, Gog and Magog, to the last great battle of Armageddon!" Nothing is to be dreaded: nothing is to be feared by those who are one with Jesus. To us remains nothing but joy and rejoicing, for God hath made his people a rejoicing; yea, his people a Joy.

V. I finish up with the last point, IT IS A JOY IN WHICH WE SHARE WITH GOD. Gently, my tongue! Timidly and cautiously speak thou here! Here is thy warrant for supposing a fellowship with God and man in this joy—"Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people." The wonderful comes out here. God himself, the Ever-blessed, finds joy in his new creation. Herein is ground for marvelling. I have often said to you that, when the Lord made the material world, there was not much in it to touch his spiritual nature, and so he simply spoke and said, in plain prose, "It is good." That was all: he said it was good. But when the Lord has made new heavens and earth, when he has finished, when the bride of Christ shall be brought to him—you know the word, "He will rest in his love, he will joy over her with singing." Did you ever get into your hearts the idea of the Lord God singing? God singing over his church, over his Jerusalem, over his new creation! God singing! I can understand the angels singing for joy over God's work, but here is God singing over his own work. I will tell you something more wonderful than that: it is that you should be a part of that work, and that God should sing over you. And yet it is not so very wonderful, for is he not the Father, and doth not the Father sing over his prodigal son that wandered and is come back? is he not the Savior, and will not the Savior, who bought us with his blood, sing over us who are the purchase of his agonies? He is the Spirit, and shall not the Spirit, who has striven with us, and wrought all our works in us, sing when his work is done, and we are sanctified? Father, when thy eternal purposes are all fulfilled, thou wilt joy over thy people! Son of God, Redeemer, when all thy agonies shall have received their recompense in the salvation of thy redeemed, thou wilt rejoice over thy chosen! Holy Ghost, when all thy condescending, indwelling within us shall have accomplished its design, thou wilt rejoice in thy people! Come now, beloved, rejoice in sympathy



with the divine heart! When the father found his son, he made the whole household merry, and shall not we be? When the woman had found her piece of money, she called together her friends and neighbors and she said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Shall not we rejoice with the Spirit over the lost silver pieces? When the shepherd brought home his sheep, he said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Come, then, rejoice with the Father, rejoice with the Son, rejoice with the Spirit; and if the Lord God, as the Trinity in Unity, invites us to be glad and rejoice in that which he creates, let us not hold back, but let us sing his matchless love, and new-creating power, and infinite wisdom. I am sure you will sing, you must sing even now, if you know yourselves to be a part thereof.

And now I close with this observation. Nobody will ever rejoice in this new-creating work of God while he is rejoicing in his own works, and trusting in himself, and boasting his own merits. It is a sign of grace when a man is sick of self, and is in harmony with God. When he leaves off rejoicing in what he can do, and comes to rejoice in what God has done, and is doing, then a change has been wrought upon him. Some of you are trying to save yourselves, and make yourselves right before God: as well might the dead try to find life for themselves. It cannot be done. You must be made new by a power you have not within yourself—by a divine power. You must be born again, and this is the work of God; not your work. We shall know when this heavenly work is begun in you when you cease from rejoicing in anything that you are or can be of yourselves, and then shall you with us rejoice in that which God creates in you.

Ring the bells of heaven! Tune your voices, sons of earth! He who makes all things new is on the throne, working out his holy pleasure. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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**God's Advocates Breaking Silence**

Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. - Job 36:2

Elihu was sufficiently severe with Job, but as this arose from his honest conviction that Job had spoken amiss, we cannot blame him. The style of his address is, in some points, highly commendable. We admire the courtesy which moved him to say, "Suffer me a little." It shows some little consideration for his audience. It is to be feared that under our preaching our people do suffer greatly, and we do not sympathize with their sense of weariness; else might we often apologize in the terms of Elihu, saying, "Suffer me a little."

I admire Elihu's attempt at brevity; I call it an attempt, for I am not quite sure that he succeeded, for he filled two chapters more. Yet he said, "Suffer me a little"; and thereby promised to make his oration as short as he could. Some lengthy divines, with their many divisions, their "Finallies," and "Lastlies," and concluding observations, spin and spin, and cause their congregations to suffer, and that not a little, but exceeding much. It is well when we have anything good to say to use as few words as possible, for if brevity be not the garment of grace it is the soul of wit, and all our wits should be set to work to put gospel teaching into such a form that it will be the better received. Assuredly, short and pointed addresses are more likely to reach the heart than long and dreary sermons. If our preaching be so poor that the people suffer, it is better that they suffer little rather than much; and if our ministry be very rich and satisfying, it is better to send the people home longing than loathing.

We may also admire the prudence of Elihu in dividing his discourse into four or five portions. If you turn to the book of Job you will see that he has been speaking ever since the thirty-second chapter, and he has made at least three pauses, and it may be that these filled up considerable intervals. His talk would have reached an unbearable length had he continued to speak on and on without a parenthesis of silence; but he stopped and gave his hearers space to breathe. Doubtless four sermonettes were better than one long discourse; and teachers, and all those who seek to win the hearts of others, should imitate Elihu in this,

and not say too much at one time, for the spirit of the hearer may be willing, but his flesh is weak. Be wise and do not attempt to say everything at once. Recollect that there is such a thing as undoing by overdoing. Many of those whom we try to teach are like bottles with narrow necks, and we must pour gently with a slender stream, or we shall spill the truth rather than convey it. Hungry children cannot eat a whole field of wheat; we must prepare the food and give them a loaf, and even that will often be better if cut into slices and handed out little at a time. Little and often in spiritual feeding is far better than much at long intervals. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little" is the way in which wisdom teaches her disciples. Often let the preacher or teacher pause as Elihu did, and say to himself, if not to his hearers, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

It is admirable in Elihu, also, that he knew what he was at when he spoke. He says, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." He has a definite object before him. His subject has been considered, and his drift has been determined.

"I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Elihu felt the necessity of so doing. He had kept silence for awhile, but after what he had heard spoken by the patriarch's three friends, he came to the conclusion that "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment." The speeches of Job also had stirred his soul, for in his judgment he drank up scorning like water (Job 34:7). He felt that he must speak, his swelling heart impelled him; woe was upon him if he kept silence, and therefore he burst forth with the exclamation, "I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.' He was forced to speak; duty called him, impulse compelled him. There is nothing like emptying out your heart when it is full; it is wretched work to hear the noise of an empty barrel. It is good speaking when you say what must be said, and give forth utterances which you cannot restrain. He who speaks from conscious necessity will speak with earnestness, readiness, and power. I suppose, too, that Elihu felt that he must continue to speak because he had once begun. "I have yet to speak," saith he, "on God's behalf"; he had started,

and could not come to a stand all on a sudden. The theme which he had chosen when once adopted keeps its grip upon the soul: it holds the speaker spell-bound. Forgive us if we sometimes transgress the usual limits of time, for when we reach the height of our great argument we long to linger, and are drawn on and drawn out beyond our first intending, feeling that we have yet to speak on God's behalf. He who once beginneth to speak concerning his God feels that his heart intendeth a good matter, and his tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. On such a theme "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words." Thus you see that Elihu spoke because he felt laid under a necessity to do so, and I believe that the like necessity is laid upon many of us. While we muse the fire burns, and we must speak with our tongue. It is evident that Elihu felt great responsibility in speaking on behalf of God, as who would not? It is no light thing to be called to advocate the cause of the King of kings. Therefore was he very thoughtful as to his speech, and he says, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." It is not every sort of talk that is good enough to be used in pleading for the Lord our God: the best of the best is not so good as such a cause demands. Words should be fitly chosen, and statements should be carefully weighed when we are pleading on the behalf of God. It may well be a matter of prayer with us that all who speak for Jesus may feel the weight of their engagement, and go about it in the deepest solemnity of spirit. Feeling how awful is their work and calling, let us not fail to pray for them that they may be divinely helped and prospered. Let us speak unto the Lord on their behalf and say to our great Father,-

"We plead for those who plead for thee,  
Successful pleaders may they be."

Elihu surely felt it to be a high honor to be an advocate for God. What greater dignity can be bestowed upon us? He must have felt it an honor, for he spoke in tones of courage and confidence. He cried, "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead." No flattering speeches were on his tongue. How can any man flatter his fellows when he is called to speak in the name of God? He might fear that in so doing his Maker would take him away. Ill would it become an ambassador for Christ to demean his office by stooping to flatter the king's enemies: his business is to reflect

honor upon the Prince who has bestowed honor upon him.

We know also that Elihu felt it to be a great privilege to speak on the behalf of God, for he declares, "I will speak, that I may be refreshed." O beloved, when the Lord teaches you much of his love, you feel constrained to tell it. That is a secret which it is hard to keep; and, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are both permitted and commanded to divulge it. Hath he not said, whom we call Master Lord, "That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops"? It is a delight to the renewed soul to speak concerning Christ as much as it is to a bird to sing. The faculty is given, and the impulse is bestowed, and we must exercise and indulge them both.

That I have yet to speak personally on God's behalf is to me a great joy. It is a delight in which few of you can fully sympathize; because you may not have spoken so much as I have done, nor have been so long and dolorously silent. Glory be unto the Lord my God, once more my tongue is loosed, and the opportunity to speak is given, and I say it with unfeigned joy, and perhaps with more joy than Elihu ever knew, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." I hope, however, that all of you whose lives are spared, whose spheres of usefulness are enlarged, or who see new doors of utterance open to you, will with joy say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf," and that you will not hesitate to avail yourselves of the privilege to the fullest possible extent. What a host will go forth to publish the gospel if you all feel that you must speak on God's behalf! How will Satan's kingdom be moved if you all do it with power from on high, the power of the Holy Ghost!

In our text we have a duty set before us. First, let us think of it; secondly, let us consider how to perform it; and thirdly, let us do it at once.

I. We have before us a privilege and a duty,- "I have yet to speak on God's behalf:" LET US THINK OF IT. Speech is the high prerogative of man. It is given to him alone of all earthly creatures; he is the one sole articulate voice for this lower world. Birds and beasts, fishes and creeping things, mountains and seas, mean the praises of God, but they cannot express them. Man is the world's tongue: it were well if that tongue were always sanctified to the divine service, for otherwise it misrepresents the

universe for which it should be the interpreter.

Of our text we note that the subject is sublime. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Is it not a high calling and an exalted theme? The cause of God and truth deserves seraphic eloquence. At first sight it seems as if it were needless to speak on behalf of God. He is so great that human opinion can be of no consequence to him; he is so good that he cannot need defense. His claims are so clear, does he need that they should be pleaded? Alas, my brethren, pleaders for God and advocates of his cause have always been needed since that evil day when he was slandered in Paradise, and our first parents lifted disobedient hands to pluck the forbidden fruit. Though no voice is so sweet as the divine, man is hardened against his God, and it is the office of the whole church with a thousand voices to be continually crying in the world's dull ear and speaking on the behalf of God. There is need, and growing need, that we should lift up our voices for our God and his gospel; yet may we tremble as we enter upon the enterprise. Who shall fitly commend perfection? Who shall vindicate spotless purity? Who shall rightly tell of insulted justice, or who shall declare boundless love? The theme will exhaust every faculty when elevated to the highest degree and strengthened to its utmost possibility. To speak on God's behalf: this is a lofty argument indeed, and yet we will not flinch from it, for it is natural that we should speak for him to whom we owe everything. If we have a tongue at all we ought to speak here; if silent upon all other themes, yet never should we be unwilling to speak for our God. The stones themselves might speak if we should hold our speech in such a cause. The theme might make slow speaking Moses wax as eloquent as his brother Aaron. A God so good, so good to us, so good beyond all imagination, deserves that we shake off our cowardice and speak out for him manfully! Reflect, my brothers, who are called to speak on the behalf of God, that since he has provided an advocate for you, you are bound to become advocates for him. What a pleader has he set apart for you! It is Christ of whom we read "Never man spake like this man." Our glorious Mediator stands for ever pleading the causes of our souls, and it is but natural and right, therefore, that his redeemed should with all their hearts plead his cause before the sons of men.

And yet there are few who speak on the behalf of God. I mean more than perhaps you think. There are few who vindicate the honor of Jehovah, and view matters from his throne. Their eyes look elsewhere, and not to the sacred Majesty of the Supreme Being. Many are the preachers of the gospel, but still I note but few who even preach the gospel on behalf of God. There are two aspects of the gospel, the one which looks towards man, and the other which looks towards God: he who preaches the gospel only from its manward side is apt to forget its major part. He regards man with a pity and sympathy most fitting and proper; but, alas, too often he fails in sympathy with God, and in distinct recognition of the claims and rights of the great Sovereign. How seldom is divine sovereignty spoken of! Man is looked upon as though he were a deserving creature and had a right to salvation. One would think, to hear some preachers, that God was under obligation to man, or, at least, that he had no will of his own, but had left man's will to be supreme. The truth is that if all the race had been condemned, God would have been infinitely just, and if he spares one and not another none can say unto him "What doest thou?" His declaration is "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." I sympathize with man, but I have in my very soul an infinitely deeper sympathy with God. I am bound to love my neighbor as myself, but the still higher law calls on me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Speaking on behalf of man may be carried so far that you come at length to look upon sin as his misfortune rather than his fault, and to view the fact that sin is punished at all as a matter to be deplored. In some professed Christians their pity for the criminal has overcome their horror at the crime. Eternal punishment is denied, not because the scriptures are not plain enough on that point, but because man has become the god of man, and everything must be toned down to suit the tender feelings of an age which excuses sin but denounces its penalties, which has no condemnation for the offense, but spends its denunciations upon the Judge and his righteous sentence. By all means have sympathies manward, but at the same time show some tenderness towards the dishonored law and the insulted Lord. Is justice a figment? Is there no necessity for divine anger? Is mercy itself become a debt due to mankind? See yon nothing horrible in sin? Is there no guilt in rejecting Christ and trampling on his blood? Ay, and is there none in closing the

eyes even to the feeble light which streams from the visible works of God, and reveals his power and Godhead? Few, I say, look at the matter in this light, and yet it should be the main business of every believer "to speak on God's behalf." It becomes, therefore, all the more needful that those who have been led to side with God, and who feel their hearts drawn to adore and magnify and vindicate their glorious Lord, should count it a privilege still to be spared to speak on the behalf of God. I would silence no voice that speaks for man so far as it speaks truthfully, but oh for more voices to speak for God and maintain his crown rights. It needs that we vindicate his law and the terrors of it, his gospel and the sovereignty of it, his nature and the completeness of it, his providence and the wisdom of it, his redemption and the efficacy of it, his eternal purpose and the accomplishment of it. May this theme, though silent long, be sounded forth till its voice is heard in every street of Zion. Not the exaggeration of divine truth, but that truth itself, we desire to hear, and God grant we may live to hear it. May many a man of God be constrained to say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Let others plead what cause they will, it is ours with the greatest of poets "To justify the ways of God to men."

While thinking over the work described in the text we would further remark that the call is personal,- "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Do we not as believers in Jesus recognize ourselves in that little word I? "I have yet to speak," though hitherto a listener as Elihu was while the elders gave each one his opinion. I, though silenced for awhile, blessed be his name, have yet to speak on God's behalf. The harp has hung awhile upon the wall, and pined in silence; but now the Chief Musician takes it down again, and almost before he sweeps the chords every string begins to thrill with delight at the thought that he will make them resound again; for the cobweb and the dust suit not the lyre which for so many years has welcomed the sacred touch. Have you been laid aside awhile, brother or sister? Then rejoice in the day of your restoration and say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." I, again, though not the wisest nor the best, have my testimony to bear even as Elihu did, who had aforesaid given place to those whom he thought to be wiser than he. His words were, "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach



wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding ": and so though esteeming himself to be least, and therefore fitly coming last, he rose in his place and faithfully delivered his soul. O you that are not eloquent, whose tongues will scarce respond to your thoughts, nevertheless ye have to speak in the name of the Lord in ways as forcible as uttered language. Take care that ye do so, and make no long delays, but look forward eagerly for times when you shall speak on God's behalf after your own manner. The smallest bell in the steeple is needed to complete the chime, and the tiniest bird in the wood would be missed if its note were hushed; therefore come thou forth, O least of all the brotherhood, for without thy presence the Father's family is not complete. All voices are needed; no child of God may be dumb. You, too, who are conscious of great weakness and unworthiness, I invite you to say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf"; for this man Elihu was a trembler like yourselves. In the thirty-seventh chapter he says, "At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place." Nor did he feel that his abilities were equal to his subject, for in the nineteenth verse of the same chapter he breathed this prayer, "Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness;" and yet though conscious of his inability to handle the theme, and trembling under its power, he nevertheless rejoiced to feel that he must speak something and somehow, and he opened his mouth boldly in the name of the Lord. Brother, work for God, whether you can or not; power will increase as you use the little you possess. You will learn to speak more graciously as you proceed, if not more fluently and accurately. Therefore plunge into the middle of the matter, saying, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Glory be to God, the devil himself cannot silence the man whose mouth the Lord has opened and whose heart he has quickened by his truth. He may be laid aside for many a day, and it may seem to his fellow-men that he is useless and worthless, but the hour will want the man, and the man will seize the hour, and he will speak so as to be heard. Only let thy heart be ready and thy spirit watchful and waiting, and the time shall surely come when, though thou art now a poor prattling babe, thou shalt speak like a man on God's behalf.

I think, dear friends, I may now make a third remark, namely, that in the text, the reminder is seasonable, and may be addressed most opportunely

to many of us, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Does not this arouse thee, O silent and sluggish soul? Hast thou been hidden among the stuff all these days? Art thou on the Lord's side but of a faint heart? Hast thou never found a tongue? Wake up, my brother, and say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf" Is it not written, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing"? How canst thou bear a life-long silence, when to me even a few weeks become irksome? Our children need no encouragement to talk, and should the children of God be tongue-tied?

I have thought lately a great deal about Zacharias who was struck dumb while sacrificing in the temple, on account of his unbelief, but was assured that in a few months he should speak again. How I should have watched those weary weeks until the day should come when my tongue should once more express my thoughts. How glad should I be as the day drew near! Hast thou been shut up, brother, so that thou couldst not come forth? Then cheer thyself and look out for the day when thou wilt say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

This thought may justly occur to us after times of great deliverance. David had been seized by the Philistines and taken before king Abimelech, and had only escaped by feigning madness. No sooner was he safe than he said, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1). Amongst the verses of that grateful song you read the following, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." He felt bound to tell the Lord's goodness both to old and young. When we are raised from deep distress we should never fail to say, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

The same is true if you have been conscious of a grave fault and have received forgiveness; then, too, you have yet to speak on God's behalf, and you may be very glad of it, for it will serve as a pledge of your forgiveness. Poor Peter might very naturally have remained quiet throughout the rest of his life after having denied his Master, but it must have cheered him to remember that the Lord had said beforehand, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Moreover, he felt the certainty of his Lord's forgiving love when by the sea of Galilee in loving tones he said, "Feed my sheep." Do you wonder that, on the day of

Pentecost, Peter felt a joy not to be expressed as he said to himself, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf; even I, who once denied him, am yet allowed to be his advocate and to proclaim his grace"?

Beloved friends, if any of you have been disappointed in your Christian work and are therefore cast down, I want you to take my text as a motto still. Have you fallen into the condition of the prophet Jeremiah, of whom we read, "Then I said I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name"? Have you been despised and defamed, laughed at and rejected; and you fear that you have done no good, and that you are altogether unfit for the service? Do you therefore cry, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord"? Mark, my brother, you will not easily abide in silence, for your experience will soon be like that of the prophet: "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." You will be obliged to speak; yea, again and again you will be compelled to say, "I have yet to speak in the name of the Lord." Perhaps you have been foolish like Jonah, and have run away from the Lord's service, and now you have just escaped from the deeps, with the sea slime upon you, and the tokens of the whale's belly about you. What then? Why, the first thing you have to do, almost before you brush your clothes, is to hasten to Nineveh and deliver your Lord's message, for you have yet to speak on God's behalf. Though you have once refused, you will be brought to do it, and it will be well to yield at once, and go boldly with this doctrine in your heart, "Salvation is of the Lord"; and with this message upon your tongue, "Repent and seek the Lord." If you go at once your voice shall ring through the streets of Nineveh, and the man with the salt-sea smell upon him shall be more revered in the streets of Nineveh than if he had come there perfumed from the courts of kings.

Take the text home as coming seasonably to many characters here. I cannot tell the exact condition of each brother's and sister's heart, and yet I think if I could read your inmost souls I should see the strongest reasons why this should be the soliloquy of each one, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

Furthermore, while thinking this matter over, let us remark that this duty is a very solemn and arduous one, and consequently it deserves our best

possible preparations. When a young barrister was chosen years ago, almost within the recollection of our older folks, to advocate the cause of a queen whose character had been questioned, I can imagine him sitting up late and rising early that he might study his brief and get the whole matter well into his mind, and choose out goodly words with which to urge her suit. I can conceive the trepidation with which he stood up in the Hall at Westminster to plead for one whom many in the nation regarded as an injured queen. But all that feeling of responsibility should be far outdone by every one who has to speak for God. To rush from your bed to the pulpit to talk what first comes to hand seems to me to be next door to profanity. Even to talk to little children about Jesus without the slightest anxiety beforehand cannot be excused. We should not offer unto God that which costs us nothing; and if we stand up to plead for him, surely it should not be said that the first time we saw our brief was when we appeared in court. No, fetch your words from far; let them be gained by diving into the deeps of your own soul and into the depths of the divine word. Say to yourself, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf, and I would do it with my utmost ability. O ye powers of mind, be ready; but, above all, O power divine, rest thou on me, for he that speaks for God should speak by God, or else he speaks in vain."

If we have to speak for God we should certainly do it with all zeal and earnestness. A cold advocacy of the cause of God is next door to an attack upon it. To speak for God with careless air, with bated breath, or with affected tone is gravely unbecoming in a case where faith and fire should be the main attributes of the speaker. Let us throw ourselves into every word we utter for God, even though we speak only to one poor ragged child.

At the same time let us cultivate a constant promptitude in this work. We should be ready to give an answer to him that asketh us; we should be eager to seize opportunities; we should be on the watch for openings for advancing the great suit. Be always in trim for this great business. When you leave home say to yourself, "I may have to speak for God in the omnibus, or in the workshop, in the parlour, or in the kitchen; I may have to speak on the behalf of God when least I expect it, let me have my heart in order for it." May the Holy Ghost enable you so to do. The mercy of the

Lord to us never faileth, and let our zeal to honor him never cease.

Thus we have thought upon the subject, and I trust are prepared to enquire into the way in which we can show our practical interest in it. I can only give brief hints, and there is no need of more, for the work itself will open before you when you once get at it.

II. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Let us now consider HOW IT IS TO BE DONE. A great number of Christians will do it best by manifesting holiness in their daily lives; by their common conversation being seasoned with salt; and by taking such opportunities as the providence of God puts in their way of speaking to their Redeemer's praise. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf" as the master of a family to my children and to my servants, as a mistress to my domestics, as a servant by my life, as a merchant in my trade. I have so to speak on God's behalf that those about me may see what religion is by watching my life. Whatever my lot, condition, or occupation, I have a witness to bear; for those who never read the Bible may read me, and those who never think of Christ may at least think of one of his disciples, and see in some degree what the Master is by what the servant is. Let this object tone and tune your lives, my brothers and sisters; and let the members of this church especially bear in mind that they are bound from morning to night in all that they are and all that they do to be speaking on the behalf of God.

But, further, we are bound to do this by giving instruction. All of you who have been taught should also teach, and I am sure there is a great want of instruction in this age: instruction, I mean, upon the things of God. We have probably more present need of instruction than of exhortation. We have many who exhort, but few who edify. Do, dear friends, whether you teach in the Sunday-school, or stand up at the corner of the street, or talk with friends and comrades, try to make known the name and nature and attributes of God; show his claims, the perfect righteousness demanded by his law, and the penalties due to disobedience; speak on God's behalf of his gospel's freeness, fullness, and sureness; speak on God's behalf concerning the doctrine of his providence and the great truths of his grace and sovereignty. Do not let those around you die for lack of knowledge: make the name of the Lord to be known as much as lieth in you. All themes, if rightly regarded, point to God, and are best seen when

he is our standpoint. There is a great need that we should be continually putting gospel truths in the sunlight of God, giving clear instruction to the sons of men in reference to the character, the work, the purposes, the will, the supremacy of God in Christ Jesus; for the Lord he is God, even he is God alone, and the whole earth shall yet know this. For this end we have yet to speak on God's behalf.

Thirdly, there is another way of doing this, namely, by bearing personal testimony to what you have known and felt and experienced of the good things of God. This is a very powerful way of speaking on God's behalf. Tell of your own sense of sin wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; tell of your own delight in the pardoning blood; tell of the power of prayer as proved by yourself; tell of the reality of faith, and the fidelity of God to his promise; and illustrate these by your own history. Perhaps you are too slow to do this, from alarm lest you should be thought egotistical. If Paul had never spoken of himself in his Epistles we should have been great losers, and I do not suppose that Paul would have been any the humbler for his silence. It is a mock humility, it is a detestable humility, which robs God of his glory because we are afraid somebody will criticise us if we spoke to his praise. Such a motive is sheer selfishness: it is base pride when a man, to make himself the better thought of, dares not say, "My God did this and that for me, and this and that by me, and unto him be praise." Bear your testimony in your homes, and tell your friends what great things God hath done for you. Say among the heathen, "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." Be witnesses for the Lord in all companies. Sometimes, too, we may have to bear our testimony by way of controversy. We are to contend earnestly for the faith. Have you not heard it said, "Why cannot a man preach his own views and let other people alone?" Yes, why did not Luther do so? Why did he not take the advice of Staupnitz when he said, "Go thou to thy cell and pray, and leave these matters to God, and hold thy tongue"? Where had been the Reformation if he had followed that sage advice? Could not Calvin have done so, and studied the decrees of God by himself, and have made no war on Rome? Where would have been the church of the present day? It is an easy way to save your skin, to believe what you believe and let other people alone. Martyrs at the stake and confessors in prison were fools on the hypothesis that controversy is wrong. No, it is a part of our

religion to let no error alone, to draw the sword and fight the good fight, warring against the many false spirits which have come into the world. If you ever hear severe criticisms upon bold and strong speeches which assail error, do not join in those criticisms. If you do, I do not know that those who are the victims of your remarks will care much about it, but you will be fighting on the wrong side, and that is an important point for you to think of. If you are wise you will let the Christian soldier war his warfare, and at the very least not oppose. Surely, if error is to have liberty, the truth ought not to be bound. Our "modern thought" men are the least liberal of all professors, their bigotry outbigots all that has gone before. They have a warm side for every error, but the old-fashioned orthodox gospel is sneered at, run down, and caricatured. Well, there is the end of the matter; by God's grace we have believed, and what we have believed we hold fast, and this day again we lift up a banner because of the truth, and rejoice that we have yet to speak on God's behalf.

There is another way of speaking on God's behalf, and that is by pleading with sinners, setting forth God's claims, urging them to accept God's gracious way of mercy, reminding them of God's right to our obedience, and of the demand of his justice that sin should be punished; setting before them the sovereignty of God, so that they shall admit that they have no claims upon his goodness, and urging them to yield to him and accept the grace which he so spontaneously gives. You can all do something of this; I pray you do a great deal more. During the late special services many of you have been diligent in speaking to strangers in the pews: keep up the custom, brethren. You used to do it years ago; renew the habit. Your hearts are warm, and your tongues have come into practice; go on, I pray you, as you have begun; say, each one, "I have permitted many to go in and out of the pew without a word for Christ; but it shall not be so again, for I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

III. My third head was, LET US DO IT, but I have no time to attempt it, except it be in the briefest fashion. I have to speak on behalf of God to those among you who are utterly careless about divine claims. How long will ye provoke the majesty of heaven? Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's

crib: but ye do not know him and do not consider." Are ye honest towards everybody but God? Will you consider everyone but your Maker? Do you cast an eye of love on all except the great Being who is love itself? Some of you have lived half a century, and yet have neglected all the claims of your God. I beseech you, recollect that the time will come when he will reckon with you, and call you to account. The talents committed to you have all been buried as yet: what will you say in that day when he shall call you to his bar? Oh, for God's sake, even if you leave out all considerations of your own eternal condition, by the common honesty which suggests that each one should have his own, I pray you turn your eyes to God and think upon his Christ.

I speak again on God's behalf to many who are undecided; and this is my message,-How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, serve him: if Baal be God, serve him. It is time that you should put an end to these hesitations, that the equivocal life which you are now leading should close in one way or the other. You said years ago that you were almost persuaded; you are no further now; you are worse, and will grow worse still; and in the end you will perish in your sin unless you come to a dead halt and consider your way, and acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace. Oh, I pray you hear the voice which cries to you to cease your wanderings and return unto your God.

I would speak to you new converts on the behalf of God just these few sentences. See to it that your conversion is true. Have no superficial religion. Pray God to plough you deep that there may be a sure harvest. Remember, if you get healed before you are wounded it will serve no useful purpose. Many a surgeon has filmed a wound and found that he has done more hurt than good. You must be killed before you can be made alive; you must be stripped before you can be clothed. See to it that you repent as well as believe the gospel, for a dry-eyed faith is not the faith of God's elect, and will not save you. Repent and be converted. Let sin be abhorred, lamented, and forsaken; then, with the precious blood of Christ to make you clean, go on your way rejoicing.

O you new converts who are to be brought into the church, I speak on God's behalf to you. I hope you will be better than your fathers, better far than some of us who have been a stiff-necked generation. I hope you will



come in among us as plastic material, which the Lord Jesus will mould according to his will. I trust you will come into the church like firebrands, like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame, that all of us may anew be set on fire. There are some of us, I will not say who, but each one may judge for himself, who are quite cold enough; o that their arctic hearts may become a torrid region: may the Lord warm the mass right through, that we may praise and bless his name.

And now, to you Christians, I have yet to speak on the behalf of God. Do you need I should? Do you love the Lord? Do you really love him? "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Mary, Hannah, do you indeed love your Lord? Then what manner of persons ought we to be? What lives should love prompt us to lead? Come, let us gird our garments about us, and give ourselves up once again to his service, by whom we are brought nigh unto God. May the Holy Spirit come upon us in a sevenfold measure from this day forward, to the praise of the glory of his name who gives us the great privilege of saying, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

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## **God's Barriers Against Man's Sin**

Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.  
- Jeremiah 5:22-23

The Majesty of God, as displayed in creation and providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to his commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah, so clearly manifest in the works of his hands, should constrain us, his creatures, to fear his name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before his throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous, is entirely submissive to the behests of God; that when he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," it dares not encroach—"the pride of its waves is stayed." When we know that God bridles the tempest, though "nature rocks beneath his tread," and curbs the boisterous storm—he ought to be feared—verily, he is a God before whom it is no dishonour for us to bow ourselves in the very dust. The contemplation of the marvellous works which he doth upon "the great and wide sea," where he tosseth the waves to and fro, and yet keepeth them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our devoutest emotions, and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great art thou, O Lord God; greatly art thou to be praised; let the world which thou hast made, and all that therein is, declare thy glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding, as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipotent power, and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast, and if not, only let reason do her office, and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced. Let your eyes behold the stars; God alone can tell their numbers, yet he calls them all by names; by him they are marshalled in their spheres, and travel through the aerial universe just as he gives them charge; they are all his servants,

who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like slaves obey his will; and you know that the great pulse of ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under his control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of his, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring his glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honourable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse, and our glory is a shame. Alas, then the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of tempest? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of his deep-toned thunder, and sees with alarm the shafts of his lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine, and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, "I have sinned this time: the lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;" but like him, when "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders have ceased," when the plagues are removed, then they sin yet more, and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceeding sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just. We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture, that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened; thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom ye rebelled, it might be pardonable; if he were a man like yourselves, ye might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness; but since he is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about him, the God to whom all nature is obedient, and whose high behests are obeyed both in heaven and in hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot pourtray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvellously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"

But while it is a lesson, I do not think it is the lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of his own people. "The sea," saith he, "obeys me; it never breaks its boundary; it never leapeth from its channel; it obeys me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to me. The sea obeys me from shore to shore, without reluctance, and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to me, in the voices of the pebbles, 'O Lord, we are obedient to thee, for thou art our master.' But my people," says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people; they go astray from me." And is it not, my brethren, a marvellous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, save man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who maketh the deep to be hoary, sinneth not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light, are easily directed by the very wish of God; clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot; "he maketh the clouds his chariot;" and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God willeth. In heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practised by man; at least, in heaven, there is a cheerful obedience; and in hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception, he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text, and this I shall endeavour to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"—now here is the pith of the matter—"which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they soar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean.

"The sea obeys me, and has for its only check the sand; and yet," says he, "my people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people, and scarcely can my commands, my promises, my love, my judgment, my providence or my word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. The sea is easily restrained by a belt of sand; but we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from him.

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient save man; but man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea, without any stupendous effort of divine power more than he ordinarily puts out in nature: he can not thus make man obedient to his will.

Now, my brethren, let us look back into history, and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy; he has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life; his God will walk with him, and make him his friend; moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels, and with the Lord, the Master of angels; and yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die. One would think it was enough, to promise reward for obedience, and punishment for sin; but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit, and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt it is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees him coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and

unheeding as before. Another prophet is raised up, and cries, "Yet a little while, and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water." Do men cease from sin? No; profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before. Man rushes on to his destruction; the deluge comes and destroys all but a favoured few. The new family goes out to people the earth: will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little, and ye shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse for ever, and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences, and diseases? She still goes on in the same manner; at this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world, and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand; we admire the beautiful poetic fact; but man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed; he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

"But what of this fact?"—you say—"we know it is true; we do not doubt it." Stay awhile; I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences; and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them,—saints and sinners.

First of all, ye saints, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large, than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly—"The sea is bound by sand; but I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of his restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon his

people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O heir of heaven! thou canst look back to eternity and see thy name in life's fair book set down; thou canst sing of electing love; thou dost believe that a covenant was made with Christ in thy behalf, and that thy salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed his name as the representative of all the elect. Thou believest that on Calvary thy sins were all atoned for; thou hast in thy soul the conviction that thy sins, past, present, and to come, were all numbered on the scape-goat's head of old, and carried away for ever; thou believest that neither death nor hell can ever divide thee from thy Saviour's breast; thou knowest that there is laid up for thee a crown of life which fadeth not away, and thine expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in thine hands, with crowns of gold on thine head, and streets of gold beneath thy feet, thou shalt be happy for ever. Thou believest thyself to be one of the favoured of heaven, a special object of divine solicitation; thou thinkest that all things work together for thy good, yea, thou art persuaded that everything in providence has a special regard to thee, and to thy favoured brethren. I ask thee, O saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep thee from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of thy heart, wouldst thou not be restrained from sin by this? Is not thy sin exceeding sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah! sin has reached its climax, when it dares to sin against such love as this. O Christian! thine affection to thy Lord and Master should restrain thee from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of thine heart, of thine heart even now, for still thou hast evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping thee from unholiness. The sins of yesterday rise to thy memory now. Oh! look back on them. Do they not tell thee that thou dost sin most ungratefully? O saint! didst thou not yesterday use thy Master's name in vain, and not thy

Master's only, but thy Father's name? Hadst thou not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Wast thou not petulant when girded with favours that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Wast thou not, when God hath forgiven thee ten thousand talents, angry with thy neighbour, who owed thee a hundred pence? Ah Christian! thou art not yet free from sin, nor wilt thou be, until thou hast washed thy garments in death's black stream, and then thou shalt be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the throne, but not till then. I ask thee, O saint, viewing thy sins as sins against love and mercy, against covenant promises, covenant oaths, covenant engagements, ay, and covenant fulfilments, is not thy sin a desperate thing, and art not thou thyself a rebellious and revolting being, seeing that thou canst not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as thy soul acknowledges?

Next notice, that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin; he finds a Samson shorn of his locks, and with his eyes put out; he sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out; that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture, and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept thou darest to sin. Oh! art thou not a rebellious creature, and mayest thou not this morning humble thyself at the thought of the greatness of thine iniquity?

Again: the saint sins against his own experience, When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him; he has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such and such a transgression; it appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh! it made his Master withdraw his presence and hide his face. The saint can



look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck, and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul, and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin exceeding sinful. But every time thou sinnest, O grey-headed saint, thou sinnest with a vengeance, for thou hast had all through thy life so much proof of what sin has been to thee. Thou hast not been deceived about it, for thou hast felt its bitterness in thy bowels: and when thou sippest the accursed draught thou art infatuated indeed, because thou sinnest against experience. Ay, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints! and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will; but because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep, that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God, who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts, and yet they will break forth; verily ye are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all his children with providence, in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you, even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us, and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practise before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust, we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity, how we revelled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice, and we looked down; our brain reeled, we could not stand; and do we not remember how just then some striking providence came in our way, and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the church for violating the rules of propriety. Ah! strange things happen to some of us; strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a providence which on some sad and solemn occasion, to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember,

notwithstanding the girdlings of his providence, how many times you have offended; and let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though he has afflicted you, you have sinned; though he has given you chastisement, you have sinned; though he has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh! how corrupt your hearts are, and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, beloved, that the ordinances of God's house are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary; he girds us by the remembrance of our holy baptism; and all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce; yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men, because he has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honour of God, and against the gratitude they owe him, the saints of God have dared to sin, and they must confess before him that they are rebellious, and have revolted from him. Bow down your heads with shame while ye consider your ways, and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that he has kept you when your feet were making haste to hell, where you would have gone, but for his preserving grace. Shall not this long suffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day -

"While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures?"

Will you not pray, that God should not cast you away, nor take his Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature, and though you have revolted against him?

This is for the saints; and now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to sinners! Sinner, I have solemn things to say to thee this

morning; lend me for a few minutes thy very closest attention; I will speak to thee as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in thine ear. I have asked my God, that I may so speak to thee, O sinner, that if I win not thy heart I may at least be free from thy blood; and that if I am not able to convince thee of thy sin, I may at any rate make thee without excuse in that day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Come, then, sinner; in the first place, I bid thee consider thy guilt. Thou hast heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God, and restrained within its channel by simple sand; and thou, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, thou art a rebel against God. The sea obeys him; thou dost not. Consider, I beseech thee, how many restraints God has put on thee: he has not checked thy lusts with sand but with beetling cliffs; and yet thou hast burst through every bound in the violence of thy transgressions. Perhaps he has checked thy soul by the remembrance of thy guilt. Thou hast this morning felt thyself a despiser of God; or if not a despiser, thou art a mere hearer, and hast no part nor lot in this matter. Dost thou not remember thy sins in the face of thy mother's counsels and thy father's strong admonitions? Do they never check thee? Dost thou never think thou seest a mother's tears coming after thee? Hast thou never heard a father's prayer for thee? When thou hast been spending thy nights in dissipation, and hast gone home late to thy bed, hast thou never thought thou hast seen thy father's spirit at thy bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son, or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child? Consider what thou hast learned, child! Baptized with a mother's tears, almost immersed in them; thou wast early taught to know something of God; when thou didst go from thy mother's knees, thou wentest to those of a pious teacher; thou wast trained in a Sabbath school, or at any rate thou wast taught to read the Bible. Thou knowest the threatenings of God; it is no new tale to thee, when I warn thee that sinners must be condemned; it is no new story when I tell thee that saints shall wear the starry crown; thou knowest all that. Consider, then, how great is thy guilt; thou hast sinned against light and knowledge; thou art not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but thou art a sinner before high heaven, in the full light of day; thou hast not sinned ignorantly, thou hast done it when thou knewest better; and when thou comest to be lost, thou shalt have an additional doom, because thou didst

know thy duty, but thou didst it not. I charge that home upon thee, I charge it solemnly upon thy conscience; is it true, or is it not? Some of you have had other things. Don't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife, you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget; sickness had got strong hold of you, and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned; not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks; you thought you would be amongst them yourself soon. Methinks I see you; you turned your face to the wall, and you cried, "O God, if thou wilt save my life, I will give myself to thee!" Perhaps it was an accident; thou didst fear that death was very near; the terrors of death laid hold of thee, and thou didst cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make." But didst thou perform that vow? Nay, thou hast sinned against God; thy broken vows have gone before thee to judgment. Dost thou think it a little thing to make a promise to thy fellow creature and break it? It may be so in thine estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But dost thou think it a little thing to promise to thy Maker, and to break thy promise? There is no light penalty for sinning against the Almighty God; it will cost thee thy soul, man, and thy soul's blood for ever, if thou goest on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if thou payest not, vow not; for God shall visit those vows upon thee, in the day when he maketh inquisition for blood, and destroyeth thy soul. Thou hast been guarded thus; remember that thou hast had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill thee; thy broken bones were healed; thou didst not die; when the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon thee: here thou art still. Thy life is spared.

Oh! my dear hearers, some of you are the worst; you have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness, how earnestly I have longed for you all in the bowels of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server, and kept back part of the truth, much more honour would I have received from men than I have received; but I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession? and expected that I should have seen a

change in some of your lives. But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness! Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's ambassador? It is no little sin: every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hope for you, but ye have gone back to the ways of perdition; I have cried, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it were better for thee that thou hadst been Tyre and Sidon than that thou shouldst have been left in the midst of privileges, if thou shouldst perish at last! Woe unto you, hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If ye perish beneath our warnings, ye shall perish in a horrible manner! Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell." Woe unto thee, young woman! thou hast had a pious mother, and thou hast had many warnings. Woe unto thee, young man! thou hast been a profligate youth; thou hast been brought to this house of prayer from thine infancy, and thou art sitting there even now; often does thy conscience prick thee; often thy heart hast told thee that thou art wrong; and yet thou art still unchanged! Woe unto thee! Woe unto thee! And yet will I cry unto my God, that he would avert that woe and pardon thee; that he would not let thee die, but bring thee unto himself, lest now ye perish in your sins. Ye sinners! God has a controversy with you; he tames the sea, but ye will not be tamed; nothing but his marvellous grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies, and judgments, and still ye sin.

Oh! my hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others; for when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, ye do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, "O God, I did not know this would be the pay for my labour." When thou didst sow tares, thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst reap wheat; thou knowest "that they who sow carnal things, shall reap

carnal things;" thou art sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that thou wilt reap salvation; for thou knowest that "he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin, when God puts hell before thee! What! sin when he has given out his threatening? Sin! while Sinai is thundering, while hell is blazing? Ay, that is to sin indeed. But how many of you, my dear hearers, have sinned like this. I would to God, that he would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them his salvation. I cannot with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of his Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Hath he done so? Hath he blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say, from this time forth you will mend your ways? Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best, and they are convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God saith that the sea can be tamed with sand; but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Dost thou think thou canst do that, which God saith is impossible? Dost thou suppose thyself stronger than God Almighty? What! canst thou change thine own heart, when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech thee, do not try to do it with thine own strength. I am glad thou knowest thy guilt; but O do not increase that guilt, by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of thine own resolutions. Go and tell God that thou knowest thy sin, and confess it before him, and ask him to create in thee a clean heart, and renew in thee a right spirit. Tell him thou knowest that thou art rebellious, and thou art sure that thou always wilt be, unless he change thy heart; and I beseech thee, rest not satisfied until thou hast a new heart. My hearer, be not content with Baptism; be not content with the Lord's Supper; be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday; be not content with leaving off drunkenness; be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that, and be damned. It is a new heart and a right spirit you want; begin with that, and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Bethink thee, my hearer; thou mayest

varnish and gild thyself, but thou canst never change thyself. Thou mayest moralise, but thou canst never spiritualise thy heart. But just bethink thee. Thou art this morning lost; and just think of this,—thou canst do nothing whatever to save thyself. Let that thought rise in thy soul, and lay thee very low; and when thou goest to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I cannot do; save me, O my God, for thy mercy's sake."

My dear hearers, have I spoken harshly to you, or wilt ye rather take it in love? Ye who have sinned thus terribly against God, do ye feel it? Well, I have no grace to offer to thee, I have no Christ to offer to thee, but I have Christ to preach to thee. Oh! what shall I say? This:—you are a sinner. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Art thou a sinner? Then he came to save thee. Oh! joyful sound. I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to thee. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart, that I am allowed again to tell thee—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Let me tell you that when he came into this world he was nailed to the cross, and that there he expired in desperate griefs and agony; and there he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There the blood ran from his hands and feet, and because he suffered he is able to forgive. Sinner, dost thou believe that? Thou art black; dost thou believe, in the face of thy blackness, that Christ's blood can make thee white? What sayest thou, sinner? God has convinced thee of thy sin; art thou willing to be saved in God's way this morning? If thou art willing, thou shalt be saved. It is written,—"Whosoever will, let him come." Art thou thirsty this morning? come hither and drink. Art thou hungry? come and eat. Art thou dying? come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven; all you who know your transgressions, he bids me tell you this:—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake." Hast thou been an adulterer, hast thou been a whore-monger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation;—"Whosoever will, let him come." I find no exception in this;—"Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Dost thou know thy guilt? then I do not ask thee what thy guilt is. Though thou wert the vilest creature, again, I tell thee, if thou knowest thy guilt, Christ will forgive thee. Believe it, and

thou art saved.

And now will ye go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder; the wonder is that we do not all weep, until we find ourselves saved! You will go away to-morrow to your farms and to your merchandize, to your shops, and to your offices; and the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass away like the morning cloud. My hearers, I would not weep, though you should call me all the names you can think of, but I wilt weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will ye be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death! What! is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Dost thou say thou shalt not die; yet thou wilt put it off a little while? Sinner, thou wilt never have a more convenient season; if to-day is inconvenient, to-morrow will be more so. Put it off to-day, wipe away the tears from your eyes, and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear, but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has had a soft heart; it has passed away, and in after years he has said, "Oh, that I could but shed a tear!" O God! make thy word like a hammer this morning, that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! Ye who know your sins, as God's ambassador, I beseech you, "be ye reconciled unto God." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Remember, once lost, ye are lost for ever; but if ye are once saved, ye are certainly saved for ever. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul of old; Jesus himself hath said "He that believeth and is haptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I will not finish with a curse. "He that believeth shall be saved." God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake!

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## **God's Gentle Power**



And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? - 1 Kings 19:11-13

Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves. We all know that when we have passed through any great excitement of high joy there almost always comes following, a corresponding reaction and depression. Elijah had gone to the top of Carmel and had pleaded his cause, and the rain floods had come in answer to his prayer. He had taken the prophets of Baal, and had slain them, and gained a glorious victory for his God; and so full of excitement was he that he girded his loins as though he had been a young man, and ran before the chariot of Ahab, like the royal footmen. It was almost inevitable that after an excitement so high, and strong, that he should be desponding and depressed in spirits, and we find that he was so depressed. If the like should ever happen to any of you' my brethren and sisters, count it no strange thing, nor suppose that some extraordinary trial hath happened unto you. It is but a physical result from physical causes. The mind has operated upon the body. It has strung the bow too tightly, and now, unless the string be relaxed, there is a danger of its breaking altogether. Now as Elias was a man of like passions with us, we may conclude that the way in which God dealt with him is very much the way in which he would deal with us. With a similar case, and the same physician, we may look for the same treatment. As, therefore, the Lord spake to Elijah not by earthquake, nor wind, nor fire, but by the still small voice, so in all probability will he speak to us. It may be, it is just possible it may be, that here to-night there is some worker for God very much in the same condition as Elijah. You, my dear brother, have been working for God in a neighbourhood where you have met with little but opposition and disappointment, and you have almost resolved that you will go away from the place. "The soil is hard," you say, "and breaks the ploughshare. Shall oxen plough upon a rock?" 'Tis in vain for you to continue your labour there, you think, and you have come here to-night still with this thought uppermost—that you have laboured in vain,

and spent your strength for nought. Hear you the word of the Lord this night. He speaks not to you by any earthquake of judgment with which he means to visit you, neither by any fiery word of severe rebuke; but perhaps through me, this evening, he may speak with a still small voice that shall just meet your case and send you back to your labour. Brother, will you play the Jonahs Will you refuse to go to tile great city—to Nineveh? Remember there are worse places than Nineveh. He that goes out of the path that God marks for him may yet come to be at the bottom of the sea with Jonah, with the weeds wrapped about his head. You go at your own cost, remember, if you go away frown the post of duty, however arduous. Don't attempt the risk. But thus saith the Lord unto thee, "It may be thou hast not laboured in vain as thou hast supposed." Elijah knew nothing of the seven thousand men that God had in reserve. You don't know what converts God has given you. There are scattered up and down the world—perhaps some precious ones who owe their salvation instrumentally to you, and could they all stand before you—you would blush with shame at the thought of leaving a harvest—field that has really been so prolific, though not in your sight. Go back again to thy work, for the Lord has blessed thee. Play not the fool by deserting the post where he will give thee honour yet.

But then the voice told Elijah also that God would punish the people who had treated him so ill; that he, would send Hazael with his sharp sword and Jehu, yet to mow the ground a second time. And oh! thou true servant of God, the Lord will not suffer thee to be rejected. If they have rejected thee, they have rejected thy God also. If thou hast been faithful to his truth, leave thou that matter to him—go thou back to thy work. And one other word there was to Elijah. He was to go back to anoint his successor. If Elijah flees, and if Elijah at length is taken up to heaven, yet Elisha shall succeed him. Perhaps there may be a brother here who is in the state I have described who does not know what God has in store for him. You are to call into the Christian ministry a brother that shall do greater than you have, you shall light as greater candle shall your own. Oh! what joy Elijah must have had when he felt there would be someone to take up his work! You have not, my dear brother, yet called out for your master the man the Lord means to call. What a happy man he must have been who was the means of the conversion of Whitefield or Jonathan

Edwards, or some great missionary of the cross. You may be that, in that little village—in that back slum. Go thou back then. What doest thou here Elijah? What doest thou here? With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? The Master's voice speaks to thee. Go to thy closet, and get fresh strength from on high, and then go back to thy difficulties—go back to thy self-denials, go back to all thy service with a good heart and true."Fear not thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord." Arise, thou worm, and thresh the mountain, for "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." I have delivered the message. It is to somebody, I know not to whom, in this place.

But now the drift, the great aim of the sermon at this time is to speak to the unconverted. With them I dealt also this morning.\* I feel persuaded God will bless it. Now, this evening, let us have another word with them. We will read the text again. "Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake. but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." Our first observation is that:—

## I. POWERFUL MEANS MAY ALTOGETHER FAIL TO IMPRESS SOME MINDS

Let us think a while. Terrible judgments appear as if they must convert sinners; yet there may be those here, and there certainly are those in many places who have passed through a whole series of judgments, and are rather hardened than softened by them. You may have been, dear friend in a storm of sin; you may have been just barely washed upon a rock, and escaped as with the skin of your teeth. You have also passed through a time of cholera. You have been in a city smitten with the plague. You have lived in a house where others have sickened and died; and at those times you did pause a little, and you made some good resolutions, but they all ended in smoke; and here you are still, a proof that God is not in the earthquake, nor yet in the wind, nor yet in the fire. It may be you have suffered a great deal of personal sickness. Do I not know some here present who have been laid very low with fever—who

have been the subjects of very frightful accidents, and brought to the borders of the grave? These things were loud voices to you, but you did not hear them. They were God's terrors, sent to fetch you to himself, but they failed to do it. You remained just where you were, perhaps worse instead of better; for when the sun shines on wax, it melts it, but if it shines on clay, it hardens it; and so God's judgments have had just that effect on you. You are hardened, instead of softened by them. Men are not converted by judgments. They may submit themselves in a false way, but power and displays of terror do not win the heart.

Again, we naturally expect that men will be converted during the times of earnest religious excitement. Some are brought in; but there are certain persons who do not seem to be affected by revivals. When others bow like the corn that waveth in the wind, they stand stiff and firm, and are altogether untouched. It is a solemn thing when a season of grace is not a season of grace to us. When we lie, like Gideon's fleece, all dry, while all around us is wet with the dew of heaven, yet with some it is just so—gracious excitements and spiritual revivals do not touch them. The Lord is not in the wind, and the Lord is not in the earthquake, and the Lord is not in the fire—at least to them. The same is the case with powerful sermons. I do not mean by this "eloquent sermons," so called. "Eloquent sermons" usually seem to me to be the least eloquent things in the world; for eloquence means speaking from the heart; and I cannot believe that the fine periods we sometimes hear read ever spring anywhere but from the head. But I mean when a sermon is full of gospel truth, when it is pertinently put, when it is pathetically urged, when the heart of the preacher is warmed, and his eyes o'erflow with tears; when you see a congregation melted, you say to yourself, "Surely that must touch so-and-so's heart." And then there comes a passage in the sermon that seems so touching that the very rocks might weep, and the stones might break; but oh! when it is all over it is all over, and it is forgotten too; and to many a hearer the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. And so it is also in the dealing out of the judgments of God in the ministry. It is the duty of the Christian pastor, if he would make full proof of his ministry, to warn men of the results of sin—to tell them that there is a judgment—that for every idle word they speak they will have to account. We ought continually to declare that for every transgression

there shall be a recompense of reward. But ah! dear hearer, though we have read books and heard sermons that were full of the terrors of the Lord, which we thought surely would move men, yet there are men who care nothing whatever about the wrath to come, nor the fire that is kindled for the wicked, nor the dreadful terrors of Divine Justice. The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, so far as they are concerned. The means that appear to be powerful are powerless to them; and when you think they will surely turn and repent, they harden their necks and go on in their sin. This, abundant facts could prove.

But the next observation shall be that sometimes a much gentler force effects what could not otherwise have been achieved. Many have been converted to God by the still small voice whom no wind, though it rose to a hurricane, no earthquake, though it rent the world to its centre, and no fire, though it licked up the forests, could ever move. A gentle word has done it. Sometimes that still small voice has come to us by apparently very, very inadequate means. It is astonishing what little things God will use when he pleases to do so. He wanted to soften the heart of that rough prophet Jonah, and he sent a worm and a gourd, and they did it. He would bring Peter to repentance, and he bade a cock to crow. It was a strange preacher, but it was as good as a dean of a cathedral to the Apostle. Means may seem to be absolutely ridiculous, yet God maketh use of the things that are not, as though they were. I remember to have heard the story of a man, a blasphemer, profane, an atheist, who was converted singularly by a sinful action of his. He had written on a piece of paper, "God is nowhere," and bade his child read it, for he would make his child an atheist too. And the child spelt it, "God is n-o-w h-e-r-e-God is now here." It was a truth, instead of a lie, and the arrow pierced the man's own heart. I remember one who had lived a life of gross iniquity who stepped into Exeter Hall and found Christ there. It was not my sermon, however, that God blessed: it was only this. I read the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Just those words touched his heart. "Jesus, lover of my soul," he said to himself. "Did Jesus love my soul? Then how is it that I could have lived as I have done?"; and that word broke him down. God works great results by little things. A little hymn learnt at the Sunday School is sung at home by a little prattler, and the heart of the father is softened by it.

One little sentence uttered by a friendly visitor reaches a mother's conscience and impresses her heart. Ay, and God can use the quiet of the evening, or the stillness of the night, or a flash of lightning, or a peal of thunder, or a dewdrop, or a little flower—he can use anything he wills to bring his banished. home. Often cloth the Spirit speak thus with a still small voice.

But, brethren, beloved, the Holy Ghost also speaks to men without any means at all. With no outward agency whatever, the still small voice will come. Oh! how I wish it would come to-night to some sitting here listening to the preacher! I wish you could forget—forget the congregation, and forget everything except yourself and your God. We have known persons who have been walking in the fields, thoughtless and careless. All around has been still, and they have suddenly thought, and thought is often the avenue to prayer. We have known some passing through a country churchyard, and though no text upon the tomb how touched them, yet the very sight of those green hillocks has been a sermon to them. Aye, and men have walked through orchards, and the leaves have said to them, "We all do fade as a leaf." Or sitting in their chamber, or lying on their bed wakeful, the old times have come over again. The man that lives to be an old sinner recollects the little prayer he said at his mother's knee. The soldier that has been at battle recollects the teaching of the Sunday School, though he has passed now his fiftieth year; and he says, "I wish I could blot out all that which lies between my mother's kiss and this hour. It has been a dark, dark season." Only the thought has done it. God's Spirit did but touch the secret spring, and the soul was moved aright. The still small voice has done it. Oh! how satisfied I should be if the Lord would not give me a single soul in this place by my preaching, if he would but do it himself! What matters it so long as they are saved? He does put honour upon his preached word, and he brings in the most of men thereby; but so long as they are brought in, and he gets glory, what will it signify as to the means he uses? May he still speak to you by his still small voice. I commend to him in my earnest prayer some of you who are very familiar with my voice, and to whom it is as useless as familiar. You will never be brought to Christ by me. God will never give me your souls I fear. For these many years have I laboured for them, and they have not been given me. Well, good Master, call them by some other

means, only bring them; and grant that this very night, conscience may be aroused by thoughts which thou thyself shalt suggest, and they may come to thee.

You see, then, the first two points, that the most powerful means will often fail, and that the least means may be successful. Ay, and the Holy Ghost may work without means altogether. And now once again:—

## II. WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO MEN, HIS VOICE IS ALWAYS LINKED WITH PERSONAL ADDRESS.

Look at the text. What says the still small voice? "What doest thou here Elijah?" There was the man named. It was no general statement about prophets who proved faithless, or about believers who grew doubtful, or about men of courage that played the coward. Oh! no; it was, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" It is a mark of God's Spirit that when he speaks to men he speaks to them personally. Just take a case or two. You remember Jesus Christ going through Jericho, preaching as he went. He meant to call that rich publican who had climbed the tree. In what way did the effectual voice of grace do it? He says, "Zaccheus" It was not a general observation about people up in trees that were to come down; but "Zaccheus"—that is the man. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house." The personal call did it. And Mary, when she did not know her Master, and was in the garden, and thought he was the gardener—what was it that opened her eyes to know her Lord, and made her say, "Rabboni"? It was no word else except that he said unto her, "Mary." The tone in which he said it, and the name—the old familiar name, Mary—that did the work. And when the Saviour meant to break Simon Peter's heart, and yet to assure him that he was forgiven, how did he speak to him? Three times he said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" This is how God speaks to men. And when out of the open heavens Jesus spake to the maddened persecutor who was on the road to Damascus, but whom he meant to make his elect apostle to the Gentiles, how did he speak but thus? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Now here I cannot speak except to the crowd and the congregation, and though one labours hard to make a description apt and

plain, and to fit the cap to all wearers' heads, yet men slip through in the crowd; they will not take it to themselves, nor can we make them. But when the Holy Ghost speaks with the still small voice, it is always, "Thou art the man. Thou art the man. Thou art the sinner condemned. Thou art the sinner invited to mercy. Thou art the sinner that shall be received by grace." Believe thou, and thou shalt be saved, for he loves thee and gave himself for thee. May the Lord send us such personal work as this. I know every Christian here, if he could state his experience, would tell you that the word never came with power to his soul until it came right to him as though he were the only sinner, and the gospel were meant for him above all others. Oh! for an arrow from the great archer's bow to go right into you, that, like a stag that is smitten by the archer, you might retire into the glades of the forest, to weep alone and die alone, unless the hand that sent in the dart shall gently draw it out and heal the wound that it has made! Oh! for this personal conviction!—conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment laid home to each man's heart. It must be so, or you cannot be saved. But now another truth is suggested by the text. It is this, that:—

### III. WHEN GOD'S STILL SMALL VOICE SPEAKS TO MEN PERSONALLY, THE SUBJECT IS THEMSELVES AND THEIR ACTIONS.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" This was the voice of God. May the same voice come to-night to some here about their actions. Let me take the text and use it to you. What are you doing? What doest thou? What have you been doing? You are getting on in life. What have you done? Mischief I fear. What good have you done? You were made to glorify God, that was the end for which you were created. Have you glorified him? You have been fed by him, clothed by him. Have you made him any return? What have you done? No good—much evil. What are you doing now? Sitting here and listening. Ay, but how are you treating the Word? Are you receiving it? Do you hear the voice of mercy, and do you reject it, or will you accept it? What are you going to do? What are you going to do to-night when you get out of this place? How will the last hours of the precious Sabbath be spent? And to-morrow, and the next day—what are you planning? Is there anything holy in it, anything noble in it, anything



that will be glorifying to God? Do you never take stock? Spiritual trader, do you never take stock? Mariner upon the sea of life, dost thou never consult thy chart? Dost thou never heave the lead, or take thy bearings? Art thou so mad as to sail on in the fog, and not care what becomes of so goodly a vessel as thy soul? Oh! pause. What best thou done? What art thou doing? What wilt thou do? Especially what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? Unsaved, what will you do when the death-sweat stands upon your brow—when the cold beaded drops are there, and the marrow is frozen, and the strong man gathers up his feet in the bed for the last dread struggle—what will you do without a Saviour? What will you do when the trumpet rings through heaven and earth, and sea, and men live again, and you, with them, stand before the judgment-seat, and amidst the rolling thunder the book is opened and your sins stand there unforgiven? What will you do? What will you do? Oh! that you may never be brought to this, but be brought to Christ to-night! Do you notice how the word was put? It was not, "What are you doing?" only, but "What doest thou—thou, Elijah?" And there are some special persons whose sins receive an aggravation by the very fact that they are what they are. I know thee—what thou wert of old. What a sweet child. How his mother loved him, and loved to hear him sing, and pray, too, in his way. What happiness it was to the parents! Ah! they fell asleep and died, and 'tis a mercy they did, else perhaps your course would have brought them to the grave with grief. What doest thou, child of many prayers and many tears? What doest thou? Still to be an enemy to thy mother's God, and to blaspheme the name they father loved. You have been hearers of the gospel, some of you almost ever since you can recollect. Your mother carried you in her arms to God's house, and sometimes conscience has pricked you, and the word has gone through, and through, and through; but you have resisted it. What has led you, I pray you, to remain still what you are? What infernal power has helped you to steel your heart? In what fire has your soul been annealed to make it hard as adamant stone? O soul, soul, sinful soul, delaying, procrastinating soul! what doest thou in such a state after so much love and mercy? And I might speak to some that promised fair many times, and that have been almost persuaded to be Christians, and yet still are out of God, and out of Christ, and on the borders of destruction. What do you here? Perhaps there is someone who has come to London lately, that in the country was an observer of

religion, apparently sincere, but oh! this wicked London! You have given up those good habits; you—have got into bad company, and oh! I shall not tell what you have done; but I hope you will confess it to God in your own secrecy. But how dare you do it? How could you do it? Oh! how could you do it? How could you be a prodigal?—you, your fathers dearly beloved, taught so well, with so much light, with such a tender conscience—how could you sin? Why the very tramps of the street might be ashamed of you, for they never knew much better. Those that go into foulest sin might condemn you, for with their bad street training, educated perhaps in the kennel, who wonders that they are what they are? But for you, it is a wonder. The angel Lucifer, son of the morning, fell down to the deeps of hell. You have fallen from the side of the pulpit, fallen from a Christian parent's side, and almost from inside the Church of God, and fallen into sin. Perhaps I speak to some that have belied their baptism, have given up the profession that they made when they there were buried with Christ, who have belied the sacramental table where they once sat, and professed to eat his bread and drink of his cup, and to be partakers of his body and of his blood. You have crucified the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" My, and you used to preach too; you used to preach to others, and now what are you? You were once, as it were, a priest at the altar of God, and now you are a priest at the altars of Baal. God have mercy upon you, and may his still small voice now speak in your soul.

There was one point in the question which was asked, which was this: "What doest thou here?" Each man, when he is called to search himself by the Spirit of God, must recollect his surroundings. I thank God, my brethren and my sisters, that you are hearers—not to commend you that you may be Pharisees, because you happen to go to a place of worship. I do, nevertheless, praise God that you are here. When the sick lay round the Pool of Bethesda, there was some hope of their being healed. You are favoured in being where Christ is preached; but what doest thou here? Did you come to find a jest? Did you come to hear one who was much talked of in your hearing? Did you come from curiosity? Did you come from a worse motive? Well, never mind, but what are you doing now? Are you willing to listen to God's voice? Will you now yield? He round you now, as with the bands of a man, would cast the bands of his love, who

was given for you, and to his altar bind you fast. 'Tis but to yield; and surely it must be hard to resist when it is divine mercy that plies you, and eternal love that persuades you. "Come unto me," says Jesus; "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Will you not come? "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Will you not come? Oh! that your answer to the question, "What doest thou here?" might be to-night, "I am doing this here; I am laying my sins on Jesus; I am confessing the past; I am asking grace for the future; I am looking to the wounds of him that was cleft as a rock is cleft that I may shelter in him; I am saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Thy God be praised if such is the case. But I must close with the last observation, and that is, that:—

#### IV. WHERE THE LORD DOES SPEAK WITH A STILL SMALL VOICE TO MEN PERSONALLY ABOUT THEIR CONDUCT AND THEIR SIN, IT IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL.

You notice what Elijah did. He first wrapped his mantle about his face—he became subdued and awe-stricken—full of reverence. Oh! it is a great thing when a sinner is willing to wrap his face when he is confounded, and say, "I cannot defend my course; I am guilty." We know that if at our judgment-seat a man pleads guilty, he is punished; but at the judgment-seat of the gospel whoever pleads guilty is forgiven. Wrap your face. Oh! but you thought that you were better than most; you went to church, and you went to the meeting-house, the chapel, regularly, and were you not better than others? Ah! wrap your face. Your church-goings and your chapel-goings have only increased your responsibilities if you have rejected the Saviour. Take the mantle of self humiliation, and wrap it about your face now. Say, with the leper, "Unclean! Unclean!" Where you are in the Tabernacle, where you are, never mind where you stand or sit, I commend to you the publican's prayer. Say it now, and God help you, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did you say it from your heart? Go home. You shall go home to your house justified, for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

But you must notice that while Elijah thus wrapped his face in reverence, he stood still and listened. It was a still small voice, and the prophet was

attending. No other sound was heard but this, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" But he stood. I doubt not that man of iron stood and wept, and seemed to say in his soul, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "He that bath earn to hear, let him hear." Oh! be very attentive to the voice of God's Spirit! If you have only a half of a good thought, take care of it. It may be the beginning of another one. Oh! if you have only just got a little leaning, thank God for it. Remember Christ does not quench the smoking flax; don't quench it yourself. "Quench not the Spirit." Oh! I have known times when I would have given my whole life to have had one tear of repentance. Can you repent now? Can you long after God now? Oh! cherish that longing! Yield to the Spirit of God. Don't be like iron to the fire that needs to have the blast-furnace on it before it will melt; but oh! be like wax to the flame, like cork on the water that moves up and down with every influence. God make you so. It wants a strong wind to shake the oak; but the fern that grows under it waves its branches at every breath of the zephyr. May you be just as sensitive as that. Bow before the Spirit's influence. The Lord make you to do it for his name's sake.

And then, best of all and last of all, the prophet was not only reverent, humble, and attentive, but he was obedient. God told him to go and do this and that. He never questioned, but away he went and executed the divine commission, and until the time when he was taken up in the chariot of fire Elijah never quailed again. The still small voice had made him twice a man, and steeled him once again to bear all that he had to endure in his chequered life. He was obedient to the heavenly vision. Will you be obedient to-night?" If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." May God make you to be obedient. But you say, "What is his command then? What is the work of God—this great work that God commands? This is the one gospel precept, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; or take it in the shape in which the Master put it, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." To believe is to trust. To be baptized is to be immersed into Christ—immersed in water upon profession of faith, for so it is put, and I dare not give you half the gospel. So it is put, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Don't leave out any part of the divine command. Be obedient to the whole of it. "Believe and be baptized," or as the Apostle put it, " Repent, and be baptized,

every one of you." May God grant that you may be obedient to this. The great command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Trust in him—in his substitutionary work for sinners. He bore their guilt, and was punished in their stead, and whosoever trusts in what he did—in a word, trusts in him, is saved. God grant you to do it. I leave it to his still small voice to work this blessed result. Amen.

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## **God's People In The Furnace**

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. - Isaiah 48:10

When travelling through the country, you have often noticed that in different spots the old rocks peep out from under the soil, as if they would let us know what earth's bones are made of, and what are the solid foundations of this globe. So in searching through the Scriptures you will find here instruction, here admonition, here rebuke, and here comfort, but very frequently you will discover the old doctrines like old rocks rising amid other matters; and when you little expect it you will find election, redemption, justification, effectual calling, final perseverance or covenant security introduced, just to let us see what the solid foundations of the gospel are, and what are those deep and mysterious truths on which the entire gospel system must rest. So in this text, for instance, when there seemed in the chapter but little need of the mention of the doctrine of God's choosing his people, on a sudden the Holy Spirit moves the prophet's lips and bids him utter this sentiment, "I have chosen thee;" I have chosen thee by my eternal, sovereign, distinguishing grace; I have chosen thee in covenant purposes; I have chosen thee according to my electing love; "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Well, it is a good thing that they are mentioned sometimes when we little expect it; for these are things which we are apt to forget. The tendency of the many in the present age is to slight all doctrinal knowledge, and to say, "We care not whether a thing be true or not." This age is a superficial one. Few

ministers plough deeper than the top soil; there are very few who come into the inward matter of the gospel, and deal with the stable things on which our faith must rest; and therefore we bless and adore the Holy Spirit that he so frequently pens these glorious truths to make us recollect that there is such a thing as election, after all. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." However, I am not going to dwell upon that, but after making one or two preliminary observations, I shall proceed to discuss the subject of the furnace of affliction being the place where God's chosen ones are continually found.

And the first observation I shall make will be this: all persons in the furnace of affliction are not chosen. The text says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," and it implies that there may be, and there doubtless are, some in the furnace who are not chosen. How many persons there are who suppose that because they are tried, afflicted, and tempted, therefore they are the children of God, whereas they are no such thing. It is a great truth that every child of God is afflicted; but it is a lie that every afflicted man is a child of God. Every child of God will have some trial or other; but every man who has a trial is not necessarily an heir of heaven. The child of God may be in poverty—he frequently is; but we must not infer that therefore, necessarily every man who is poor is a child of God, for many such are depraved and ruined, blaspheming against God and going far into iniquity. Many a child of God loses his property; but we are not therefore to conclude that every bankrupt, or every insolvent is a vessel of mercy; indeed there is often some suspicion that he is not. A child of God may have his crops blasted, and mildew seize his fields, but that does not prove his election, for multitudes who never were chosen of God have had the mildew and the blast as well as he. He may be calumniated, and his character may be slandered, but that may be the case with the wickedest worldling also; for there have been men far from religious who yet have been slandered—in politics, or in literature. No tribulation ever proves us to be children of God, except it be sanctified by grace, but affliction is the common lot of all men—man is born to it, even as the sparks fly upward; and you must not infer, because you happen to be troubled, because you are poor, or sick, or tried in your minds, that therefore you are a child of God. If you do imagine so, you are building on a false foundation; you have taken a wrong thought, and you

are not right in the matter at all. I would, this morning, if possible, disturb some of you who may have been laying a healing plaster to your souls when you have no right to do so. I would show you if I could, very plainly, that after all your suffering, you may yet, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of hell. There is such a thing as through trial going to the pit of perdition, for the road of the wicked is not always easy, nor are the paths of sin ever pleasant. There are trials in the pathway of the ungodly, there are troubles they have to suffer which are quite as acute as those of the children of God. Oh! trust not in your troubles; fix your thoughts on Jesus; make him the only object of your trust, and let the only test be this, "Am I one with Christ? Am I leaning upon him?" If so, whether I am tried or not, I am a child of God. but let me be ever so much tried, 'though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'" Many an afflicted man has not been a child of God. Many of you no doubt can recollect persons in your lifetime whose afflictions made them worse instead of better; and of a great many men it may be said, as Aaron said, "Behold, I put gold into the furnace, and out of it came this calf." Many a calf comes out of the furnace. Many a man is put into the furnace and comes out worse than he was before—he comes out a calf. Men passed through the fire in the days of the kings of Israel—when they passed through the fire to Moloch; but Moloch's fire did not purify or benefit them; on the contrary, it made them worse; it made them dedicated to a false god. We are told also in the Word of God, how a certain class of people are put into the furnace and get no good by it, and are not the children of God. But, lest any should doubt what I have said, let them turn to the passage in the 22nd chapter of Ezekiel, 17th and 18th verses, "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, son of man, the house of Israel, is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you." So you see there are some who feel the furnace who are none of the Lord's, some to whom there is no promise of deliverance, some who have no hope that thereby they are becoming more and more pure

and more fit for heaven; but on the contrary, God leaves them there as dross is left, to be utterly consumed; they have on earth the foretaste of hell, and the brand of the demon is set upon them in their afflictions even here. Let that thought be taken to heart by any who are building their salvation on false grounds. Afflictions are no proof of sonship, though sonship always ensures affliction.

But the second preliminary remark I would make is on the immutability of God's love to his people. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." I chose thee before thou wast here; yea, I chose thee before thou hadst a being, and when all creatures lay before me in the pure mass of creatureship, and I could create or not create as I pleased, I chose and created thee a vessel of mercy appointed unto eternal life: and when thou in common with the whole race, hadst fallen, though I might have crushed thee with them, and sent thee down to hell, I chose thee in thy fallen condition, and I provided for thy redemption: in the fulness of time I sent my Son, who fulfilled my law and made it honourable. I chose thee at thy birth, when a helpless infant thou didst sleep upon thy mother's breast. I chose thee when thou didst grow up in childhood with all thy follies and thy sins. Determined to save thee, I watched o'er thy path when, Satan's blind slave, thou didst sport with death. I chose thee when, in manhood, thou didst sin against me with a high hand; when thy unbridled lusts dashed thee on madly towards hell. I chose thee, then, when thou wast a blasphemer and a swearer, and very far from me. I chose thee, then, even when thou wast dead in trespasses and sins: I loved thee, and still thy name was kept in my book. The hour appointed came; I redeemed thee from thy sin; I made thee love; I spake to thee, and made thee leave thy sins and become my child; and I chose thee then over again. Since that hour how often hast thou forgotten me! but I have never forgotten thee. Thou hast wandered from me; thou hast rebelled against me; yea, thy words have been exceeding hot against me, and thou hast robbed me of mine honour; but I chose thee even then; and now that I put thee in the furnace thinkest thou that my love is changed? Am I a summer friend fleeing from thee in the winter? Am I one who loves thee in prosperity and doth cast thee off in adversity? Nay; hearken to these my words. thou furnace-trying one, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Think not, then, when you are in trouble that God has cast you



off. Think he has cast you off if you never have any trials and troubles, but when in the furnace, say, "Did he not tell me this beforehand?"

"Temptation or pain?—he told me no less:  
The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,  
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

O blessed reflection! let it comfort us: his love does not change; it cannot be made to alter; the furnace cannot scorch us, not a single hair of our head can perish; we are as safe in the fire as we are out of it; he loves us as much in the depths of tribulation as he does in the heights of our joy and exultation. Oh! thou who art beloved of friends, "when thy father and mother forsake thee the Lord will take thee up." Thou who canst say, "He that ate bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," "though all men forsake thee," saith Jehovah, "yet will not I." O Zion, say not thou art forgotten of God; hear him when he speaks—"Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I never forget thee." "I have graven thee upon my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Rejoice then, O Christian, in the second thought, that God's love does not fail in the furnace, but is as hot as the furnace, and hotter still.

And now to the subject, which is this—God's people in the furnace. And in discussing it we shall first of all endeavour to prove the fact that if you want God's people you will find them in the furnace; secondly, we will try to show the reasons why there is a furnace; thirdly, the benefits of the furnace; fourthly, comforts in the furnace. And may God help us in so doing!

I. First, then, I state the fact that **IF YOU WANT GOD'S PEOPLE YOU MUST GENERALLY LOOK FOR THEM IN THE FURNACE.** Look at the world in its primeval age, when Adam and Eve are expelled the garden. Behold, they have begotten two sons, Cain and Abel: which of them is the child of God? Yonder one who lies there smitten by the club, a lifeless corpse; he who has just now been in the furnace of his brother's enmity and persecution—that is the heir of heaven. A few hundred years roll on, and where is the child of God? There is one man whose ears are continually vexed with the conversation of the wicked and who walks

with God, even Enoch, and he is the child of God. Descend further still, till you come to the days of Noah. You will find the man who is laughed at, hissed at, hooted as a fool, a simpleton, an idiot, building a ship upon dry land, standing in the furnace of slander and laughter: that is Noah, the elect of God. Go on still through history; let the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, pass before you, and you may write upon all of them: "these were God's tried people." Then go down to the time when Israel went into Egypt. Do you ask me to find out God's people? I take you not to the palaces of Pharaoh, I do not ask you to walk through the stately halls of Memphis, or go to hundred-gated Thebes; I take you to none of the places decked with the splendour, the glories, and dignity of monarchs; but I take you to the brick kilns of Egypt. See yonder slaves smarting beneath the lash, whose cry of oppression goes up to heaven. The tale of their bricks is doubled, and they have no straw wherewith to fashion them. These are the people of God. They are in the furnace. As we follow on in the paths of history, where were God's family next? They were in the furnace of the wilderness suffering privation and pain. The fiery serpent hissed upon them; the sun scorched them, their feet were weary, they lacked water, and bread failed them, and was only supplied by miracle. They were in no desirable position; but amidst them—for all are not Israel that are of Israel—were the chosen ones, those who were most in the furnace, Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, against whom the people took up stones to stone them; these were the sons of God these were distinguished above their fellows as being elect out of the chosen nation. Still turn over the blessed pages; pass through Judges and come to the time of Saul, and where was God's servant then? Where is the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Where is the man after God's own heart? He is in the caves of Engedi, climbing the goat tracks, hunted like the partridge by a remorseless foe. And after his days where were the saints? Not in the halls of Jezebel, nor sitting at the table of Ahab. Behold, they are hidden by fifties in the cave, and fed by bread and water. Behold yon man upon the mountain top wrapping his shaggy garment round him; at one time his dwelling is by the rippling brook, where ravens bring him bread and flesh; at another time a widow is his host, whose only possessions are a little oil and a handful of meal—in the furnace Elijah stands, the remnant of God's chosen people. Take history through; there is no need for me to

follow it up, otherwise I might tell you of the days of Maccabees, when God's children were put to death without number, by all manner of tortures till then unheard of. I might tell you of the days of Christ, and point to the despised fishermen, to be laughed at, and persecuted apostles. I might go on through the days of popery, and point to those who died upon the mountains or suffered in the plains. The march of the army of God may be tracked by their ashes left behind them. The course of the ship of glory may be traced by the white sheen of sufferings left on the sea of time. Like as a comet when it flashes in its glory, leaveth a blaze behind it for a moment, so hath the church left behind it blazing fires of persecution and trouble. The path of the just is scarred on earth's breast the monuments of the Church are the sepulchres of her martyrs. Earth has been ploughed with deep furrows wherever they have lived. You will not find the saints of God where you do not find the furnace burning round about them. I suppose it will be so until the latest age. Until that time shall come when we shall sit under our own vine and our own fig-tree, none making us afraid or daring to attempt it, we must still expect to suffer. Were we not slandered, were we not the butt of ridicule, we would not think ourselves the children of God. We glory that we stand prominent in the day of battle; we thank our enemies for all their shafts, for each one bears upon it proofs of our Father's love. We thank our foemen for every stab, for it only cuts our armour and rattles on our mail, never reaching the heart. We thank them for every slander they have forged, and for every lie they have manufactured, for we know in whom we have believed, and know that these things cannot separate us from his love; yea, we take this as a mark of our being called, that we, as the sons of God, can suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.

It is a fact, I say, that you will find religion in the furnace. If I were asked to find religion in London, I protest the last place I should think of going to look for it would be in yon huge structure that exceeds a palace in glory, where you see men decked out in all the toys which the old harlot of Babylon herself once did love. But I should go to a humbler place than that. I should not go to a place where they had the government to assist them, and the great and the noble of the land to back them up; but I should generally go among the poor, among the despised, where the furnace blazed the hottest; there I should expect to find saints—but not

among the respectable and fashionable churches of our land. This is a fact then that God's people are often in the furnace.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON FOR THIS. Why is it that God's children get there? Why does God see fit to put them in the furnace?

1. The first reason I have is this—that it is the stamp of the covenant. You know there are certain documents which, in order to be legal, must have a government stamp put upon them. If they have not this stamp, they may be written, but they will not be at all legal and cannot be pleaded in a court of law. Now we are told what the stamp of the covenant is. There are two stamps, and for your information allow me to refer you to the book of Genesis 15:17 and there you will see what they are. When Abraham was lying down at night, a horror of darkness came upon him, and God made a covenant with him, and it is said, "And it came to pass, that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between the pieces." These two things were the stamps that made the covenant secure: "a burning lamp"—the light for God's people, light for their darkness, light to guide them all the way to heaven; and beside the lamp "a smoking furnace." Shall I then wish you to rend the smoking furnace off? Do I wish to get rid of it? No; for that would invalidate the whole. Therefore will I cheerfully bear it, since it is absolutely necessary to render that covenant valid.

2. Another reason is this—that all precious things have to be tried. You never saw a precious thing yet which did not have a trial. The diamond must be cut; and hard cutting that poor jewel has; were it capable of feeling pain, nothing would be more fretted and worried about, than that diamond. Gold, too, must be tried; it cannot be used as it is dug up from the mine, or in grains as it is found in the rivers; it must pass through the crucible and have the dross taken away. Silver must be tried. In fact all things that are of any value must endure the fire. It is the law of nature. Solomon tells us so in the 17th chapter of Proverbs, the 3rd verse. He says, "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold." If you were nothing but tin, there would be no need of the "fining-pot" for you; but it is simply because you are valuable that you must be tried. It was one of the laws of God, written in the book of Numbers, 31st chapter, 23rd verse—" Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make go through the fire,

and it shall be clean." It is a law of nature, it is a law of grace, that everything that can abide the fire—everything that is precious—must be tried. Be sure of this,—that which will not stand trial is not worth having. Would I choose to preach in this house if I thought it would not stand the trial of a large congregation, but might one of these days totter and break down? Would any one forming a railway, construct a bridge that would not stand a trial of the weight that might run across it? No; we have things that would stand the trial, otherwise we should think them of no value. That which I can trust one hour, but find it break the next, when I want it most, is of little use to me. But because ye are of value, saints, because ye are gold, therefore ye must be tried. From the very fact that ye are valuable, ye must be made to pass through the furnace.

3. Another thought is this; the Christian is said to be a sacrifice to God. Now every sacrifice must be burned with fire. Even when they offered the green ears before the harvest, it is said the green ears must be dried with fire. They killed the bullock and laid it on the altar, but it was no sacrifice till they burned it. They slew the lamb, they laid the wood; but there was no sacrifice in the killing of the lamb till it was burned. Know ye not, brethren, we are offerings to God, and that we are a living sacrifice unto Jesus Christ. But how could we be a sacrifice if we were not burned? If we never had the fire of trouble put about us, if we never were kindled, we should lie there without smoke, without flame, unacceptable to God. But because ye are his sacrifice, therefore ye must be burned; fire must penetrate you and you must be offered a whole burnt offering, holy and acceptable unto God.

4. Another reason why we must be put in the furnace is, because else we should not be at all like Jesus Christ. If you read that beautiful description of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation, you will find it says, that "his feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." The feet of Jesus Christ represent his humanity, the head the divinity. The head of his Deity suffered not: as God he could not suffer' but "his feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." How can we be like Christ, unless our feet, too, are burned in the furnace? If he walked through the flames, must not we do the same?—that "in all things he might be like unto his brethren." We are we know, to be like Christ in that august

appearance when he shall come to be admired of all his saints; we are to be like him when we shall see him as he is; and shall we fear to be like him here? Will we not tread where our Saviour trod? there is his footstep; shall not our foot fill the same place? There is his track; will we not willingly say -

"His track I see, and I'll pursue  
The narrow way, till him I view?"

Yes! Onward, Christian! the captain of your salvation hath gone through the dark valley before you—therefore, onward! Onward with boldness! Onward with courage! Onward with hope! that ye may be like your Saviour, by participation in his sufferings.

III. And now WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE FURNACE? for we are quite sure that all these reasons are not sufficient for God's trying his people unless there is some benefit to be derived from it. Very simply and briefly then, one benefit to be derived from the furnace is, that it purifies us. I was very kindly shown by some of the magistrates of Glasgow over one of the largest ship-building works I had ever seen. I saw them cast certain articles while I was present. I noticed them put the metal in the crucible, and after subjecting it to an intense heat, I saw them pour it out like water into the moulds, but first they removed the impurities from the top; but the scum would never have come on the top had it not been for the fire. They could not extract the dross if it had not been put in the furnace and melted. That is the benefit of the furnace to God's people; it melts, tries, and purifies them. They get rid of their dross; and if we can but get rid of that, we may be willing to suffer all the misery in the world. The man who is very badly diseased, may stop a long while before he is willing that the doctor's knife shall be used upon him; but when death comes to his bedside, he will say at last. "Anything, physician; anything, surgeon; if you can but get this disease away—cut as deep as you please." I confess I have the greatest antipathy to pain; but nevertheless, a greater pain will make one bear a less one to relieve it. And as sin is pain to God's people; as it is a weary torment, they will be willing, if necessary, to have their right hand cut off, or their right eye plucked out, rather than having two eyes or two hands, to be cast into hell-fire. The furnace is a good place for you, Christian; it benefits you; it helps you to become more like

Christ, and it is fitting you for heaven. The more furnace-work you have the sooner you will get home; for God will not keep you long out of heaven when you are fit for it. When all the dross is burned, and the tin is gone, he will say, "Bring hither that wedge of gold; I do not keep my pure gold on earth. I will put it away with my crown jewels in the secret place of my tabernacle of heaven."

2. Another benefit of the furnace is, that it makes us more ready to be moulded. Let a blacksmith take a piece of cold iron, lay it on the anvil, and bring down his heavy hammer with tremendous force to fashion it. There he is at work. Ah! Mr. Blacksmith, you will have many a hard day's work before you will make anything out of that bar of iron. "But," says he, "I mean to smite hard, to strike true, and morning, noon, and night. this hammer shall be always ringing on the anvil, and on the iron." Ah! so it may, Mr. Blacksmith, but there will be nought come of it. You may smite it eternally while it is cold, and you shall be a fool for your pains; the best thing you could do would be to place it in the furnace, then you might weld it; then you could melt it entirely, and pour it into a mould, and it would take any shape you pleased. What could our manufacturers do if they could not melt the metal they use? They could not make half the various things we see around us if they were not able to liquify the metal, and afterwards mould it. There could be no good men in the world if it were not for trouble. We could none of us be made useful if we could not be tried in the fire. Take me as I am, a rough piece of metal, very rough, stern, and hard. You may tutor me in my childhood, and use the rod; you may train me in my manhood, and set the pains of the magistrate and the fear of the law before my eyes, but you will make a very sorry fellow of me, with all your hitting and knocking. But if God takes me in hand, and puts me in the furnace of affliction, and melts me down by trial, then he can fashion me like unto his own glorious image, that I may at last be gathered with him above. The furnace makes us fusible. We can better be poured out and moulded and delivered unto the doctrines, when we have been somewhat tried.

3. Then the furnace is very useful to God's people because they get more light there than anywhere else. If you travel in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, or in other manufacturing districts, you will be interested at

night by the glare of light which is cast by all those furnaces. It is labour's own honourable illumination. This may be an idea apart from the subject; but I believe there is no place where we learn so much, and have so much light cast upon Scripture, as we do in the furnace. Read a truth in hope, read it in peace, read it in prosperity, and you will not make any thing of it. Be put inside the furnace (and nobody knows what a bright blaze is there who has not been there) and you will be then able to spell all hard words, and understand more than you ever could without it.

4. One more use of the furnace—and I give this for the benefit of those who hate God's people—is, that it is useful for bringing plagues on our enemies. Do you not remember the passage in Exodus, where "the Lord saith unto Moses and unto Aaron, take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it towards the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast." There is nothing that so plagues the enemies of Israel as "handfuls of ashes of the furnace" that we are able to cast upon them. The devil is never more devoid of wisdom than when he meddles with God's people, and tries to run down God's minister. "Run him down!" Sir, you run him up! You will never hurt him by all you can say against him, for "handfuls of the dust of the furnace" will be scattered abroad to bring plagues upon the ungodly throughout the land. Did any Christian ever suffer yet by persecution—really suffer by it? Does he ever really lose by it? No; it is quite the reverse. We gain by it. You remember the case of the burning fiery furnace of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, and Nebuchadnezzar's dealings. You remember he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual; and he told his brave men, his strongest ones, to take these three men bound and cast them into the furnace. There they go! they have thrown three men bound into the fire; but before they have time to turn back it is said, the heat of the flames slew those men that cast them into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar said himself, "Did we not cast three bound into the furnace? Behold I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and the fourth is like the Son of God." Now, just mark these points. Nebuchadnezzar made a great blunder, and heated the fire too hot. That is just what our enemies often do. if they would just speak the truth about us and only tell our



imperfections, they would then have enough to do. But, in their endeavours to cast down God's servants, they heat the fire rather too hot; they make what they say smell, as Rowland Hill said, too much like a lie, therefore, nobody believes them; and instead of doing any hurt, it just kills the men who would have cast us into the fire. I have noticed sometimes when there comes out a desperate article against any particular man, suppose the man is right, the person who writes the article is always damaged by it, but not the man who is thrown into the fire. It does the slandered man good. All that has ever been said of me, as one of God's servants, has done me good; it has just burned the bonds of my obscurity, and given me liberty to speak to thousands. Moreover, to throw the Christian into the furnace, is to put him into Christ's parlour; for lo! Jesus Christ is walking with him! Spare yourselves the trouble, O ye enemies; if ye wish to hurt us, spare yourselves the labour. You think that is the furnace. It is not: it is the gate of heaven. Jesus Christ is there; and will you be so foolish as to put us just where we like to be? Oh! kind enemies, thus to render us threefold blessed. But, were ye wise, ye would say, "Let it alone. If the thing be of God it will stand if it be not of God it will utterly fall." God's enemies receive more damage from "the ashes of the furnace" than in any other way. They are shots that kill wherever they go. Persecution damages our enemies; it cannot hurt us. Let them still go on; let them still fight; all their arrows fall back upon them selves. And as for aught of evil that is done against us. it is but small and light compared with the damage that is done to their own cause. This, then, is another blessing concerning the furnace—it hurts our enemies though it does not hurt us.

IV. And now, to wind up, let us consider THE COMFORTS IN THE FURNACE. Christian men may say, "It is all well to tell us what good the furnace does; but we want some comfort in it." Well, then, beloved, the first thing I will give you is the comfort of the text itself-ELECTION. Comfort thyself, thou tried one, with this thought: God saith, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The fire is hot, but he has chosen me; the furnace burns, but he has chosen me; these coals are hot, the place I love not, but he has chosen me. Ah! it comes like a soft gale assuaging the fury of the flame. It is like some gentle wind fanning the cheeks; yea, this one thought arrays us in fireproof armour, against which

the heat hath no power. Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty, thou mayest come in at the door—God is in the house already, and he has chosen me. Sickness, thou mayest come, but I will have this by my side for a balsam—God has chosen me. Whatever it is, I know that he has chosen me.

2. The next comfort is that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace. In that silent bedchamber of yours, there sitteth by your side one whom thou hast not seen, but whom thou lovest; and oftentimes when thou knowest it not, he makes all thy bed in thy affliction, and smoothes thy pillow for thee. Thou art in poverty; but in that lonely house of thine that hath nought to cover its bare walls, where thou sleepest on a miserable pallet, dost thou know that the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor; he often treads those bare floors, and putting his hands upon those walls he consecrates them! Wert thou in a palace he might not come there. He loves to come into these desolate places that he may visit thee. The Son of Man is with thee, Christian. Thou canst not see him, but thou mayest feel the pressure of his hands. Dost thou not hear his voice? It is the valley of the shadow of death: thou seest nothing; but he says, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." It is like that noble speech of Caesar's—"Fear not, thou carriest Caesar and all his fortune." Fear not, Christian! thou carriest Jesus in the same boat with thee, and all his fortune! He is with thee in the same fire. The same fire that scorches thee, scorches him. That which could destroy thee could destroy him, for thou art a portion of the fulness of him that fills all in all. Wilt thou not take hold of Jesus, then, and say -

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,  
I'll follow where he goes."

Feeling that you are safe in his hands, will you not laugh even death to scorn, and triumph over the sting of the grave, because Jesus Christ is with you?

Now, dear friends, there is another great furnace besides the one I have been talk ing of. There is a very great furnace, "the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." There is a furnace so hot, that when the ungodly are cast into it,

they shalt be as the crack ling of thorns under a pot. There is a burning so exceedingly fierce that all those tormented in its flames spend their time in "weeping, and wailing, and gnash ing of teeth." There is a furnace "where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched." Where it is I know not. Methinks it is not down here in the bowels of the earth. It were a sad thought that earth hath hell within her own bowels, but that it is somewhere in the universe the Eternal has declared. Men and women! ye who love not God, a few more years will set you on a journey through the vast unknown to find out where this place is. Should ye die Godless and Christless, a strong hand will seize you on your death-bed, and irresistibly you will be borne along through the vast expanse of ether, unknowing whither you are tending, but with the dread thought that you are in the hand of a demon, who with an iron hand is bearing you most swiftly on. Down he plungeth thee? Ah! what a fall were that my friends! to find yourselves there in that desperate land of torments! May you never know it! Words cannot tell you of it now. I can but Just call up a few dread horrible emotions; I can but picture it in a few short rough words: may you never know it! Would ye wish to escape: there is but one door. Would ye be saved: there is but one way. Would ye find entrance into heaven and escape from hell: there is but one road. The road is this —"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." To believe is to trust in Jesus. As an old divine used to say, "Faith is recumbency on Christ." But it is too hard a word. He meant, faith is lying down on Christ. As a child lieth on its mother's arms, so is faith; as the seaman trusteth to his bark, so is faith; as the old man leaneth on his staff, so is faith; as I may trust, there is faith. Faith is to trust. Trust in Jesus, he will ne'er deceive you:

"Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude;  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

Thus may you escape that furnace of fire into which the wicked must be cast. God bless you all, for his name's sake.

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## **God's Providence**

Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. - Ezekiel 1:15-19

While reading the scriptures, we tried to hint at the practical benefits of the doctrine of Providence. We attempted to explain that portion of Scripture which teaches us to "take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself." Our blessed Lord had there uttered very precious words to drive away our fears, to keep us from distrust and from distress, and to enable us so to rely upon Providence that we may say, he that feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies, will never suffer me to famish nor to be naked. Having shown you from our Lord's own words the practical benefits of the doctrine of Providence, I thought I would endeavor to explain that doctrine more fully this morning. I am constantly talking about providence in my preaching, and I thought it quite as well to devote a whole sermon to explain what I believe are God's great wonder-working processes which we call Providence. In looking for a text I found this, These "wheels" signify divine Providence; and I trust, while explaining them, I may be so assisted by God's Spirit that I may say many things to you concerning God's government which may rejoice any

who are desponding, and lift up the souls of many who are distressed.

I. Going at once to my divisions, my first remark will be that PROVIDENCE IS HERE COMPARED TO A "WHEEL."

When the prophet had seen the "living creatures," which I take it were angels, he opened his eyes again, and he saw a wonderful illustration of the divine Providence, and this exhibition was in the figure of a wheel. You must know that this is not the only place where the comparison is to be found; for among the classics, the Romans and the Greeks were accustomed to compare the wondrous works of God in Providence to a wheel. The story goes, that a certain king being taken prisoner, was bound in chains, and dragged along at the chariot wheels of his conqueror. As he went along, he kept looking at the wheel, and shedding tears—looking at the wheel again, and lifting up his eyes and smiling. The conqueror turned and said, "Wherefore art thou looking at that wheel?" He said, "I was thinking, such is the lot of man; just now I was here; now I am there; but soon I may be here again at the top of the wheel, and thou mayest be grinding the dust." This was well for a heathen. The prophet had the very same idea. He was permitted by God to see that the wheel is a very beautiful figure of divine Providence. Let us show you that it is.

I have just hinted at the reason why Providence is like a wheel; because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top, and then it is at the bottom. Sometimes this part is exalted, and anon it sinks down to the dust. Then it is lifted to the air, and then again by a single revolution it is brought down again to the earth. Just as our poet sings -

"Here he exalts neglected worms  
To sceptres and a crown;  
And there the following page he turns,  
And treads the monarch down."

So it is with our life. Sometimes we are in humble poverty, and hardly know what we shall do for bread; anon the wheel revolves, and we are brought into the comfort of wealth; our feet stand in a spacious room; we are fed with corn and wine; we drink of a cup overflowing its brim. Again we are brought low through affliction and famine. A little while and

another page is turned, and we are exalted to the heavens, and can sing and rejoice in the Lord our God. I have no doubt many of you here have experienced a far more checkered life than I have, and therefore you can feel that your life has been as a "wheel." Ah! man, thou art strong, and great, and rich; thou mayest stand now as the uppermost part of it; but it is a wheel, and you may yet be brought low. And you, poor, who are depressed and downcast, who are weeping because you know not where you shall lay your heads—that wheel may revolve and you may be lifted up. Our own experience is never a stable thing; it is always changing, always turning round. The fly that sits now on the edge of the wheel may be crushed by its next revolution, and be brought to the dust of death the next day. The world may cry "Hosannah" to its minister to-day and the next day may say, "Crucify him, crucify him." Such is the state of man. Providence is like a wheel.

You know that, in a wheel there is one portion that never turns round, that stands steadfast; and that is the axle. So in God's Providence, there is an axle which never moves. Christian, here is a sweet thought for thee! Thy state is ever changing; sometimes thou art exalted, and sometimes depressed; yet there is an unmoving point in thy state. What is that axle? What is the pivot upon which all the machinery revolves? It is the axle of God's everlasting love toward his covenant people. The exterior of the wheel is changing, but the center stands forever fixed. Other things may move; but God's love never moves: it is the axle of the wheel; and this is another reason why Providence should be compared to a wheel.

Yet further. You observe, when the wheel moves very rapidly you can discern nothing but the circumference—nothing but the exterior circle. So, if you look back to history, and read the story of a thousand years, you just see the wheel of Providence revolving rapidly; you lose sight of all the little things that are within the circle; you see only one great thing, and that is, that God is working through the world his everlasting purposes. You sit down and take a book of history—say the History of England—and you will say of one event, "Now that seems to be out of place;" of another, "That seems to be out of time;" of another, "That seems to be adverse to the cause of liberty;" but look through a thousand years, and those things which seemed as if they would crush liberty in her germ; those things

which seemed as if they would destroy this our commonwealth in our very rising, have been those which have caused the sturdy oak of liberty to take deeper root. Take the whole together, instead of the things one by one; look at a thousand years, and you will see nothing but one round ring of symmetry, teaching you that God is wise, and God is just. So let it be with you in your lives. Here you are fretting about troubles today. Think also of the past; put all your troubles together, and they are no troubles at all. You will see that one counteracts the other. If you take your life—not today, but look back on forty years of it—you will be obliged, instead of lamenting and mourning, to bless God for his mercies toward you. Let the wheel go round, and you will see nothing but a ring of everlasting wisdom revolving.

I trust I have made the first part intelligible—that the Providence of God is here compared to a wheel.

II. The second thought is that THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY connected WITH ANGELS.

Look at verse 15: "Now as I beheld the living creatures." Then turn to the 19th verse: "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." These living creatures I believe to be angels; and the text teaches us that there is a connection between Providence and angelic agency. I do not know how to explain it; I cannot tell how it is; but I believe angels have a great deal to do with the business of this world. In times of miracles and wondrous things, there was an angel that came down and slew the firstborn of Egypt; and an angel cut off the hosts of Sennacherib. Angels did mighty things in those ancient days. My firm belief is, that angels are sent forth somehow or other to bring about the great purposes of God. The great wheel of Providence is turned by an angel. When there is some trouble which seems to stop that wheel, some mighty cherub puts his shoulder to it, and hurls it around, and makes the chariot of God's Providence still go on. Angels have much more to do with us than we imagine. I do not know but that spirits sometimes come down and whisper thoughts into our ears. I have strange thoughts sometimes, that seem to come from a land of dreams; and fiery visions that make my soul hot within me. Sometimes I have thoughts which I know come from

God's Spirit; some which are glorious, and some that are not so good as those which the Spirit would have put there, but still holy thoughts; and I often attribute them to angels. I have sometimes a thought which cheers me in distress; and was not an angel sent to strengthen Christ in the garden? How do you think the angel strengthened him? Why, by putting thoughts into Christ's mind. He could not in any other way: he could not strengthen him by a plaster, or by any physical means; but by injecting thoughts. And so with us. There was a temptation which might have led you astray; but God said, "Gabriel, fly! there is a danger to one of my people; go and put such a thought into his soul, that when the danger comes he will say, Get thee behind me, Satan, I will have nothing to do with sin."

We have each of us a guardian angel to attend us; and if there be any meaning in the passage, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," it means that every person has a guardian spirit, and every Christian has some angel who flies about him, and holds the shield of God over his brow; keeps his foot, lest he should dash it against a stone; guards him, controls him, manages him; injects thoughts, restrains evil desires, and is the minister and servant of the Holy Ghost to keep us from sin, and lead us to righteousness. Whether I am right or wrong, I leave you to judge; but perhaps I have more angelology in me than most people. I know my imagination sometimes has been so powerful that I could almost, when I have been alone at night, fancy I saw an angel fly by me, and hear the horse-hoofs of the cherubim as they dashed along the stony road when I have been out preaching the word. However, I take it that the text teaches us that angels have very much to do with God's Providence. For it says, "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." Let us bless God that he has made angels ministering spirits to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation.

III. Our third remark shall be, that PROVIDENCE IS UNIVERSAL.

That you will see by the text: "Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces." The wheel had "four faces." I think that means one face to the north, another to the south, another to the



east, and another to the west. There is a face to every quarter. Providence is universal, looking to every quarter of the globe. Have you ever been in a house where there was an old picture hanging? I have sometimes stood in a picture-gallery, and there has been some old warrior: he has looked at me. If I have gone to the other end of the room, he has still looked at me; wherever you are in the room, a well-painted portrait will be looking at you. Such is the Providence of God; wherever you are, the eye of God will be upon you—as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world. If there were only one, you might think how much God would look upon that one, but he looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being, and nothing else in the whole world. His eye is fixed upon us at every hour, and at every moment. Wherever we may be, we shall have one face of the wheel turned upon us.

You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland, I shall have the eyes of God there; send me to Australia, and let me toil at the gold diggings, there will he visit me. If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eye of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing, and his presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amid the howlings of the tempest and the shrieking wind, where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones, and I shall have the eye of God there. Let me sink, and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves—let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea, and the eye of God shall be on every bone, and in the day of the resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings. Yes, the eye of God is everywhere; Providence is universal.

Now there may be some here who have friends far away—let me comfort them. The eye of God is looking on them. There may be some here who are about to part with beloved ones who are going to distant countries. Wherever they are, they will be as much in the keeping of God as though they were here. If one part of the world is not as near the sun's light as another, yet they are all equally near the eye of our God. Transport me where you please—wherever the cloudy pillar of Providence shall guide me—and I shall have God with me. That thought comforted the great traveler, Mungo Park, when he was in the desert of Sahara. He had been

robbed and stripped of every thing, and was left naked. He suddenly saw a little piece of moss, and taking it up, he saw how beautiful it was. He said: "Then the hand of God is here—here is one of his works; though I call loudly none can hear me, for there is nothing but the prowling lion and the howling jackal; yet God is here." That comforted him. Wherever you may be, whatever may be your case, God will be with you. Whatever period of your life you may now be in, God is with you. His eye is at the bridal and at the funeral; at the cradle and at the grave. In the battle, God's eye is looking through the smoke; in the revolution, there is God's hand managing the masses of men who have broken loose from their rulers. In the earthquake, there is Jehovah manifest; in the tempest, there is God's hand, tossing the bark, dashing it against the rocks, or saving it in his hand from the boisterous waves. In all seasons, at all times, in all dangers, and in all climates, there is the hand of God.

#### IV. Our next remark is, that PROVIDENCE IS UNIFORM.

It is only one Providence, and ever one. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness." There were four wheels and four faces, yet one likeness. There was but one piece of machinery; and thus we are taught that Providence is all one. Sometimes providences seem to cross each other. One thing that God does seems to contradict the next thing; but it never really does so.

It is a great truth, though hard for us to grasp, that Providence is one. Just look at the case of Joseph. God has it in his mind that Joseph shall be governor over all the land of Egypt: how is that to be done? The first thing to be done is that Joseph's brethren must hate him. O, say you, that is a step backward. Next, Joseph's brethren must put him in the pit. That is another step backward, say you. No, it is not: wait a little. Joseph's brethren must sell him; that is another step backward, is it not? Providence is one, and you must not look at its separate parts. He is sold; he becomes a favorite: so far, so good. That is a step onward. Anon, he is put in a dungeon. Wait and see the end; all the different parts of the machinery are one. They appear to clash; but they never do. Put them all together. If Joseph had not been put in the pit, he never would have been

the servant of Potiphar: if he never had been put in the round-house, he never would have interpreted the jailor's dream; and if the king had never dreamed, he would not have been sent for. There were a thousand chances, as the world has it, working together to produce the exaltation of Joseph. Providence is one: it never clashes.

"Oh!" says one, "I cannot understand that; Providence seems to be very adverse to me. Mrs. Hannah More, I think it is, says, she went into a place where they were manufacturing a carpet. She said: "There is no beauty there." The man said: "It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw." "Why, here is a piece hanging out, and it is all in disorder." "Do you know why, ma'am? You look at the wrong side." So it is very often with us. You and I think Providence is very bad, because we are looking at the wrong side. We do look at the wrong side while we are here, but when we get to heaven we shall see the right side of God's dealings; and when we do we shall say., "Lord, how wonderful are thy works: in wisdom thou hast made them all: glorious are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." You have been puzzled sometimes to think why that friend was brought into the grave. You have said, Why was I made sick at such a time? Why that trouble and that calamity? That is no business of yours. It is yours to believe that all things work together for one great purpose: that one thing never crosses another. But you must not expect to see it so just yet. Here on earth the machine appears to be broken into pieces, and we can only see it in confusion: but in heaven we shall see it all put together. Suppose I go into a place where some great artist is manufacturing a machine: I say, Do you mean to say this is a machine? Yes, and an exquisite one it will be. It does not look like it; I could not put it together. O, no, sir, you could not, but I can: and come and see it when I have put it together, and you shall see that each part fits—that each cog on one wheel will work on the cog of another wheel, and all the parts will move together when I adjust them. Do not find fault with it, and say, One is too small and another too large, because you know nothing at all about it. So, dear friends, you and I can never see but parts of God's ways. We only see here a wheel and there a wheel; but we must wait till we get to heaven, then we shall see the right side of the carpet; we shall see it all put together, and then we shall see it was one piece of machinery, had one end, one aim, one object, and was all one.

## V. The next thought is, that, in this text, PROVIDENCE IS COMPARED TO THE SEA.

Look to the 16th verse—"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl." The word beryl is commonly used in Scripture to denote the ocean, because it bears the greatest likeness to that deep green you sometimes see, and at other times the blue appearance of the sea. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to the top of some high cliff, and we look down on the noisy ocean. It has been the theme of a thousand songs; it has borne myriads of fleets on its mighty breast. Ay! and yet there it is rolling on. If you begin to think about the ocean, though it is one of the minor parts of God's works compared with the constellations of the heavens, and the globes which he has hung on high, you begin to be lost in the vastness of your conceptions concerning the greatness of God's works. And so with providence.

It is like the ocean for another reason. The sea is never still; both day and night it is always moving. In the day, when the sun shines upon it, its waves march up in marshaled order as if about to capture the whole land, and drown all the solid earth. Then again they march back each one as if reluctant to yield its prey. It is always moving: the moon shines upon it, and the stars light it up; still it moves. Or, it is darkness, and nothing is seen; still it moves—by night and day the restless billows chant a boisterous hymn of glory, or murmur the solemn dirge of mariners wrecked far out in the depths. Such is Providence; by night or day Providence is always going on. The farmer sleeps, but his wheat is growing. The mariner on the sea sleeps, but the wind and the waves are carrying on his bark. Providence! thou never stoppest; thy mighty wheels never stay their everlasting circles. As the blue ocean has rolled on impetuously for ages, so shall Providence, until he who first set it in motion shall bid it stop; and then its wheels shall cease, forever fixed by the eternal decree of the mighty God.

Again, you will see another reason why the sea is like Providence. Man cannot manage it. Who can rule or govern the sea? Men cannot. Xerxes made chains for the Hellespont, and lashed the sea with whips because it washed away his boats; but what cared the sea about that? It laughed at him; and if he had not been too great a coward to put himself on its

bosom, it might have swallowed him. Canute put his chair on the beach, and bade the waves retire. What cared they for him? They came and would have washed him and his chair away if he had not moved backward. The sea is not to be governed by man. A whole fleet sails over it, and it is only like a feather blown by the wind across the surface of a brook. All we ever put on the sea is as nothing. It can never be restrained, nor chained, nor managed by man. Greedy man hath carved the land, but the sea has no landmark. It is impetuous; it follows its own will. So does Providence; it will not be managed by man. Napoleon once heard it said, that man proposes and God disposes. "Ah," said Napoleon, "but I propose and dispose too." How do you think he proposed and disposed. He proposed to go and take Russia; he proposed to make all Europe his. He proposed to destroy that power, and how did he come back again? How had he disposed it? He came back solitary and alone, his mighty army perished and wasted, having well-nigh eaten and devoured one another through hunger. Man proposes and God disposes. Providence, like the sea, cannot be directed by man; it can be controlled by God. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" -

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,  
With all the fates of men."

Man cannot alter it, and cannot change it. Let him try to stand against God's Providence; and Providence will grind and crush him.

There are many more reasons; but I think it would be wasting time to notice them. I leave you to finish that part of the subject.

## VI. Again, GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS INTRICATE.

This is our sixth remark; and that you will find is here too. "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." We have just said that Providence is intricate. When Joseph brought his two sons up to Jacob's deathbed side, Jacob ordered the two boys to be brought; and when he was about to bless them, he guided his hands wittingly; and he put his right hand on the head of the youngest, and his left hand on the

head of the eldest. "O!" said Joseph, "not so, my father." But he said, "it is even so;" and he gave the blessing. He would not give the blessing in any other way; but he crossed his hands. And so God usually blesses his children by crossing his hands. We say, "Do not deal so with me." "It is even so, child; there is a blessing on thy head." Do not say, Uncross thy hands; that is the way to bless the most of all. I wish to put thee greatest blessing upon thee; and therefore I have crossed my hands. Providence is wonderfully intricate. Ah! you want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I assure you. You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you; you must believe it. You want to see how it can bring good to the soul; you may be enabled in a little time; but you cannot see it now; you must believe it. Honor God by trusting him. God has many gordian knots which wicked men may cut, and which righteous men may try to unravel, but which God alone can untie. We see the wicked prosper; they flourish, and great is their power, while the righteous are cast down. We say why? There are wheels within wheels. Do not fret yourselves because evil-doers are more prosperous. There may be a nation that seems to have right on its side; that nation may be crushed, and another people who are tyrannical may get the victory. Do not say why? Do not ask? You shall know the reason when you get up yonder:

"God plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

Do not attempt to do what Gabriel never dare do—to ask the reason why, for God will never give it.

## VII. PROVIDENCE IS ALWAYS CORRECT.

I shall not detain you long over this. The prophet saw the wheels, and he well says, they turned not when they went, they always went straight forward; they never turned to the right or to the left. Such is God's Providence. Man marks out plans: he says, I shall build this tower; he gets it halfway up, and he finds he has not enough to finish it with; he has to pull it down, lay a smaller foundation, and build again. God never does so; he has a plan when he begins, and he carries that plan out: he lays the foundation, and always finishes the topstone. There are some who talk

about God's changing his purpose; such people do not know what God is at all. How could God change? God must either change from a better to a worse, or from a worse to a better. If he change from a worse to a better, he is not perfect now; and if he change from what he is to something worse, he will not be perfect then, and he will not be God. He cannot change. It is not possible that God should ever change or shift in any of his purposes. Can he change because he has not power? Why, sirs, he could girdle this globe with mountains, or move the hills into the sea. Can he change because he has not patience enough? What, he who from his purpose never swerves? Shall he change because he has made a mistake? Shall the Most High, Jehovah, ever have an error in his mighty mind? To err is human. With the divine Being the whole goes on, and what he has ordained shall be. On the iron rock of destiny it is written, and it cannot be altered. God moves the wheel, and the wheel goes on; and though a thousand armies stand to stop it, it goes on still. "They turned not to the right hand not to the left when they went."

I cannot make out what some of you do with your comfortless gospel—believing that God loves you today, and hates you tomorrow—that you are a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next. I could not believe a gospel like that. If I were a heathen, I could believe it at once, because I could manufacture a god of wood and stone. I would have a god of mud, that I could alter with my fingers, and change it to any fashion. But if I once believe in a God that "was and is, and is to come," I know he cannot change; and I feel a constancy of faith, and a firmness of hope, which the cares and trials of this mortal life cannot destroy. He will not cast off his people whom he hath chosen.

#### VIII. One more thought. PROVIDENCE IS AMAZING.

We shall not dwell on this; but just show you that the text says so. "As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four." Even the man that knows that every wave that dashes against the ship is washing him nearer home—that every breath of wind that rises comes to his sail and fills it, and sends it to the white cliffs of his native Albion—even the man that feels that all is for him—even he must say that Providence is amazing. O! that thought, it staggers thought! O! it is an idea that overwhelms me—that God is

working all! The sins of man, the wickedness of our race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence—all these things in some mysterious way are working the will of God! We must not look at it; we cannot look at it. I cannot explain it. I cannot tell you where human will and free agency unite with God's sovereignty and with his unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other ever since the time of Adam. Some have said, Man does as he likes; and others have said, God does as he pleases. In one sense, they are both true; but there is no man that has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We cannot tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by; and yet I cannot go home but through a certain road. John Newton used to say, there were two streets to go to St. Mary Woolnoth; but Providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbathday I came down a certain street I do not know why—and there was a young man who wished to speak to me; he wished to see me many times before. I say that was God's Providence—that I might meet that young man. Here was Providence, and yet there was my choice; how, I cannot tell. I cannot comprehend it. I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes—that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens—that the chaff from the hand of the winnow is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence—the fall of sere leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He that believes in a God must believe this truth. There is no standing-point between this and atheism. There is no half way between a mighty God that worketh all things by the sovereign counsel of his will and no God at all. A God that cannot do as he pleases—a God whose will is frustrated, is not a God, and cannot be a God. I could not believe in such a God as that.

IX. Our last and closing idea is, that PROVIDENCE IS FULL OF WISDOM.

You will see this by the last part of the 18th verse—"And their rings were full of eyes round about them four." You will say this morning, Our



minister is a fatalist. Your minister is no such thing. Some will say, Ah! he believes in fate. He does not believe in fate at all. What is fate? Fate is this—Whatever is, must be. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, Whatever God ordains must be; but the wisdom of God never ordains any thing without a purpose. Every thing in this world is working for some one great end. Fate does not say that. Fate simply says that the thing must be; Providence says, God moves the wheels along, and there they are. If any thing would go wrong, God puts it right; and if there is any thing that would move awry, he puts his hand and alters it. It comes to the same thing; but there is a difference as to the object. There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. Fate is a blind thing; it is the avalanche crushing the village down below and destroying thousands. Providence is not an avalanche; it is a rolling river, rippling at the first like a rill down the sides of the mountain, followed by minor streams, till it rolls in the broad ocean of everlasting love, working for the good of the human race. The doctrine of Providence is not, that what is, must be; but that, what is, works together for the good of our race, and especially for the good of the chosen people of God. The wheels are full of eyes; not blind wheels.

Let us close with the thought, that there is the greatest wisdom in the workings of Providence. Now you were in great distress probably, and you could not see why. The next time you are in distress, you must say, The wheels are full of eyes: I have but two eyes; but God's wheels are full of eyes—God can see every thing; I can only see one thing at a time. I see it looks good for me now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now; I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I know not what kind of flower that herb will yield. This affliction is a cassava root, full of poison, and would soon destroy me; but God can put that in the oven, so that all the poison shall evaporate, and it shall become food for me to live upon. This trouble of mine seems to me to be destructive: God shall get all the destroying power out of it, and it shall be made food. Now, thou tried one, groaning down in the valley, up with thine heart; away with thy tears; put thy hand on thy breast, and make thy heart stop its hard beating—thou poor soul! dash the cup of misery from thine hand; thou

art not condemned; thou art a pardoned Christian. Remember that God hath said, "All things work together for good"—more still, they "work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called according to his purpose." O! how I would like to make your hearts like flint and steel against trouble! We cannot bear the winds of trouble; we are soon cast down and broken-hearted. When we are in prosperity, we are giants; we think we can do like Samson; we can take hold of the two pillars of trouble and distress, and we can pull them down. But once tell us that the Philistines will be upon us, and we have no power.

He who has faith is better than the stoic. The stoical philosopher bore it, because he believed it must be; the Christian bears it because he believes it is working for his good. Next time trouble comes, disease comes, pestilence comes, smile at it, and say:

"He that has made his refuge God,  
Shall find a most secure abode;  
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,  
And there at night shall rest his head."

Let this be thy shield to keep off the thrusts of distress, let this be thy high rock against all the winds of sorrow. Sing,

"Though the way may be rough, it cannot be long,  
So smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

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## **God's Will About The Future**

Go to now, ye that say, to day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that

ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. - James 4:13-17

Men to-day are just the same as when these words were first written. We still find people saying what they are going to do to-day, to-morrow, or in six months time, at the end of another year, and perhaps still further. I have no doubt there are persons here who have their own career mapped out before them pretty distinctly, and they feel well-nigh certain that they will realize it all. We are like the men of the past; and this Book, though it has been written so long, might have been written yesterday, so exactly does it describe human nature as it is at the end of this nineteenth century.

The text applies with very peculiar force when our friends and fellow-workers are passing away from us. Sickness and death have been busy in our midst. Perhaps in our abundant service we have been reckoning what this brother would do this week, and what that sister would be doing next week, and so on. Even for God's work we have had our plans, dependent in great measure on the presence of some beloved helpers. They have appeared amongst us in such buoyant health, that we have scarcely thought it possible that they would be struck down in a moment. Yet so it has often been. The uncertainty of life comes home to us when such things occur, and we begin to wonder that we have reckoned anything at all safe, or even probable, in such a shifting, changing world as this. With this in full view, I am going to talk about how we ought to behave with regard to the future, and attempt to draw some lessons for our own correction and instruction from the verses before us.

Following the line of the text, and keeping as close to it as we can, we will notice, first, that counting on the future is folly. Then we will observe what is clear enough to us all, that ignorance of the future is a matter of fact. In the third place, I shall set before you the main truth of this passage, that recognition of God in the future is wisdom, our fourth point shall be that boasting of the future is sin; and our final thought will be, that the using of the present is a duty.

I. To begin with, it will need but few words to convince you that COUNTING ON THE FUTURE IS FOLLY. The apostle says, "Go to now!" as if he meant, "you are acting absurdly. See how ridiculous your conduct is." "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will do such and such a thing." There is almost a touch of sarcasm in the words. The fact of frail, feeble man so proudly ordering his own life and forgetting God seems to the apostle James so preposterous that he scarcely deems it worth while to argue the point, he only says "Go to now!"

Let us first look at the form of this folly, and notice what it was that these people said when they were counting on the future. The text is very full of suggestions upon this matter.

They evidently thought everything was at their own disposal. They said "We will go, we will continue, we will buy, we will sell, we will get gain." But it is not foolish for a man to feel that he can do as he likes, and that everything will fall out as he desires; that he can both propose and dispose, and has not to ask God's consent at all? He makes up his mind, and he determines to do just what his mind suggests. Is it so, O man, that thy life is self governed? Is there not, after all, One greater than thyself? Is there not a higher power that can speed thee or stop thee? If thou dost not know this, thou hast not yet learned the first letter of the alphabet of wisdom. May God teach thee that everything is not at your disposal; but that the Lord reigneth, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever!

Notice, that these people, while they thought everything was at their disposal, used everything for worldly objects. What did they say? Did they determine with each other "We will to-day or to-morrow do such and such a thing for the glory of God, and for the extension of his kingdom"? Oh, no, there was not a word about God in it, from beginning to end! Therein they are only too truly the type of the bulk of men to-day. They said, "We will buy; then we will carry our goods to another market at a little distance; we will sell at a profit; and so we will get gain." Their first and their last thoughts were of the earth earthy, and their one idea seemed to be that they might get sufficient to make them feel that they were rich and increased in goods. That was the highest ambition upon their minds. Are there not many who are living just in that way now?

They think that they can map out their own life; and the one object of their efforts seems to be to buy and sell, and get gain; or else to obtain honour, or to enjoy pleasure. Their heart rises not into the serene air of heaven; they are still groveling here below.

All that these men of old spoke of doing was to be done entirely in their own strength. They said, "We will, we will." They had no thought of asking the divine blessing, nor of entreating the help of the Most High. They did not care for that, they were self-contained; they called themselves "self-made men"; and they intended to make money. Who cannot make money who has made himself? Who cannot succeed in business who owes his character, and his present standing, entirely to his own exertions, and to his own brain? So they were full of self-confidence, and began reckoning for the future without a shadow of doubt as to their own ability. Alas, that men should do so even to-day, that, without seeking counsel of God, they should go forward in proud disdain, or in complete forgetfulness of "the arrow that flieth by day", and "the pestilence that walked in darkness", until they are suddenly overwhelmed in eternal ruin!

It is evident that to those men everything seemed certain. "We will go into such a city." How did they know that they would ever get there? "We will buy, and sell, and get gain." Did they regulate the markets? Might there be no fall in prices? Oh, no! they looked upon the future as a dead certainty, and upon themselves as people who were sure to win, whatever might become of others.

They had also the foolish idea that they were immortal. If they had been asked whether men might not die, they would have said, "Yes, of course all men must die some time or other," for all men count all men mortal; but in their hearts, they would have made an exception in their own case, if we may judge them by what we were apart from sovereign grace. "All men count all men mortal but themselves." Without any saving clause, they said, "We will continue there a year." How did they know that they would see a single quarter of that year through? But you must not press such men too closely with awkward questions. If you had done so, they would have said, "Do not talk about death; it makes one melancholy."

Having looked at the form of this folly of counting on the future, let us speak a little on the folly itself. It is a great folly to build hopes on that which may never come. It is unwise to count your chickens before they are hatched; it is madness to risk everything on the unsubstantial future.

How do we know what will be on the morrow? It has grown into a proverb that we ought to expect the unexpected; for often the very thing happens which we thought would not happen. We are constantly surprised by the events which occur around us. In God's great oratory of providence, there are passages of wondrous eloquence, because of the surprise-power that is in them. They come upon us at unawares, and overwhelm us. How can we reckon upon anything in a world like this, where nothing is certain but uncertainty?

Besides, the folly is seen in the fact of the frailty of our lives, and the brevity of them. "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time." That cloud upon the mountain—you see it as you rise in the morning; you have scarcely dressed yourself before all trace of it has gone. Here in our streets, the other night, we came to worship through a thick fog, and found it here even in the house of prayer. But while we worshipped, there came a breath of wind; and on our way home a stranger would not have thought that London had been, but a few hours before, so dark with dirty mist; it had all disappeared. Life is even as a vapour. Sometimes these vapours, especially at the time of sunset, are exceedingly brilliant. They seem to be magnificence itself, when the sun paints them with heavenly colours; but in a little while they are all gone, and the whole panorama of the sunset has disappeared. Such is our life. It may sometimes be very bright and glorious; but still it is only like a painted cloud, and very soon the cloud and the colour on it are alike gone. We cannot reckon upon the clouds, their laws are so variable, and their conditions so obscure. Such also is our life.

Why, then, is it, that we are always counting upon what we are going to do? How is it that, instead of living in the eternal future, where we might deal with certainties, we continue to live in the more immediate future, where there can be nothing but uncertainties? Why do we choose to build

upon clouds, and pile our palaces on vapour, to see them melt away, as aforetime they have often melted, instead of by faith getting where there is no failure, where God is all in all, and his sure promises make the foundations of eternal mansions? Oh! I would say with my strongest emphasis: Do not reckon upon the future. Young people, I would whisper this in your ears; Do not discount the days to come. Old men, whispering is not enough for you, I would say, with a voice of thunder: Count not on distant years; in the course of nature, your days must be few. Live in the present; live unto God; trust him now, and serve him now; for very soon your life on earth will be over.

We thus see that counting on the future is folly.

II. Secondly, IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE IS A MATTER OF FACT. Whatever we may say about what we mean to do, we do not know anything about the future. The apostle, by the Spirit, speaks truly when he says, "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Whether it will come to us laden with sickness or health, prosperity or adversity, we cannot tell. To-morrow may mark the end of our life; possibly even the end of the age. Our ignorance of the future is certainly a fact.

Only God knows the future. All things are present to him; there is no past and no future to his all-seeing eyes. He dwells in the present tense evermore as the great I AM. He knows what will be on the morrow, and he alone knows. The whole course of the universe lies before him, like an open map. Men do not know what a day may bring forth, but Jehovah knows the end from the beginning. There are two great certainties about things that shall come to pass—one is that God knows, and the other is that we do not know.

As the knowledge of the future is hidden from us, we ought not pry into it. It is perilous, it is wicked, to attempt to lift even a corner of the veil that hides us from things to come. Search into the things that are revealed in Holy Scripture, and know them, as far as you can; but be not so foolish as to think that any man or woman can tell you what is to happen on the morrow; and do not think so much of your own judgment and foresight as to say, "That is clear, I can predict that." Never prophesy until after the

event, and then, or course, you cannot prophesy; therefore never attempt to prophesy at all. You know not what shall be on the morrow, and you ought not to make any unhallowed attempt to obtain the knowledge. Let the doom of King Saul on Mount Gilboa warn you against such a terrible course.

Further, we are benefited by our ignorance of the future. It is hidden from us for our good. Suppose a certain man is to be very happy by-and-by. If he knows it, he will be discontented till the happy hour arrives. Suppose another man is to have great sorrow very soon. It is well that he does not know it, for now he can enjoy the present good. If we could have all our lives written in a book, with everything that was to happen to us recorded therein, and if the hand of Destiny should give us the book, we should be wise not to read it, but to put it by, and say:—

"My God, I would not long to see  
My fate with curious eyes,  
What gloomy lines are writ for me,  
Or what bright lines arise."

It is sufficient that our heavenly Father knows; and his knowledge may well content us. Knowledge is not wisdom. His is wisest who does not wish to know what God has not revealed. Here, surely, ignorance is bliss: it would be folly to be wise.

Because we do not know what is to be on the morrow, we should be greatly humbled by our ignorance. We think we are so wise; do we now? And we make a calculation that we are sure is correct! We arrange that this is going to be done, and the other thing; but God puts forth his little finger, and removes some friend, or changes some circumstance, and all our propositions fall to the ground. It is better for us, when we are low before the throne of God, than when we stand up and plume ourselves because we think we can say, "Oh, I knew it would be so! See how well I reckoned! With what wondrous forethought I provided for it all!" Had God blown upon our plans, they would have come to nought. We know nothing surely. Let that thought humble us greatly.



Seeing that these things are so, we should remember the brevity, the frailty, and the end of our life. We cannot be here long. If we live to the extreme age of men, how short our time is! But the most of us will never reach that period wherein we may say to one another, "My lease has run out." How frail is our hold on this world! In a moment we are gone, gone like the moth; you put your finger upon it; and it is crushed. Man is not great; man is less than little. He is as nothing; he is but a dream. Ere he can scarcely say that he is here, we are compelled to say that he is gone.

We are glad that we do not know when our friends are to die; and we feel thankful that we cannot foretell when we shall depart out of this life. What good would it do to us? Some who are in bondage through fear of death might be in greater bondage still, while those who are now careless about it would probably feel more content in their carelessness. If they had to live another twenty years, they would say, "At any rate, we may sport away nineteen of them." As for those of us to whom this world is a wilderness, and who count ourselves as pilgrims hurrying through it, we know enough when we know that this is not our rest, because it is polluted, and that the day will soon come when we shall enter the Canaan of our inheritance, and be "for ever with the Lord." Meanwhile, the presence of the Lord makes a heaven even of the wilderness. Since he is with us, we are content to leave the ordering of our lives to his unerring wisdom. We ought, for every reason, to be thankful that we do not know the future; but, at any rate, we can clearly see that to count on it is folly, and that ignorance of it is a matter of fact.

III. Thirdly, RECOGNITION OF GOD WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE IS TRUE WISDOM. What says our text? "For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." I do not think that we need always, in every letter and in every handbill, put "If the Lord will"; yet I wish that we oftener used those very words. The fashionable way is to put it in Latin, and even then to abbreviate it, and use only the consonants, "D.V.", to express it. You know, it is a fine thing when you can put your religion into Latin, and make it very short. Then nobody knows what you mean by it; or, if they do, they can praise your scholarship, and admire your humility. I do not care about those letters "D.V." I rather like what Fuller says when he describes himself as writing in the letter such

passages as "God willing", or "God lending me life." He says, "I observe, Lord, that I can scarcely hold my hand from encircling these words in parenthesis, as if they were not essential to the sentence, but may as well be left out as put in. Whereas, indeed, they are not only of the commission at large, but so of the quorum, that without them all the rest is nothing; wherefore hereafter, I will write these words freely and fairly, without any enclosure about them. Let critics censure it for bad grammar, I am sure it is good divinity." So he quaintly puts the matter. Still, whether you write, "If the Lord will", or not, always let it be clearly understood; and let it be conspicuous in all your arrangements that you recognize that God is over all, and that you are under his control. When you say, "I will do this or that," always add, in thought if not in word, "If the Lord will." No harm can come to you if you bow to God's sovereign sway.

We should recognize God in the affairs of the future, because, first, there is a divine will which governs all things. I believe that nothing happens apart from divine determination and decree; even the little things in life are not overlooked by the all-seeing eye. "The very hairs of your head are numbered." The station of a rush by the river is as fixed and foreknown as the station of a king, and the chaff from the hand of the winnowing is steered as much as the stars in their courses. All things are under regulation, and have an appointed place in God's plan; and nothing happens, after all, but what he permits or ordains. Knowing that, we will not always say, "If the Lord will"; yet we will always feel it. Whatever our purposes may be, there is a higher power which we must ever acknowledge; and there is an omnipotent purpose, before which we must bow in lowliest reverence, saying, "If the Lord will."

But while many of God's purposes are hidden from us, there is a revealed will which we must not violate. It is chiefly in reference to this that the Christian should always say, "I will do this or that, provided that, when the time comes, I shall see it to be consistent with the law of God, and with the precepts of the gospel." I say now, "I will do this or that," but certain other things may occur which will render it improper for me to do so. Hence, to be quite in accordance with the Word I so deeply reverence, I must always put in the saving clause, sometimes giving utterance to it,

but in every case meaning, whether I put it into words or not, "I will do so and so, if it be right to do it; I will go, or I will stay, if it be the will of God."

In addition to this, there is a providential will of God which we should always consult. With this guidance, which comes from the circumstances that surround us, believers are familiar. Sometimes a thing may seem to us to be right enough morally, and yet we may not quite know whether we should do it or not. Or perhaps, there are two courses equally right, when judged by the Word of God, and you are uncertain which to follow. The highest wisdom, in such a case, is to wait for God to make a path plain by some act of providence. When you come where two roads meet, in your perplexity pull up, kneel down, and lift your hearts to heaven, asking your Father the way. And whenever we are purposing what we should do—and we ought to make some purposes, for God's people are not to be without forethought or prudence—we should always say, or mean without saying, "All my plans must wait till the Lord sets before me an open door. If God permit, I will do this; but if the Lord will, I will stop, and do nothing. My strength shall be to sit still, unless the Master wishes me to go forward." May I whisper into the ear of some very quick, impetuous, and hasty people, that it would be greatly to their soul's benefit if they knew how to sit still? Many of us seem as if we must always do everything at once, and hence we make no end to muddle for ourselves. There is often a blessed discipline in postponement. It is a grand word, that word, "wait"; especially in this particular connection. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Be patient; sometimes even to be passive in the hand of God will be our strength, and to stand still until the cloudy, fiery pillar moves in front of us, will be our highest wisdom.

There is yet another sense I would give to this expression: there is a royal will which we would seek to fulfill. That will is that the Lord's people should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. So, as the servants of the Most High, we go forth to do this or that, "if the Lord will", that is to say, if, by so doing, we can fulfil the great will of God in the salvation of men. I wish that this was the master-motive with all Christians; that we were each willing to say, "I will go and live in such a

place, if there are souls to be saved there. I will take a house in such a street, if, by living there, I can be of service to my Lord and Master. I will go the China or Africa, or to the ends of the earth, if the Lord will; that is to say, if, by going there, I can be helping to answer that prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Dear Christian friends, do you put yourselves entirely at God's disposal? Are you really his, or have you kept back a bit of yourself from the surrender? If you have retained any portion for yourself, that little reserve that you have made will be the channel by which your life will bleed away. You say, "We are not our own; we are brought with a price:" but do you really mean it? I am afraid that there is a kind of mortgage on some Christians. They have some part they must give, as they fancy, to their own aggrandisement. They are not all for Christ. May the Lord bring us all to his feet in whole-hearted consecration, till we can say, "We will not go to that city unless we can serve God there. We will not buy, and we will not sell, unless we can glorify God by not buying and selling; and we will not wish even for the honest gain that comes of trading; unless we can be promoting the will of God by getting it. Our best profit will consist of doing God's will." A man can as much as serve God by measuring calico, or by weighing groceries, as he can by preaching the gospel, if he is called to do it, and if he does it in a right spirit. This should always be our aim, and we should put this ever in the forefront of our life. "I go or stay, I ascend or I descend, if the Lord will; the Lord's will shall be done in my mortal body whether I live or whether I die."

May this be your resolve, then; let this clause, "if the Lord will", be written across your life, and let us all set ourselves to the recognition of God in the future. It is a grand thing to be able to say, "Wherever I go, and whatever happens to me, I belong to God; and I can say that God will prepare my way as well when I am old and grey-headed as he did when I was a boy. He shall guide me all the way to my everlasting mansion in glory; he was the guide of my youth, he shall be the guide of my old age. I will leave everything to him, all the way from earth to heaven; and I will be content to live only a day at a time; and my happy song shall be—

"So for to-morrow and its need  
I do not pray,

But keep me, guide me, hold me, Lord,  
Just for to-day."

IV. And now, fourthly, **BOASTINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE EVIL.** "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." I will not say much upon this point, but briefly ask you to notice the various ways in which men boast about the future.

One man says, about a certain matter, "I will do it, I have made up my mind," and he thinks, "You cannot turn me. I am a man who, when he has once put his foot down, is not to be shifted from his place." Then he laughs, and prides himself upon the strength of his will; but his boasting is sheer arrogance. Yet he rejoices in it, and the Word of God is true of such a one: "All such rejoicing is evil."

Another man says, "I shall do it, the thing is certain;" and when a difficulty is suggested, he answers, "Tut, do not tell me about my proposing and God's disposing; I will propose, and I will also dispose; I do not see any difficulty. I shall carry it out, I tell you. I shall succeed." Then he laughs in his foolish pride, and rejoices in his proud folly. All such rejoicings are evil. They are foolish; but, what is worse, they are wicked. Do I address myself to any who have no notion about heaven or the world to come, but who feel that they are perfect masters of this world, and, therefore talk in the manner I have indicated, and rejoice as they think how great they are? To such I will earnestly say, "All such rejoicing is evil."

I heard a third man say, "I can do it. I feel quite competent." To him the message is the same, his boasting is evil. Though he thinks of himself, "Whatever comes in my way, I am always ready for it," he is greatly mistaken, and errs grievously. I have often been in the company of a gentleman of this sort, but only for a very little while; for I have generally got away from him as soon as I could. He knows a thing or two. He has got the great secret that so many are seeking in vain. All of you ordinary people, he just snuffs you out. If you had more sense, and could do as he does—well, then, you could be as well off as he is. Poor man! "Nobody needs to be poor," says he. "Nobody needs to be poor. I was poor a little

while; but I made up my mind that I would not remain poor. I fought my own way, and I could begin again with a crust, and work myself up." You will notice his frequent use of the capital I, but ah, dear sir, God has thunder-bolts for these great I's! They offend him; they are a smoke in his nostrils. Pride is one of the things which his soul hates. No man should speak in such a strain: "All such rejoicing is evil."

But that young man yonder talks in a different tone. He has been planning he will do when he succeeds; for, of course, he is going to succeed. Well, I hope that he may, He is going to buy, and sell, and get gain; and he says, "I will do so and so when I am rich." He intends then to live his fling, and to enjoy himself; he laughs as he thinks what he will do when his toilsome beginnings are over, and he can have his own way. I would ask him to pause and consider his life in a more serious vein: "All such rejoicing is evil."

There is, of course, a future concerning which you may be certain. There is a future in which you may rejoice. God has prepared for them that serve him a crown of life, and by humble hope you may wear the crown even now. You may, by the thoughts of such amazing bliss, begin to partake of the joy of heaven; and this will do you no harm. On the contrary, it will set your heart at rest concerning your brief stay on earth, for what will it matter to you whether your life is cloudy or bright, short or long, when eternity is secure? But concerning the uncertainties of this fleeting life, if you begin to rejoice, "All such rejoicing is evil."

V. That brings me to my last and most practical point, which is this: THE USING OF THE PRESENT IS OUR DUTY. "therefore to him that knoweth good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." I take this text with its context. It means that he who knows what he ought to do, and does not do it at once, to him it is sin. Tho text does not refer to men who live in guilty knowledge of duty, and neglect it; its message is to men who know the present duty, and who think that they will do it by-and-by.

In the first place, it is sinful to defer obedience to the gospel. "He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Do you say, "I am going to repent"? Your duty is to repent now. "I am going to believe," do

you say? The command of Christ is, "Believe now." "After I have believed," says one, "I shall wait a long time before I make any profession." Another says, "I am a believer, and I shall be baptized some day." But as baptism is according to the will of the Lord, you have no more right to postpone it than you have to postpone being honest or sober. All the commands of God to the characters to whom they are given come as a present demand. Obey them now. And if anyone here, knowing that God bids him to believe, refuses to believe, but says that he hopes to trust Christ one of these days, Let me read him this: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,"—this word is in the present tense, —"to him it is sin."

In the next place, it is sinful to neglect the common duties of life, under the idea that we shall do something more by-and-by. You do not obey your parents, young man, and yet you are going to be a minister, are you? A pretty minister will you make! As an apprentice you are very dilatory and neglectful, and your master would be glad to see the back of you; he wishes that he could burn your indentures; and yet you have an idea you are going to be a missionary, I believe? A pretty missionary you would be! There is a mother at home, and when her children are neglected while she talks to her neighbours; but when her children are off her hands, she is going to be a true mother in Israel, and look after the souls of others. Such conduct is sin. Mind your children; darn the stockings, and attend your other home duties; and when you have done that, talk about doing something in other places. If present duties are neglected, you cannot make up for the omission by some future piece of quixotic endeavour to do what you were never called to do. If we could all be quiet enough to hear that clock tick, we should hear it say, "Now! Now! Now! Now!" The clock therein resembles the call of God in the daily duties of the hour. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," even though he may dream of how he will, in years to come, make up for his present neglect.

Then, dear friends, it is sinful to postpone purposes of service. If you have some grand project and holy purpose, I would ask you not to delay it. My dear friend, Mr. William Olney, whose absence we all mourn to-night,\*\* was a very prompt, energetic man. He was here, he was there, he was

everywhere, serving his Lord and master; and now that he is suddenly stricken down, his life cannot be said to be in any sense unfinished; there is nothing to be done in his business; there is nothing to be done in his relation to this church. There is nothing left undone with regard to anybody. It is all as finished as if he had known that he was going to be struck down. Mr. Whitefield said that he would not go to bed unless he had put even his gloves in their right place. If he should die in the night; he would not like to have anybody asking, "Where did he leave his gloves?" that is the way for a Christian man always to live; have everything in order, even to a pair of gloves. Finish up your work every night; nay, finish up every minute. I have seen Mr. Wesley's Journal, though it is not exactly a "journal"; it does not give an account of what he did in a day, nor even what he did in an hour. He divided his time into portions of twenty minutes each; and I have seen the book in which there is the record of something done for his Lord and Master every twenty minutes of the day. So exactly did he live, that no single half-minute ever seemed to be wasted. I wish that we all lived in that way, so that we looked, not at projects in some distant future that never will be realized, but at something to be done now.

Last Thursday, when I was speaking, I said that some Christian people had never told out the story of the cross to others, and urged them to begin to do so at once. A young friend, sitting in this place, leaned over the front of the pew, and touched a friend sitting there, saying to her, "I would like to speak to you about that." He had never spoken to her before, he did not even know her, and he thus addressed her while the service was proceeding. A member of the church, sitting by her side, who heard what the young man said, was so pleased with his prompt action, that she stayed after the service to sympathize and help, while he explained the way of salvation. The young person, to whom he spoke, came to tell me, last Tuesday, that she had found the Saviour through that well-timed effort. Dear friends, that is the way to serve the Lord. If we were to do things at the moment when they occurred to us, we should do them to purpose. But, oh, how many pretty things you have always meant to do, and have never even attempted! You have strangled the infant projects that have been born in your mind; you have not suffered them to live, and grow into manhood of real action. First thoughts are



best in the service of God, and the carrying of them out would secure great benefit to others and much fruit for ourselves. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." God help us, if we are saved, to get at this holy business of serving the Lord Christ, which as far exceeds buying and selling, and getting gain, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let us do something for Christ at once. You young people that are newly converted, if you do not very soon begin to work for Christ, you will grow to be idle Christians, scarcely Christians at all; but I believe that to attempt something suited to you ability almost immediately, as God shall direct you, will put you on the line of a useful career. God will bless you, and enable you to do more as the years roll onwards.

I have this last word: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," that is, it is sinful in proportion to our knowledge. If there is any brother here, into whose mind God has put something fresh, something good, I pray him to translate it into action at once. "Oh, but nobody has done it before!" Somebody must be first, any why should not you be the first if you are sure that it is a good thing, and has come into your heart through God the Holy Ghost? But if you know to do good, and do not do it; it will be sin every minute that you leave it undone. Therefore get at it at once. And you, my sister, who to-night, while sitting here thinking of something you might have done which you have not yet attempted, attempt it at once. Do not let another sun rise, if you can help it, before you have begun the joyful and blessed service. "The time is short." Our opportunities are passing, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Be up and doing. Soon we shall be gone. May we never hear the summons to go home while there is anything left undone that we ought to have done for our Lord and Master!

I am conscious of having spoken but very feebly and imperfectly; but, you know, my heart is heavy because of this sore trial which has come upon us through the stroke that has fallen on our beloved deacon, William Olney; and when the heart is so sad, the brain cannot be very lively. May God bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **God's Will And Man's Will**

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. - Romans 9:16

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. - Revelation 22:17

The great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of "the will." I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and to stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against—sectarianism, for "sectarianism" is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism, let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then truth shall fly out of hand, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would

drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged,—a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good—mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason: moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good; oh! this is precious!" say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to dishonor. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, and then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of this toy; they magnify one capital truth till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be able to say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can

help it, but I will endeavor honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you, if it be according to God's Word, reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man; and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored.

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So saith our text—"It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because he wills it, but because God willed, accord to that other passage, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependent upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument. There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of creation. There was a time when these works had no existence; the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in the

counsel by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping, so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his molding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift up their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself, ordained that yon Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalcule up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying,

My goodness is most free  
To act or not: Necessity and Chance  
Approach not me, and what I will is fate.

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdicated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of Providence. I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with doubts about the matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride— "All

the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou." From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime—there may be the second causes and the action of human evil, but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of Providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common Providence is left as a lonely providence to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no brethren. As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's willful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his won decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of e text, that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot bear to look them in the face. If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that

salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory—that salvation depends upon our own will—you have first of all this difficulty to meet, that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent. You have put an "if" upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to that theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond-slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God's grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may be no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, "This is the sure mercy of David;" for there is an "if," and a "but;" a "perhaps," and a "peradventure." In fact, the reins are gone out of God's hands; the linch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be gloried or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when we come back to the old fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in; not only is everything made contingent,

but it does seem to us as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe. According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must win like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is; God willeth good and would do it, but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man: for man, according to that theory nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills . If it be as God wills , then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say. "I will" or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Sprit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God himself; though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works—the salvation man—to be dependent upon the will of his creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

3. We think that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will; and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man,—God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" you will say that is a figure. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to



another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body, but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then again, what make you of the words of our Saviour where he said to those who had heard even him, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?" Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dare say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "they could if they would." Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am talking about if they would, the question is "will they?" and we say "no," they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief, and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact does not alter for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall make him will?—unless, in some mysterious way, he who made heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

4. But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. It is consistent with the universal experience of all God's people that salvation is of God's will. You will say, "I have not had a very long life, I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God's grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymn-book

which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayer into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse—

Oh! yes, I do love Jesus,  
Because he first loved me.

Nor would they find fault with our own hymn,

'Twas the same love that spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced us in;  
Else we had still refused to taste,  
And perished in our sin.

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say. "Crown him; crown him, put it on his head, for he is worthy; he has made us to differ; he has done it, and unto him be the praise for ever and ever." What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience,—that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

5. But, lastly, in the way of argument. and to bring our great battering-ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the known feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not accord to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will"—a double word you notice—it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him." So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" a stronger expression than "of his will"—"of his own will," his free unbiased will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose—redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified." So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the Gospel according to John, the first chapter and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

In these passages—and they are not the only ones—the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to the sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourteenth chapter, and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixteenth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon his will. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing, we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." According to this and many other texts the Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free-agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the

will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we are never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his old will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved—no, that is a cold word—as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we do hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will to do of his own good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral suasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new

creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you,—and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things,—this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live by a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun, which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never run after him. If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesus," it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give your yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? Yea. And if he does come, does he come because God brings him? Yea. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those

are the yea and nay people who have a nay for the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon as a man has any willingness given to him, he has a special promise. Before he had the willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hence your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise—"Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm-yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul! are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could be but saved, I would ask nothing else.

Lord, deny me what thou wilt,  
Only ease me of my guilt;  
Suppliant at thy feet I lie,  
Give me Christ, or else I die.

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel, he speaks to you and says—"Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you

are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now! Thou are willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "Deus vult; God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulchre, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink from the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" yet "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely."

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## **God's Word Not To Be Refused**

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who



refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. - Hebrews 12:25

We are not a cowering multitude gathered in trembling fear around the smoking mount of Horeb; we have come where the great central figure is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. We have gathered virtually in the outer circle of which the saints above and holy angels make the inner ring. And now tonight Jesus speaks to us in the gospel. So far as his gospel shall be preached by us here, it shall not be the word of man, but the word of God; and although it comes to you through a feeble tongue, yet the truth itself is not feeble, nor is it any less divine than if Christ himself should speak it with his own lips. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." The text contains:—

#### I. AN EXHORTATION OF A VERY SOLEMN, EARNEST KIND.

It does not say, "Refuse not him that speaketh," but "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh"—that is, "be very circumspect that by no means, accidental or otherwise, you do refuse the Christ of God, who now in the gospel speaks to you. Be watchful, be earnest, lest even through inadvertence ye should refuse the prophet of the gospel dispensation—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who speaks in the gospel from heaven to the sons of men." It means, "Give earnest heed and careful attention, that by no means, and in no way you refuse him that speaketh." My object tonight will be to help you, beloved friends, especially you that have not laid hold on Christ, who are not the children of Zion, who are joyful in their king—to help you tonight, that you may see to it.

And to go to our point at once, we shall have many things to say, and we shall speak them in brief sentences, hoping that the thoughts as they arise may be accepted by your mind, and may, by God's Spirit, work upon your hearts and conscience. There is great need of this exhortation from many considerations not mentioned in the text. A few of these we will hint at first.

First, from the excellency of the Word of God itself. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." That which Jesus speaks concerns your soul, concerns your everlasting destiny; it is God's wisdom; God's way of

mercy; God's plan by which you may be saved. If this were a secondary matter, ye need not be so earnest about receiving it, but of all things under heaven, nothing so concerns you as the gospel. See, then, that ye refuse not this precious Word, more precious than gold or rubies—which alone can save your souls.

See to this, again, because there is an enemy of yours who will do all he can that you may refuse him that speaketh. Satan is always busiest where the gospel is most earnestly preached. Let the sower scatter handfuls of seeds, and birds will find out the seeds and soon devour them. Let the gospel be preached, and these birds of the air, fiends of hell, will soon by some means try to remove these truths from your hearts, lest they should take root in your hearts and bring forth fruit unto repentance.

Give earnest heed, again, "that ye refuse not him that speaketh," because the tendency of your own mind will be to refuse Christ. Oh! sirs, ye are fallen through your first father, Adam, and the tendencies now of your souls are towards evil, and not towards the right, and when the Lord comes from heaven to you, you will reject him if left to yourselves. Watch, then, I say; see that ye refuse not, stir up your souls, awaken your minds, lest this delirious tendency of sin should make you angry with your best friend, and constrain you to thrust from you that which is your only hope for the hereafter. When a man knows that he has a bad tendency which may injure him, if he be wise he watches against it. So, knowing this, which God's Word tells you, watch, I pray you, lest ye refuse him that speaketh.

Bethink you well, too, that you have need to see to this, because some of you have rejected Christ long enough already. He has spoken to you from this pulpit, from other pulpits, from the Bible, from the sick-bed. He spoke to you lately in the funeral knell of your buried friend—many voices, but all with this one note, "Come to me, repent, be saved"; but until now ye have refused "him that speaketh." Will not the time past suffice to have played this mischievous game? Will not the years that have rolled into eternity bear enough witness against you? Must ye add to all this weight by again refusing? Oh! I implore you to see to it that ye do not again "refuse him that speaketh from heaven," for there is not a word of that which he speaks, but what is love to your souls. Jesus Christ, the Son

of God, came not armed with terrors to work wrath among the sons of men; all was mercy, all was grace, and to those who listen to him he has nothing to speak but tenderness and loving-kindness; your sins shall be forgiven you; the time of your ignorances God will wink at; your transgressions shall be cast into the depths of the sea; for you there shall be happiness on earth, and glory hereafter. Who would not listen when it is good news to be heard? Who would not listen when the best tidings that God himself ever sent forth from the excellent glory is proclaimed by the noblest Ambassador that ever spake to men, namely, God's own Son, Jesus, the once crucified, but now exalted Saviour? For these reasons, then, at the very outset I press upon you this exhortation, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh such precious truth", which the enemy would fain take out of your minds: truth which you yourselves have refused long enough already, and truth which is sweet, and will be exceedingly precious to your souls if you receive it. But now the text gives us:

II. SOME FURTHER REASONS for seeing to it that we do not "refuse him that speaketh." One reason I see in the text is this: see to this because there are many ways of refusing him that speaketh, and you may have fallen into one or other of these. See to it; pass over in examination your own state and conduct, lest you may have been refusing Christ. Some refuse the Saviour by not hearing of him. In his day there were some that would not listen, and there are such now. The Sabbath days of some of you are not days of listening to the gospel. Where were you this morning? Where are you usually all the Lord's Day long? Remember, you cannot live in London, where the gospel is preached, and be without responsibility. Though you will not come to the house of God to hear of it, yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God hath come nigh unto you. You may close your ears to the invitation of the gospel, but at last you will not be able to close your ear to the denunciation of wrath. If you will not come and hear of Christ on the cross, you must one day see for yourselves Christ on his throne. "See that ye refuse not him that speaks to you from heaven" by refusing to be found where his gospel is proclaimed.

Many come to hear it, and yet refuse him that speaketh, for they hear listlessly. In many congregations—I will not judge this—a very large

proportion of hearers are listless hearers. It little matters to them what is the subject in hand: they hear the sentences and phrases that come from the speaker's tongue, but these penetrate the ear only, and never reach their heart. Oh! how sad it is that this should be the case with almost all who have heard the gospel long, and who are not converted! They get used to it; no form of alarm could reach them, and perhaps no form of invitation could move them to penitence. The preacher may exhaust his art. They are like the adder that is deaf. He may know how to charm others, but these he cannot charm, charm he never so wisely.

Oh! see ye gospel hearers up yonder, and ye below here, that have been hearing Christ these many years, see that ye refuse not him that day by day during so long a time has spoken to you in the preaching of the gospel out of heaven.

But there are some who do hear, and have a very intelligent idea of what they hear, but who actually refuse to believe it. For divers reasons best known to themselves they reject the testimony of the incarnate God. They hear that God the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and he hath borne testimony that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned. They know but they will not believe in him. They will give you first one excuse, and then another, but all the excuses put together will never mitigate the fact that they do not believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, Jesus Christ, and so they "refuse him that speaketh." How many, how many here are by their unbelief refusing the Christ that speaks out of heaven?

Some are even offended at the gospel, as in Christ's day. When he came to a tender point in his preaching they went back and walked no more with him. Such there are to be found in our assemblies. The gospel galls them; there is some point that touches their prejudices, something that touches their favourite sin, and they are vexed and irritable. They ought to be angry—angry with their sin— but they are angry with Christ instead. They ought to denounce themselves, and patiently seek mercy, but this is not palatable to them; they would rather denounce the preacher, or denounce the preacher's Master.

Some will even hear the gospel, the very gospel of Christ to catch at words

and pervert sentences to make play of the preacher's words which he uses, when they are honestly the best he can find, and, worse still, make play with the sense, too, with the very gospel— and find themes for loose jokes and profane and ribald words, even in the cross. Dicing, like the soldier at the cross-foot, with the blood falling on them, so some make merriment when the blood of Jesus is falling upon them to their condemnation. May it not be so with any here present, but there have been such who have even reviled the Saviour, and had hard words for God in human flesh—could not believe that he bore the guilt of sin, could not admire the love astounding that made him suffer for the guilt of his enemies—could not see anything admirable in the heroic sacrifice of the great Redeemer, but rather turned their heel against their benefactor, and poured forth venomous words on him that loved the sons of men and died saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And some have practically shown they have refused him that speaketh, for they have begun to persecute his people; they have maltreated those that sought the glory of God, and anything that had a savour of Christ about it has been despicable and detestable to them.

Oh! dear hearers, I shall ask you, since there are all these ways of refusing Christ, to see to it that ye do not fall into any of them. The grosser forms, perhaps, you would be too shocked at, but don't fall into the others. Do not especially fall into that indifference which has as much of insult to the Saviour almost as blasphemy. Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you that God should come from heaven that he might be just in the salvation of men, and that, coming from heaven to be thus just, he should himself suffer that we might not suffer—the Christ of God bleed and die instead of the undeserving, hell-deserving sinners? Shall this be told you—pressed upon you—and will you refuse it? Will you refuse him who speaks himself, in his own sacrifice, and in the blood which he hath carried within the veil continues now to speak—will you, will you refuse him? Pray God you may see to it that in no form you do.

And now passing on, but keeping to the same point, striking the hammer on the head of the same nail, there are many reasons why men refuse Christ; therefore, see that for none of these reasons ye do it. Some refuse him out of perfect indifference; the great mass of men have not a thought

above their meat and their drink. Like the cock that found the diamond on the dunghill, they turn it over and wish it were a grain of barley. What care they for heaven, or the pardon of sin? Their mind does not reach to that. See that ye—that ye, none of you, are so sensuous as to "refuse him that speaketh from heaven" for such a reason as this. Some reject him because of their self-righteousness: they are good enough. Jesus Christ speaks against them, they say; he does not applaud their righteousness, he ridicules them rather; he tells them that their prayers are long prayers, and their many good works are, after all, a poor ground for reliance." So as the Saviour will not patronize their righteousness, neither will they have to do with him. Oh! say not ye are rich and increased in goods; ye are naked, and poor, and miserable. Say not ye can win heaven by your merits; ye have none; your merits drag you down to hell. Yet many will refuse the Saviour because of the insanity of their self-righteousness.

Some, too, reject him because of their self-reliant wisdom. "Why," they say, "this is a very thoughtful age." And everywhere I hear it dinned into my ears, "thoughtful preaching," "thinkings," "intellectual preaching." And what a mass of rottenness before high heaven the whole lot is that is produced by these thinking preachers and these intellectual men! For my part I would rather say to them, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," for one word of God is better than all the thoughts of all the philosophers, and one sentence from the lip of Christ I do esteem to be more precious than the whole Alexandrian library, and the Bodleian also if you will, so much as it comes from man. Nay, it is the thinking of Christ we have to think about; otherwise our thinking may prove our curse. A man, if he is drowning, if he have a rope thrown to him, had better lay hold of it than merely be there thinking about the possibilities of salvation by some other means. While your souls are being lost, sirs, there is better employment for you than merely indulging in rhapsodies and inventions of your own supposed judgment. Take hold of this, the gospel of Jesus revealed of God, lest ye perish, and perish with a vengeance.

Some reject the Saviour from another cause: they do not like the holiness of Christ's teaching. They refuse him that speaketh because they think Christ's religion too strict, too precise, cuts off their pleasures, condemns

their lusts. Yes, yes, it is so, but to reject Christ for such a reason is certainly to be most unreasonable, for it should be in every man a desire to be delivered from these passions and lusts, and because Christ can deliver us, shall we, therefore, reject him? God forbid that we should be led astray by such a reason.

Some reject him because they have a fear of the world. If they were Christians, they would probably be laughed at as Methodistic, Presbyterian, Puritanic, or some other name. And shall we lose our souls to escape the sneers of fools? He is not a man—call him by some other name—he is no man that flings away his soul because he is such a coward that he cannot bear to do and believe the right, and bear the frown of fashion.

There are others who refuse the Saviour simply out of procrastination. They have no reason for it, but they hope they shall have a more convenient season. They are young people as yet, or they are not so very old, or if they are old, yet still life will linger a little while, and so still they refuse him that speaketh.

I have not mentioned a worthy reason for refusing him that speaketh, nor do I believe there is a worthy reason. It seems to me that if it be so, that God himself has taken upon himself human form, and has come here to effect our redemption from our sin and misery, there cannot be any reason that will stand a moment's looking at for refusing him that speaketh. It must be my duty and my privilege to hear what it is that God has got to say to me: it must be my duty to lend him all my heart to try and understand what it is that he says, and then to give him all my will to do, or to be whatever he would have me to do or to be.

"But did God thus come?" says one. I always feel that the very declaration is its own proof. No heart could ever have contrived or invented this as a piece of imagination, the love, the story of the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus. If I had no evidence but the mere statement, I think I must accept it, for it wears truth upon its very forefront. Who should conceive it? The offended God comes here to redeem his creatures from their own offence. Since he must in justice punish, he comes to bear the punishment himself, that he may be just and yet be inconceivably

gracious! My soul flies into the arms of this revelation; it seems to be the best news my troubled conscience ever had—God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Oh! there cannot be a reasonable motive for rejecting the Saviour, and I, therefore, impress it upon you, since so many unreasonable motives carry men away, see that ye refuse not him that speaketh, and may the Spirit of God grant that you may not be able to refuse. But now coming to the text again, we have:—

III. A VERY HIGH MOTIVE GIVEN for seeing that we refuse not him that speaketh. It is this—because in refusing him, we shall be despising the highest possible authority. When Moses spake in God's name, it was no light thing to refuse such an ambassador. Still, Moses was but a man. Though clothed with divine authority, yet he was but a man and a servant of God. But Jesus Christ is God by nature. See that ye refuse not him who is of heavenly origin, who came from heaven, who is clothed with such divine powers, that every word he speaks is virtually spoken from heaven, and who, being now in heaven, speaks through his ever living gospel directly out of the excellent glory. Regard ye this, I pray you, and remember well the parable which Jesus gave. A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and when the time came that he should receive the fruit he sent a servant, and they stoned him. He sent another, and they beat him. He sent another, and they maltreated him. After he had thus sent many of his servants, and the dressers of the vineyard had incurred his high displeasure by the shameful way in which they had treated the servants, he sent his own son, and he said, "They will reverence my son." It was the highest degree of guilt when they said, "This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." Then they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. You know how the Saviour was treated by the sons of men; but here is the point I aim at; it is this: to reject Jesus Christ, to refuse him, to refuse merely his gospel, if he did not speak in it, might not be so high a misdemeanour, but to refuse him!—I don't know how it is, but my heart feels very heavy, even to sinking, at the thought that any man here should be able to refuse Christ, the Son of God, the Everlasting and the ever Blessed. But I cannot speak out what I feel. It fills my soul with horror to think that any creature should refuse his God, when his God speaks, but



much more when God comes down on earth in infinite, wondrous, immeasurable love, takes upon himself the form of man, and suffers, and then turns round to his rebellious creature and says, "Listen, I am ready to forgive you; I am willing to pardon you; do but listen to me." Oh! it seems monstrous that men should refuse Christ! I don't know how you feel about it, but if you have ever measured that in your thoughts, it will have seemed to be the most monstrous of all crimes. If, in order to be saved, the terms were hard and the conditions difficult, I could understand a man saying, "It mocks me," but when the gospel is nothing but this, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?"; when it is nothing but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," what shall I say? I cannot fashion an excuse for any of you, and if you, after having heard the gospel, be cast into hell, I dare not think that its utmost pains will be too severe for so high an insult to such wondrous love. Ye will not be saved, sirs; ye put from you your own life; ye will not be saved when the way of salvation is plain, easy, simple, close to your hand.

"What chains of vengeance they deserve,  
That slight the bonds of love."

I cannot—I could not—conceive a punishment too severe for men who, knowing that their rejection of Christ will bring upon them everlasting punishment, yet wilfully reject him. Ye choose your own delusion. If ye drank poison and did not know it, I could pity you; if you made all your veins to swell with agony, and caused your death—but when we stand up and say, "Sirs, it is poison; see others drop and die; touch it not!"—when we give you something a thousand times better, and bid you take that, but you will not take that, but will have the poison—then if you will, you must. If, then, you would destroy your soul, it must be so; but we would plead with you yet again, "See, see that ye refuse not him that speaketh." I wish I could raise him before you tonight—even the Christ of God, and bid him stand here, and you should see his hands and his feet, and you should ask, "What are these marks we see there?" He would reply, "These are the wounds that I received when I suffered for the sons of men," and he bares his side and says, "See here, here went the spear when I died that sinners might live." In glory now, yet once, saith he, this face was defiled with spittle, and this body mangled with Pilate's scourge and

Herod's rod, and I, whom angels worshipped, was treated as a menial, ay, worse, God himself forsook me, Jehovah hid his face from me, that I, bearing the punishment of sin, might really bear it, not in fiction, but in fact, and might suffer the equivalent for all the miseries that souls redeemed by me ought to have suffered had they been cast into hell. Will ye look at his wounds, and yet refuse him? Will you hear the story of his love, and yet reject him? Must he go away and say in his heart, "They have refused me; they have refused me; I told them of salvation; I showed them how I bought salvation; they have refused me; I will go my way, and they shall never see my face again till that day when they shall say, 'Mountains fall upon us; hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne'"? If you will not have him in mercy, you must have him in judgment, and if the silver sceptre of God will not touch you, the Christ of God, the man of Nazareth, will come a second time on the clouds of heaven, and woe unto you in that tremendous day. Then shall the nations of the earth weep and wail because of him. They would not have him as their Saviour; they must have him as their Judge, and out of his mouth shall the sentence come, "Depart! Depart!"

Now I have to close with the last reason that is given in the text why we should see that we "refuse not him that speaketh." It is this: that if we do:

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IV. THERE IS A DOOM TO BE FEARED, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. You hear the din that goes up from the Red Sea when the angry billows leap over Pharaoh and his horsemen. Why is the king asleep in the midst of the waters? Why are the chivalry of Egypt cut off? They rejected Moses when he said, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." If Pharaoh escaped not when he refused him that spake on earth, oh! dreadful shall be that day when the Christ who this day speaks to you, and whom you reject, shall lift up the rods of his anger, and the lake of fire, more direful than the Red Sea, shall swallow up his adversaries. See you that next sight? A number of men are standing there holding censers of incense in their hands, and there stands Moses, the servant of God, and he says, "If these die the death of common men, God hath not spoken by me," for they have rebelled against Moses.

Do you see the sight? Can you picture it? If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse him that speaketh from heaven? Go through the peninsular of the Arabian desert. See how the tribes drop, one by one, and leave graves behind them as the track of their march. Of all that came out of Egypt, not one entered into Canaan. Who slew all these? They were all slain there because they resisted the Word of God by his servant Moses, and he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse him that speaketh to us from heaven?

I might multiply instances and give you proof of how God avenged the refusal to listen to his servant Moses, but how much more will he avenge it if we listen not to Jesus Christ the Lord! "Oh!" says one, "you preach the terrors of the Lord." The terrors of the Lord!—I scarce think of them; they are too dreadful for human language; but if I speak severely, even for a moment, it is in love. I dare not play with you, sinner; I dare not tell you sin is a trifle; I dare not tell you that the world to come is a matter of no great account; I dare not come and tell you that you need not be in earnest. I shall have to answer for it to my Master. I have these words ringing in my ears, "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." I cannot bear that I should have the blood of souls upon my skirts, and, therefore, do I again say to you—refuse what I say as much as you will; cast anything that is mine to the dogs; have nothing to do with it; but wherein I have spoken to you Christ's Word, and I have told you his gospel, "Believe and live," "He that believeth on him is not condemned," "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Wherein it is Christ's gospel, it is Christ that speaks, and I again say to you, for your soul's sake, "Refuse not him that speaks from heaven to you." May his Spirit sweetly incline you to listen to Christ's Word, and may you be saved tonight.

If you don't have Christ tonight, some of you never will have him. If you are not saved tonight, some of you never will be. 'Tis now or never with you. God's Spirit strives with you, conscience is a little awakened. Catch every breeze, catch every breeze; do not let this pass by. Oh! that tonight you might seek, and that tonight you might find he Saviour. Else

remember if you refuse him that speaks from heaven, he lifts his hands and swears that you shall not enter into his rest. Then are you lost, lost, lost, beyond all recall! God bless every one of you, and may we meet in heaven.

I do not know, I sometimes am afraid that there are not so many conversions as there used to be. If I thought there were no more souls to be saved by me in this place, under God, I would break away from every comfort, and go and find out a place where I could find some that God would bless. Are they all saved that will be? You seatholders, have I fished in this pond till there is no more to come? Is it to be so, that in all the ground where wheat ever will grow, wheat has grown, and there can be no more? My brethren and sisters in Christ, pray God to send his Spirit that there may be more brought to Jesus. If not, it is hard, hard work to preach in vain. Perhaps I grow stale and dull to you; I would not if I could help it. If I could learn how to preach, I would go to school. If I could find the best way to reach you I am sure I would spare no pains. I do not know what more to say, but if Christ himself shall be refused, how shall I speak for him? If his dear wounds, if his precious blood, if his dying groans, if his love to the souls of men all go for nothing, then my words cannot be anything; they may well go to the wind. But do, do turn ye to him. Cast not away your souls. Come to him; he will receive you; he waiteth to be gracious. Whosoever is heavy laden, let him come tonight. One tear, one sigh, one cry—send it up to him; he will hear you. Come and trust him; he will save you. God bless you for Christ's love's sake. Amen.

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## God, The All-Seeing One

Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men? - Proverbs 15:11

You have often smiled at the ignorance of heathens who bow themselves before gods of wood and stone. You have quoted the words of Scripture, and you have said, "Eyes have they but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not." You have therefore argued that they could not be gods at all, because they could neither see nor hear, and you have smiled contemptuously at the men who could so debase their understandings as to make such things objects of adoration. May I ask you one question - but one? Your God can both see and hear: would your conduct be in any respect different, if you had a god such as those that the heathen worship? Suppose for one minute, that Jehovah, who is nominally adored in this land, could be (though it is almost blasphemy to suppose it) smitten with such a blindness, that he could not see the works and know the thoughts of man: would you then become more careless concerning him than you are now? I trow not. In nine cases out of ten, and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion, the doctrine of Divine Omniscience, although it is received and believed, has no practical effect upon our lives at all. The mass of mankind forget God: whole nations who know his existence and believe that he beholds them, live as if they had no God at all. Merchants, farmers, men in their shops, and in their fields, husbands in their families, and wives in the midst of their households, live as if there were no God; no eye inspecting them; no ear listening to the voice of their lips, and no eternal mind always treasuring up the recollection of their acts. Ah! we are practical Atheists, the mass of us; yea, all but those that have been born again, and have passed from death unto life, be their creeds what they may, are Atheists, after all, in life; for if there were no God, and no hereafter, multitudes of men would never be affected by the change; they would live the same as they do now - their lives being so full of disregard of God and his ways, that the absence of a God could not affect them in any great degree. Permit me, then, this morning, as God

shall help me, to stir up your hearts; and may God grant that something I may say, may drive some of your practical Atheism out of you. I would endeavor to set before you, God, the all-seeing one, and press upon your solemn consideration the tremendous fact, that in all our acts, in all our ways, and in all our thoughts, we are continually under his observing eye.

We have in our text, first of all, a great fact declared, - "Hell and destruction are before the Lord ;" we have, secondly, a great fact inferred, - "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

I. We will begin with THE GREAT FACT WHICH IS DECLARED - a fact which furnishes us with premises from which we deduce the practical conclusion of the second sentence - "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" The best interpretation that you can give of those two words, "hell" and "destruction," is, I think, comprehended in a sentence something like this, - "Death and hell are before the Lord." The separate state of departed spirits, and destruction, Abaddon, as the Hebrew has it, the place of torment, are both of them, although solemnly mysterious to us, manifest enough to God.

1. First, then, the word here translated "hell," might just as well be translated "death," or the state of departed spirits. Now, death, with all its solemn consequences, is visible before the Lord. Between us and the hereafter of departed spirits a great black cloud is hanging. Here and there, the Holy Spirit hath made chinks, as it were, in the black wall of separation, through which, by faith we can see; for he hath "revealed unto us by the Spirit" the things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard," and which the human intellect could never compass. Yet, what we know is but very little. When men die, they pass beyond the realm of our knowledge: both in body and in soul, they go beyond our understandings. But God understands all the secrets of death. Let us divide these into several heads, and enumerate them.

God knows the burial-places of all his people. He notes as well the resting-place of the man who is buried tombless and alone, as the man over whom a mighty mausoleum has been raised. The traveler who fell in the barren desert, whose body became the prey of the vulture, and whose

bones were bleached in the sun - the mariner, who was wrecked far out at sea, and over whose corpse no dirge was ever wailed, except the howling of the winds, and the murmuring of the wild waves - the thousands who have perished in battle, unnumbered and unnoticed - the many who have died alone, amid dreary forests, frozen seas, and devouring snow-storms - all these, and the places of their sepulchre, are known to God. That silent grot within the sea, where pearls lie deep, where now the shipwrecked one is sleeping, is marked by God as the death-place of one of his redeemed; that place upon the mountain-side, the deep ravine into which the traveler fell and was buried in a snow-drift, is marked in the memory of God as the tomb of one of the human race. No body of man, however it may have been interred or uninterred, has passed beyond the range of God's knowledge. Blessed be his name, if I shall die, and lie where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, in some neglected corner of the churchyard, I shall be known as well, and rise as well recognized by my glorious Father, as if interred in the cathedral, where forests of gothic pillars proudly stand erect, and where the songs of myriads perpetually salute high heaven. I shall be known as well as if I had been buried there in solemn pomp, and had been interred with music and with dread solemnities, and I shall be recognized as well as if the marble trophy and the famous pillar had been raised to my remembrance; for God knoweth no such thing as forgetfulness of the burying-places of his children. Moses sleeps in some spot that eye hath not seen. God kissed away his soul, and he buried him where Israel could never find him, though they may have searched for him. But God knoweth where Moses sleeps; and if he knows that, he understands where all his children are hidden. Ye cannot tell me where is the tomb of Adam; ye could not point out to me the sleeping place of Abel. Is any man able to discover the tomb of Methuselah and those long-lived dwellers in the time before the flood? Who shall tell where the once-treasured body of Joseph now sleeps in faith? Can any of you discover the tombs of the kings, and mark the exact spot where David and Solomon rest in solitary grandeur? No, those things have passed from human recollection, and we know not where the great and mighty of the past are buried; but God knoweth, for death and Hades are open before the Lord.

And again, further, not only does he know the place where they were

buried, but he is cognizant of the history of all their bodies after sepulture or after death. It has often been asked by the infidel, "How can the body of man be restored, when it may have been eaten by the cannibal, or devoured by wild beasts?" Our simple reply is, that God can track every atom of it if he pleases. We do not think it necessary to resurrection that he should do so, but if he so willed it, he could bring every atom of every body that hath ever died: although it hath passed through the most complicated machinery of nature, and become entangled in its passage with plants and beasts, yea, and with the bodies of other men, God hath it still within the range of his knowledge to know where every atom is, and it is within the might of his Omnipotence to call every atom from its wandering, and restore it to its proper sphere, and rebuild the body of which it was a part. It is true, we could not track the dust that long since has moldered. Buried with exactest care, preserved with the most scrupulous reverence, years passed away, and the body of the monarch, which had long slept well guarded and protected, was at last reached by the careless hand. The coffin had moldered, and the metal was broken for the sake of its own value; a handful of dust was discovered, the last relics of one who was master of many nations. That dust by sacrilegious hand was cast in the aisle of the church, or thrown into the churchyard and blown by the winds into the neighboring field. It was impossible for ever to preserve it; the greatest care was defeated; and at last the monarch was on a level with his slave, "alike unknowing and unknown." But God knows where every particle of the handful of dust has gone: he has marked in his book the wandering of every one of its atoms. He hath death so open before his view, that he can bring all these together, bone to bone, and clothe them with the very flesh that robed them in the days of yore, and make them live again. Death is open before the Lord.

And as the body, so the soul when separated from the body, is before the Lord. We look upon the countenance of our dying friend, and on a sudden a mysterious change passes over his frame. "His soul has fled," we say. But have we any idea of what his soul is? Can we form even a conjecture of what the flying of that soul may be, and what the august presence into which it is ushered when it is disentangled from its earthly coil? Is it possible for us to guess what is that state where Spirits without bodies, perpetually blest, behold their God? It is possible for us to compass some



imagination of what heaven is to be, when bodies and souls, reunited, shall before God's throne enjoy the highest bliss; but I do think, that so gross are our conceptions, whilst we are in our bodies, that it is almost, if not quite, impossible for any of us to form any idea whatever as to the position of souls, whilst in the disembodied state, between the hour of death and the time of resurrection.

"This much, and this is all, we know;  
They are supremely blest:  
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,  
And with their Saviour rest."

But the best of the saints can tell us nothing more than this. They are blest, and in paradise they are reigning with their Lord. Brethren, these things are known to God. The separate state of the dead, the heaven of disembodied spirits, is within the gaze of the Most High, and at this hour, if so he pleased, he could reveal to us the condition of every man that is dead - whether he has mounted to Elysian fields, to dwell for ever in the sunlight of his Master's countenance, or has been plunged into hell, dragged down by iron chains, to wait in dreary woe the result of the awful trial, when "Depart ye cursed," must be the re-affirmation of a sentence once pronounced, and already in part endured. God understands the separate doom of every man's spirit before the great tribunal day - before the last sentence shall have been pronounced, death is open before the Lord.

2. The next word, "destruction," signifies hell, or the place of the damned. That also is open before the Lord. Where hell is, and what its miseries, we know not; except "through a glass darkly," we have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown. We have much reason to thank God that he has put it so far off from the habitations of living mortals, that the pains, the groans, the shrieks, the yells, are not to be heard here, or else earth itself would have become a hell, the solemn prelude and the ante-past of unutterable torment. God has put somewhere, far on the edge of his dominions, a tearful lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; into that he cast the rebel angels, who (though by a license they are now allowed to walk the earth) do carry a

hell within their bosoms, and are by-and-by to be bound with chains, reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for them that kept not their first estate, but lifted the arm of their rebellion against God. Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments of the lost, without at once becoming mad. Reason would reel at such a sight of horror. One moment of listening to the shrill screams of spirits tortured, might forever drive us into the depths of despair, and make us only fit to be bound in chains whilst we lived on earth. Raving lunatics surely we must become. But whilst God has mercifully covered all these things from us, they are all known to him; he looks upon them; yea, it is his look that makes hell what it is. His eyes, full of fury, flash the lightnings that scathe his enemies; his lips, full of dreadful thunders, make the thunders that now Upright the wicked. O! could they escape the eye of God, could they shut out that dreary vision of the face of the incensed Majesty of heaven, then might hell be quenched; then might the wheels of Ixion stand still; then might doomed Tantalus quench his thirst and eat to his very full. But there, whilst they lie in their chains, they look upward, and they see ever that fearful vision of the Most High; the dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders, and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls, with horrors deeper than despair. Yes, hell, horrible as it is, and veiled in many clouds, and covered over with darkness, is naked before the vision of the Most High.

There is the grand fact stated - "Hell and destruction are before the Lord." After this the inference seems to be easy - "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

## II. We now come to the GRAND FACT INFERRED.

In briefly entering upon this second part I will discuss the subject thus: You notice there an argument - "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" I will therefore begin by asking, why does it follow that the hearts of men are seen by God? Why - how - what - when - shall be four questions into which we shall divide what we have now to say.

1. Why is it so clear, that "if hell and destruction are open before the

Lord," the hearts of men must be very plainly viewed by him?

We answer, because the hearts of men are not so extensive as the realms of death and torment. What is man's heart? what is man's self? Is he not in Scripture compared to a grasshopper? Does not God declare that he "takes up the isles" - whole islands full of men - "as a very little thing; And the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket?" If, then, the all-seeing eye of God takes in at one glance the wide regions of death - and wide they are, wide enough to startle any man who shall try to range them through - if, I say, with one glance God seeth death and seeth hell through, with all its bottomless depths, with all its boundlessness of misery, surely, then, he is quite able to behold all the actions of the little thing called man's heart. Suppose a man so wise is to be able to know the wants of a nation and to remember the feelings of myriads of men, you can not suppose it difficult for him to know the actions of his own family and to understand the emotions of his own household. If the man is able to stretch his arm over a great sphere, and to say, "I am monarch of all this," surely he shall be able to control the less. He who in his wisdom can walk through centuries shall not say that he is ignorant of the history of a year; he who can dive into the depths of science, and understand the history of the whole world from its creation, is not to be alarmed by some small riddle that happens at his own door. No, the God who seeth death and hell seeth our hearth for they are far less extensive.

Reflect again, that they are far less aged too. Death is an ancient monarch; he is the only king whose dynasty stands fast. Ever since the days of Adam he has never been succeeded by another, and has never had an interregnum in his reign. His black ebon sceptre hath swept away generation after generation; his scythe hath mowed the fair fields of this earth a hundred times, and is sharp to mow us down, and when another crop shall succeed us he is still ready to devour the multitudes, and sweep the earth clean again. The regions of death are old domains; his pillars of black granite are ancient as the eternal hills. Death made his prey on earth long ere Adam was here. Those mighty creatures that made the deep hoary with their strength, and stirred the earth with their trappings - those elder born of nature's sons, the mighty creatures that lived here long ere Adam walked in Eden - death made them his prey: like

a mighty hunter he speared the mighty lizard and laid it low, and now we dig it from the stony tomb, and wonder at it. He is our ancient monarch; but ancient as he is, his whole monarchy is in the records of God, and until death itself is dead, and swallowed up in victory, death shall be open before the Lord. How old, too, is death - old as the first sin. In that day when Satan tempted the angels, and led astray the third part of the stars of heaven, then hell was digger; then was that bottomless pit first struck out of solid rocks of vengeance, that it might stand a marvelous record of what God's wrath can do. The fires of hell are not the kindlings of yesterday: they are ancient flames that burned long ere Vesuvius cast forth its lurid flame. Long ere the first charred ashes tell upon the plain from earth's red volcanoes, hell's flames we're burning; for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. If, then, the ancient things, these old ones, death and hell, have been observed by God, and if their total history is known to him, how much more then shall he know the history of those mere animalculae, those ephemera of an hour, that we call men! You are here to-day, and gone to-morrow; born yesterday - the next hour shall see our tomb prepared, and another minute shall hear, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and the falling of the clod upon the coffin lid. We are the creatures of a day, and know nothing. We are scarcely here; we are only living and dead. "Gone!" is the greatest part of our history. Scarcely have we time enough to tell the story, ere it comes to its finis. Surely, then, God may easily understand the history of a beast, when he knows the history of the monarchies of death and hell.

This is the why. I need not give further arguments, though there be abundance deducible from the text. "How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

2. But now, how does God know the heart? I mean to what degree and to what extent does he understand and know that which is in man? I answer, Holy Scripture in divers places gives us most precise information. God knows the heart so well that he is said to "search" it. We all understand the figure of a search. There is a search-warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harboring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower room, opens the door of every cupboard, looks

into every closet, peers into every cranny, takes the key, descends into the cellar, turns over the coals, disturbs the wood, lest any one should be hidden there. Up stairs he goes: there is an old room that has not been open for years, - it is opened. There is a huge chest: the lock is forced, and it is broken open. The very top of the house is searched, lest upon the slates or upon the tiles some one should be concealed. At last, when the search has been complete, the officer says, "It is impossible that there can be anybody here, for, from the tiles to the foundation, I have searched the house thoroughly through; I know the very spiders well, for I have seen the house completely." Now, it is just so that God knows our heart. He searches it - searches into every nook, corner, crevice, and secret part; and the figure of the Lord is pushed further still. "The candle of the Lord," we are told, "searches the secret parts of the belly." As when we wish to find something, we take a candle, and look down upon the ground with great care, and turn up the dust. If it is some little piece of money we desire to find, we light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently till we find it. Even so it is with God. He searches Jerusalem with candles, and pulls every thing to day-light. No partial search, like that of Laban, when he went into Rachel's tent to look for his idols. She put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them; but God looks into the camel's furniture, and all. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." His eye searches the heart, and looks into every part of it.

In another passage we are told that God tries the reins. That is even more than searching. The goldsmith when he takes gold, looks at it, and examines it carefully. "Ah!" says he, "but I don't understand this gold yet: I must try it." He thrusts it into the furnace; there coals are heaped upon it, and it is fused and melted, till he knows what there is of dross, and what there is of gold. Now, God knows to the very carat how much there is of sound gold in us, and how much of dross. There is no deceiving him. He has put our hearts into the furnace of his Omniscience; the furnace - his knowledge - tries us as completely as the goldsmith's crucible doth try the gold - how much there is of hypocrisy, how much of truth - how much of steam, how much of real - how much of ignorance, how much of knowledge - how much of devotion, how much of blasphemy - how much of carefulness, how much of carelessness. God knows the ingredients of

the heart; he reduces the soul to its pristine metals; he divides it asunder - so much of quartz, so much of gold, so much of dung, of dross, of wood, of hay, of stubble, so much of gold, silver, and precious stones. "The Lord trieth the hearts and searcheth the reins of the children of men."

Here is another description of God's knowledge of the heart. In one place of Sacred Writ - (it will be well if you set your children to find out these places at home) - God is said to ponder the heart. Now, you know, the Latin word ponder means weigh. The Lord weighs the heart. Old Master Quarles has got a picture of a great one putting a heart into one scale, and then putting the law, the Bible, into the other scale, to weigh it. This is what God does with men's hearts. They are often great, puffed-up, blown-out things, and people say, "What a great-hearted man that is!" But God does not judge by the appearance of a man's great heart nor the outside appearance of a good heart; but he puts it in the scales and weighs it - puts his own Word in one scale and the heart in the other. He knows the exact weight - knows whether we have grace in the heart, which makes us good weight, or only pretence in the heart, which makes us weigh light weight when put into the scale. He searches the heart in every possible way, he puts it into the fire, and then thrusts it into the balances. Oh, might not God say of many of you, "I have searched your heart, and I have found vanity therein? Reprobate silver shall men call you; for God has put you in the furnace and rejected you." And then he might conclude his verdict by saying, "Mene, mene, tekel - thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This, then, is the answer to the question, How?

The next question was, What? What is it that God sees in man's heart? God sees in man's heart a great deal more than we think of God sees, and has seen in our hearts, lust, and blasphemy, and murder, and adultery, and malice and wrath, and all uncharitableness. The heart never can be painted too black, unless you daub it with something blacker than the devil himself. It is as base as it can be. You have never committed murder, but yet you have had murder in your heart; you may never have stained your hands with lusts and the aspersions of uncleanness, but still it is in the heart. Have you never imagined an evil thing? Has your soul never for a moment doted on a pleasure which you were too chaste to

indulge in, but which for a moment you surveyed with at least some little complacency and delight? Has not imagination often pictured, even to the solitary monk in his cell, greater vice than men in public life have ever dreamed of? And may not even the divine in his closet be conscious that blasphemies, and murders, and lusts of the vilest class, can find a ready harbor even in the heart which he hopes is dedicated to God? Oh! beloved, it is a sight that no human eye could endure: the sight of a heart really laid bare before one's own inspection would startle us almost into insanity: but God sees the heart in all its bestial sensuousness, in all its wanderings and rebellions, in all its high mindedness and pride; God has searched and knows it altogether.

God sees all the heart's imaginations, and what they are let us not presume to tell. O children of God, these have made you cry and groan full many a time, and though the worldling groans not over them, yet he hath them. Oh, what a filthy sty of Stygian imaginations is the heart; all full of every thing that is hideous, when it once begins to dance and make carnival and revelry concerning sin. But God sees the heart's imaginations.

Again, God sees the heart's devices. You, perhaps, O sinner, have determined to curse God; you have not done so, but you intend to do it. He knows your devices - reads them all. You perhaps will not be permitted to run into the excess of riotousness into which you purpose to go; but your very purpose is now undergoing the inspection of the Most High. There is never a design forged in the fires of the heart, before it is beaten on the anvil of resolve, that is not known, and seen, and noted by Jehovah our God.

He knows, next, the resolves of the heart. He knows, O sinner, how many times you have resolved to repent, and have resolved and re-resolved, and then have continued the same. He knows, O thou that hast been sick, how thou didst resolve to seek God, but how thou didst despise thine own resolution, when good health had put thee beyond the temporary danger. Thy resolves have been filed in heaven, and thy broken promises, and thy vows despised, shall be brought out in their order as swift witnesses for thy condemnation. All these things are known of God. We have often had

very clear proof of God's knowing what is in man's heart, even in the ministry. Some months ago, whilst standing here preaching, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said these words - "There is a man sitting there that is a shoemaker, keeps his shop open on Sunday, had his shop open last Sabbath morning, took ninepence, and -there was fourpence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for fourpence." A City Missionary, when going round the West end of the town, met with a poor man, of whom he asked this question: "Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" He found him reading a sermon. "Yes," he said, "I have every reason to know him; I have been to hear him, and under God's grace I have become a new man. "But," said he, "shall I tell you how it was? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place, and the man looked at me as if he knew me, and deliberately told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I sold shoes on a Sunday; and I did, sir. But, sir, I should not have minded that; but he said I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit; and so I did take ninepence, and fourpence was just the profit, and how he should know that I'm sure I can not tell. It struck me it was God had spoken to my soul through him; and I shut my shop last Sunday, and was afraid to open it and go there, lest he should split about me again." I could tell as many as a dozen authentic stories of cases that have happened in this Hall, where I have deliberately pointed at some body, without the slightest knowledge of the person, or ever having in the least degree any inkling or idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved thereto by the Spirit; and so striking has been the description, that the persons have gone away and said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: he was sent of God to my soul, beyond a doubt, or else he could not have painted my case so clearly."

And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbows, because they have got a smart hit, and I have heard them say, when they went out, "That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door." "Ah!" says the other, "I was thinking of the very thing he said, and he told me of it." Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant, to state the very thing, thought and done, when he did not know it, then it must remain



decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret, because we see he tells it to men, and enables them to tell it to others. Oh, ye may endeavor as much as ye can to hide your faults from God, but beyond a doubt he shall discover you. He discovers you this day. His Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and "pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and of the marrow;" and in that last day, when the book shall be opened, and he shall give to every man his sentence, then shall it be seen how exact, how careful, how precious, how personal was God's knowledge of the heart of every man whom he had made.

4. And now the last question: When? When does God see us? The answer is, he sees us everywhere and in every place. O foolish man, who thinks to hide himself from the Most High! It is night! no human eye sees thee; the curtain is drawn, and thou art hidden. There are his eyes lowering at thee through the gloom. It is a far-off country; no one knows thee; parents and friends have been left behind, restraints are cast off. There is a Father near thee, who looks upon thee even now. It is a lone spot, and if the deed be done, no tongue shall tell it. There is a tongue in heaven that shall tell it; yea, the beam out of the wall, and the stones in the field, shall raise up themselves as witnesses against thee. Canst thou hide thyself anywhere where God shall not detect thee? Is not this whole world like a glass hive, wherein we put our bees? and does not God stand and see all our motions when we think we are hidden? Ah, it is but a glass hiding-place. He looketh from heaven, and through stone walls and rocks; yea, to the very centre itself, does his eye pierce, and in the thickest darkness he beholds our deeds.

Come, then, let me make a personal application of the matter, and I have done. If this be true, hypocrite, what a fool thou art! If God can read the heart, O man, what a sorry, sorry thing thy fair pretense must be! Ah! ah! ah! what a change will come over some of you! This world is a masquerade, and ye, many of you, wear the mask of religion. Ye dance your giddy hours, and men think you to be the saints of God. How changed will you be, when, at the door of eternity, you must drop the visor, and must announce the theatricals in which you live! How you will blush when the paint is washed from off your cheek - when you stand

before God naked to your own shame, a hypocrite, unclean, diseased, covered up before with the gew-gaws and the trickery of pretended formality in religion, but now standing there, base, vile, and hideous! There is many a man that bears about him a cancer that would make one sick to see. Oh, how shall hypocrites look when their cancerous hearts are laid bare! Deacon! how you will tremble when your old heart is torn open, and your vile pretences rent away! Minister! how black you will look when your surplice is off, and when your grand pretensions are cast to the dogs! How will you tremble! There will be no sermonizing others then. You yourself will be preached to, and the sermon shall be from that text, "Depart ye cursed." O brethren, above all things shun hypocrisy. If ye mean to be damned, make up your minds to it, and be damned like honest men; but do not, I beseech you, pretend to go to heaven while all the time you are going to hell. If ye mean to make your abodes in torment forever, then serve the devil, and do not be ashamed of it; stand it right out, and let the world know what you are. But oh! never put on the cloak of religion. I beseech you, do not add to your eternal misery being a wolf in sheep's clothing. Show the cloven foot; do not hide it. If you mean to go to hell, say so. "If God be God, serve him. If Baal be God, serve him." Do not serve Baal and then pretend to be serving God.

One other practical conclusion. If God sees and knows everything, how this ought to make you tremble - you that have lived in sin for many years! I have known a man who was once stopped from an act of sin by the fact of there being a cat in the room. He could not bear even the eyes of that poor creature to see him. Oh, I would ye could carry about with you the recollection of those eyes that are always on you. Swearer! could you swear if you could see God's eye looking at you? Thief! drunkard! harlot! could ye indulge in your sins, if ye saw his eyes on you? Oh, methinks they would startle you and bid you pause, before ye did in God's own sight rebel against his law. There is a story told of the American War, that one of the prisoners taken by the Americans was subjected to a torture of the most refined character. He says, "I was put into a narrow dungeon; I was comfortably provided for with all I needed; but there was a round slit in the wall, and through that, both night and day, a soldier always looked at me." He says, "I could not rest, I could not eat nor drink, nor do anything in comfort, because there was always that eye - an eye

that seemed never to be turned away, and never shut - always following me round that little apartment. Nothing ever hidden from it." Now take home that figure. Recollect that is your position; you are shut in by the narrow walls of time, when ye eat, and when ye drink, when ye rise, and when ye lie upon your beds; when ye walk the streets, or when ye sit at home, that eye is always fixed upon you. Go home now and sin against God, if ye dare; go home now and break his laws to his face, and despise him, and set him at nought! Rush on your own destruction; dash yourselves against the buckler of Jehovah, and destroy your selves upon his own sword! Nay, rather, "turn ye, turn ye." Turn ye, ye that have followed the ways of sin, turn ye to Christ, and live; and then the same Omniscience which is now your horror, shall be your pleasure. Sinner! if thou now dost pray, he seeth thee; if thou now dost weep he seeth thee. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." It shall be even so with thee, if now thou turnest to God and dost believe in his Son Jesus Christ.

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## **Going Home - A Christmas Sermon**

Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. - Mark 5:19

The case of the man here referred to is a very extraordinary one: it occupies a place among the memorabilia of Christ's life, perhaps as high as anything which is recorded by either of the evangelists. This poor wretch being possessed with a legion of evil spirits had been driven to something worse than madness. He fixed his home among the tombs, where he dwelt by night and day, and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him; he had been bound with fetters and chains, but in the paroxysms of his madness he had torn the chains in sunder, and broken the fetters in pieces. Attempts had been made to reclaim him; but no man could tame him. He was worse than the wild beasts, for they might be tamed; but his fierce nature

would not yield. He was a misery to himself, for he would run upon the mountains by night and day, crying and howling fearfully, cutting himself with the sharp flints, and torturing his poor body in the most frightful manner. Jesus Christ passed by; he said to the devils, "Come out of him." The man was healed in a moment; he fell down at Jesus' feet; he became a rational being—an intelligent man, yea, what is more, a convert to the Saviour. Out of gratitude to his deliverer, he said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; I will be thy constant companion and thy servant; permit me so to be." "No," said Christ, "I esteem your motive; it is one of gratitude to me; but if you would show your gratitude, 'go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'"

Now, this teaches us a very important fact, namely, this, that true religion does not break in sunder the bonds of family relationship. True religion seldom encroaches upon that sacred, I had almost said divine institution called home; it does not separate men from their families, and make them aliens to their flesh and blood. Superstition has done that; an awful superstition, which calls itself Christianity, has sundered men from their kind; but true religion has never done so. Why, if I might be allowed to do such a thing, I would seek out the hermit in his lonely cavern, and I would go to him and say, "Friend, if thou art what thou dost profess to be, a true servant of the living God, and not a hypocrite, as I guess thou art—if thou art a true believer in Christ, and would show forth what he has done for thee, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of thy bread, leave this dreary cave, wash thy face, untie thy hempen girdle; and if thou wouldst show thy gratitude, go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee. Canst thou edify the sere leaves of the forest? Can the beasts learn to adore that God whom thy gratitude should strive to honor? Dost thou hope to convert these rocks, and wake the echoes into songs? Nay, go back; dwell with thy friends, reclaim thy kinship with men, and unite again with thy fellows, for this is Christ's approved way of showing gratitude." And I would go to every monastery and every nunnery, and say to the monks, 'Come out brethren, come out! If you are what you say you are, servants of God, go home to your friends. No more of this absurd discipline; it is not Christ's rule; you are acting differently from what he would have you; go home to your friends!' And to the

sisters of mercy we would say, "Be sisters of mercy to your own sisters; go home to your friends; take care of your aged parents; turn your own houses into convents; do not sit here nursing your pride by a disobedience to Christ's rule, which says, "go home to thy friends." "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The love of a solitary and ascetic life, which is by some considered to be a divine virtue, is neither more nor less than a disease of the mind. In the ages when there was but little benevolence, and consequently few hands to build lunatic asylums, superstition supplied the lack of charity, and silly men and women were allowed the indulgence of their fancies in secluded haunts or in easy laziness. Young has most truly said, -

"The first sure symptoms of a mind in health  
Are rest of heart and pleasure found at home."

Avoid, my friends, above all things, those romantic and absurd conceptions of virtue which are the offspring of superstition and the enemies of righteousness. Be not without natural affection, but love those who are knit to you by tie of nature.

True religion cannot be inconsistent with nature. It never can demand that I should abstain from weeping when my friend is dead. "Jesus wept." It cannot deny me the privilege of a smile, when providence looks favorably upon me; for once "Jesus rejoiced in the spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee." It does not make a man say to his father and mother, "I am no longer your son." That is not Christianity, but something worse than what beasts would do, which would lead us to be entirely sundered from our fellows, to walk among them as if we had no kinship with them. To all who think a solitary life must be a life of piety, I would say, "It is the greatest delusion." To all who think that those must be good people who snap the ties of relationship, let us say, "Those are the best who maintain them." Christianity makes a husband a better husband, it makes a wife a better wife than she was before. It does not free me from my duties as a son; it makes me a better son, and my parents better parents. Instead of weakening my love, it gives me fresh reason for my affection; and he whom I loved before as my father, I now

love as my brother and co-worker in Christ Jesus; and she whom I revered as my mother, I now love as my sister in the covenant of grace, to be mine for ever in the state that is to come. Oh! suppose not, any of you, that Christianity was ever meant to interfere with households; it is intended to cement them, and to make them households which death itself shall never sever, for it binds them up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God, and re-unites the several individuals on the other side of the flood.

Now, I will just tell you the reason why I selected my text. I thought within myself, there are a large number of young men who always come to hear me preach; they always crowd the aisles of my chapel, and many of them have been converted to God. Now, here is Christmas-day come round again, and they are going home to see their friends. When they get home they will want a Christmas Carol in the evening; I think I will suggest one to them—more especially to such of them as have been lately converted. I will give them a theme for their discourse on Christmas evening; it may not be quite so amusing as "The Wreck of the Golden Mary," but it will be quite as interesting to Christian people. It shall be this: "Go home and tell your friends what the Lord hath done for your souls, and how he hath had compassion on you." For my part, I wish there were twenty Christmas days in the year. It is seldom that young men can meet with their friends; it is rarely they can all be united as happy families; and though I have no respect to the religious observance of the day, yet I love it as a family institution, as one of England's brightest days, the great Sabbath of the year, when the plough rests in its furrow, when the din of business is hushed, when the mechanic and the working man go out to refresh themselves upon the green award of the glad earth. If any of you are masters you will pardon me for the digression, when I most respectfully beg you to pay your servants the same wages on Christmas-day as if they were at work. I am sure it will make their houses glad if you will do so. It is unfair for you to make them feast or fast, unless you give them wherewithal to feast and make themselves glad on that day of joy.

But now to come to the subject. We are going home to see our friends, and here is the story some of us have to tell. "Go home to thy friends, and

tell them how great things the Lord hath done for them, and hath had compassion on thee." First, here is what they are to tell; secondly, why they are to tell it; and then thirdly, how they ought to tell it.

I. First, then, **HERE IS WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL.** It is to be a story of personal experience. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." You are not to repair to your houses and forthwith begin to preach. That you are not commanded to do. You are not to begin to take up doctrinal subjects and expatiate on them, and endeavour to bring persons to your peculiar views and sentiments. You are not to go home with sundry doctrines you have lately learned, and try to teach these. At least you are not commanded so to do; you may, if you please, and none shall hinder you; but you are to go home and tell not what you have believed, but what you have felt—what you really know to be your own; not what great things you have read, but what great things the Lord hath done for you; not alone what you have seen done in the great congregation, and how great sinners have turned to God, but what the Lord has done for you. And mark this: there is never a more interesting story than that which a man tells about himself. The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner derives much of its interest because the man who told it was himself the mariner. He sat down, that man whose finger was skinny, like the finger of death, and began to tell that dismal story of the ship at sea in the great calm, when slimy things did crawl with legs over the shiny sea. The Wedding guest sat still to listen, for the old man was himself a story. There is always a great deal of interest excited by a personal narrative. Virgil, the poet, knew this, and therefore he wisely makes Aeneas tell his own story, and makes him begin it by saying, "In which I also had a great part myself." So if you would interest your friends, tell them what you felt yourself. Tell them how you were once a lost abandoned sinner, how the Lord met with you, how you bowed your knees, and poured out your soul before God, and how at last you leaped with joy, for you thought you heard him say within you, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake." Tell your friends a story of your own personal experience.

Note, next, it must be a story of free grace. It is not, "Tell thy friends how great things thou hast done thyself," but "how great things the Lord hath

done for thee." The man who always dwells upon free will and the power of the creature, and denies the doctrines of grace, invariably mixes up a great deal of what he has done himself in telling his experience; but the believer in free grace, who holds the great cardinal truths of the gospel, ignores this, and declares, "I will tell what the Lord hath done for me. It is true I must tell how I was first made to pray; but I will tell it thus -

'Grace taught my soul to pray,  
Grace made my eyes o'erflow.'

It is true, I must tell in how many troubles and trials God has been with me; but I will tell it thus: -

"Twas grace which kept me to this day,  
And will not let me go."

He says nothing about his own doings, or willings, or prayings, or seekings, but he ascribes it all to the love and grace of the great God who looks on sinners in love, and makes them his children, heirs of everlasting life. Go home, you man, and tell the poor sinner's story; go home, young woman, and open your diary, and give your friends stories of grace. Tell them of the mighty works of God's hand which he hath wrought in you from his own free, sovereign, undeserved love. Make it a free grace story around your family fire.

In the next place, this poor man's tale was a grateful story. I know it was grateful, because the man said, "I will tell thee how great things the Lord hath done for me;" and (not meaning a pun in the least degree) I may observe, that a man who is grateful is always full of the greatness of the mercy which God has shown him; he always thinks that what God has done for him is immensely good and supremely great. Perhaps when you are telling the story one of your friends will say, "And what of that?" And your answer will be, "It may not be a great thing to you, but it is to me. You say it is little to repent, but I have not found it so; it is a great and precious thing to be brought to know myself to be a sinner, and to confess it; do you say it is a little thing to have found a Saviour." Look them in the face and say, "If you had found him too you would not think it little. You



think it little I have lost the burden from my back; but if you had suffered with it, and felt its weight as I have for many a long year, you would think it no little thing to be emancipated and free, through a sight of the cross." Tell them it is a great story, and if they cannot see its greatness shed great tears, and tell it to them with great earnestness, and I hope they may be brought to believe that you at least are grateful, if they are not. May God grant that you may tell a grateful story. No story is more worth hearing than a tale of gratitude.

And lastly, upon this point: it must be a tale told by a poor sinner who feels himself not to have deserved what he has received. "How he hath had compassion on thee." It was not a mere act of kindness, but an act of free compassion towards one who was in misery. Oh! I have heard men tell the story of their conversion and of their spiritual life in such a way that my heart hath loathed them and their story too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime, and they have mentioned the love of God not with a tear of gratitude, not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart, but as if they as much exalted themselves as they exalted God. Oh! when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with deep sorrow, remembering what we used to be, and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things, I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation, and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, "Why, you are a poor lost ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it, as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself." Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened, because they were hearing something which the man felt himself, and which they recognised as being true to him, if it was not true in them. Tell your story, my hearers, as lost sinners. Do not go to your home, and walk into your house with a supercilious air, as much as to say, "Here's a saint come home to the poor sinners, to tell them a story;" but go home like a poor sinner yourself; and when you go in, your mother remembers what you used to be, you need not tell her there is a change—she will notice it, if it is only one day you are with her; and perhaps she will say, "John, what is this change that is in you?" and if

she is a pious mother, you will begin to tell her the story, and I know, man though you are, you will not blush when I say it, she will put her arms round your neck, and kiss you as she never did before, for you are her twice-born son, hers from whom she shall never part, even though death itself shall divide you for a brief moment. "Go home, then, and tell your friends what great things the Lord hath done for you, and how he hath had compassion on you."

II. But now, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE TELL THIS STORY? For I hear many of my congregation say, "Sir, I could relate that story to any one sooner than I could to my own friends; I could come to your vestry, and tell you something of what I have tasted and handled of the Word of God; but I could not tell my father, nor my mother, nor my brethren, nor my sisters." Come, then; I will try and argue with you, to induce you to do so, that I may send you home this Christmas-day, to be missionaries in the localities to which you belong, and to be real preachers, though you are not so by name. Dear friends, do tell this story when you go home.

First, for your Master's sake. Oh! I know you love him; I am sure you do, if you have proof that he loved you. You can never think of Gethsemane and of its bloody sweat, of Gabbatha and of the mangled back of Christ, flayed by the whip: you can never think of Calvary and his pierced hands and feet, without loving him; and it is a strong argument when I say to you, for his dear sake who loved you so much, go home and tell it. What! do you think we can have so much done for us, and yet not tell it? Our children, if anything should be done for them, do not stay many minutes before they are telling all the company, "such an one hath give me such a present, and bestowed on me such-and-such a favor." And should the children of God be backward in declaring how they were saved when their feet made haste to hell, and how redeeming mercy snatched them as brands from the burning? You love Jesus, young man! I put it to you, then, will you refuse to tell the tale of his love to you? Shall your lips be dumb, when his honor is concerned? Will you not, wherever you go, tell of the God who loved you and died for you? This poor man, we are told, "Departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men did marvel." So with you. If Christ has done

much for you, you cannot help it—you must tell it. My esteemed friend, Mr. Oncken, a minister in Germany told us last Monday evening, that so soon as he was converted himself, the first impulse of his new-born soul was to do good to others. And where should he do that good? Well, he thought he would go to Germany. It was his own native land, and he thought the command was, "Go home to thy friends and tell them." Well, there was not a single Baptist in all Germany, nor any with whom he could sympathise, for the Lutherans had swerved from the faith of Luther, and gone aside from the truth of God. But he went there and preached, and he has now seventy or eighty churches established on the continent. What made him do it? Nothing but love for his Master, who had done so much for him, could have forced him to go and tell his kinsmen the marvellous tale of Divine goodness.

But, in the next place, are your friends pious? Then go home and tell them, in order to make their hearts glad. I received last night a short epistle written with a trembling hand by one who is past the natural age of man, living in the country of Essex. His son, under God, had been converted by hearing the Word preached, and the good man could not help writing to the minister, thanking him, and blessing most of all, his God, that his son had been regenerated. "Sir," he begins, "an old rebel writes to thank you, and above all to thank his God, that his dear son has been converted." I shall treasure up that epistle. It goes on to say, "Go on! and the Lord bless you." And there was another case I heard some time ago, where a young woman went home to her parents, and when her mother saw her, she said, "There! if the minister had made me a present of all London, I should not have thought so much of it as I do of this—to think that you have really become a changed character, and are living in the fear of God." Oh! if you want to make your mother's heart leap within her, and to make your father glad—if you would make that sister happy who sent you so many letters, which sometimes you read against a lamp-post, with your pipe in your mouth—go home and tell your mother that her wishes are all accomplished, that her prayers are heard, that you will no longer chaff her about her Sunday-school class, and no longer laugh at her because she loves the Lord, but that you will go with her to the house of God, for you love God, and you have said, "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God, for I have a hope that your heaven

shall be my heaven for ever." Oh! what a happy thing it would be if some here who had gone astray, should thus go home! It was my privilege a little while ago to preach for a noble institution for the reception of women who had led abandoned lives—and before I preached the sermon I prayed to God to bless it, and in the printed sermon you will notice that at the end of it there is an account of two persons who were blessed by that sermon and restored. Now, let me tell you a story of what happened to Mr. Vanderkist, a city missionary, who toils all night long to do good in that great work. There had been a drunken broil in the street; he stepped between the men to part them, and said something to a woman who stood there concerning how dreadful a thing it was that men should thus be intemperate. She walked with him a little way, and he with her, and she began to tell him such a tale of woe and sin too—how she had been lured away from her parents' home in Somersetshire, and have been brought up here to her soul's eternal hurt. He took her home with him, and taught her the fear and love of Christ; and what was the first thing she did, when she returned to the paths of godliness, and found Christ to be the sinner's Saviour? She said, "Now, I must go home to my friends." Her friends were written to; they came to meet her at the station at Bristol, and you can hardly conceive what a happy meeting it was. The father and mother had lost their daughter, they had never heard from her; and there she was, brought back by the agency of this institution,<sup>1</sup> and restored to the bosom of her family. Ah! if such an one be here! I know not; among such a multitude there may be such an one. Woman! hast thou strayed from thy family? Hast thou left them long? "Go home to thy friends," I beseech thee, ere thy father totters to his grave, and ere thy mother's grey hairs sleep on the snow-white pillow of her coffin. Go back. I beseech thee! Tell her thou art penitent; tell her that God hath met with thee—that the young minister said, "Go back to thy friends." And if so, I shall not blush to have said these things, though you may think I ought not to have mentioned them; for if I may but win one such soul, I will bless God to all eternity. "Go home to thy friends. Go home and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." Cannot you imagine the scene, when the poor demoniac mentioned in my text went home? He had been a raving madman; and when he came and knocked at the door, don't you think you see his friends calling to one another in affright, "Oh! there he is again," and the mother running up stairs and locking all the doors,

because her son had come back that was raving mad; and the little ones crying because they knew what he had been before—how he cut himself with stones, because he was possessed with devils. And can you picture their joy, when the man said, "Mother! Jesus Christ has healed me; let me in; I am no lunatic now!" And when the father opened the door, he said, "Father! I am not what I was; all the evil spirits are gone; I shall live in the tombs no longer. I want to tell you how the glorious man who wrought my deliverance accomplished the miracle—how he said to the devils, 'Get ye hence,' and they ran down a steep place into the sea, and I am come home healed and saved." Oh! if such an one, possessed with sin, were here this morning, and would go home to his friends, to tell them of his release, methinks this scene would be somewhat similar.

Once more, dear friends. I hear one of you say. "Ah! Sir, would to God I could go home to pious friends! But when I go home I go into the worst of places; for my home is amongst those who never knew God themselves, and consequently never prayed for me, and never taught me anything concerning heaven." Well, young man, go home to your friends. If they are ever so bad they are your friends. I sometimes meet with young men wishing to join the church, who say, when I ask them about their father, "Oh, sir, I am parted from my father." Then I say, "Young man, you may just go and see your father before I have anything to do with you; if you are at ill-will with your father and mother I will not receive you into the church; if they are ever so bad they are your parents." Go home to them, and tell them, not to make them glad, for they will very likely be angry with you; but tell them for their soul's salvation. I hope, when you are telling the story of what God did for you, that they will be led by the Spirit to desire the same mercy themselves. But I will give you a piece of advice. Do not tell this story to your ungodly friends when they are all together, for they will laugh at you. Take them one by one, when you can get them alone, and begin to tell it to them, and they will hear you seriously. There was once a very pious lady who kept a lodging-house for young men. All the young men were very gay and giddy, and she wanted to say something to them concerning religion. She introduced the subject, and it was passed off immediately with a laugh. She thought within herself, "I have made a mistake." The next morning, after breakfast, when they were all going, she said to one of them, "Sir, I should like to speak with you a

moment or two," and taking him aside into another room she talked with him. The next morning she took another, and the next morning another, and it pleased God to bless her simple statement, when it was given individually: but, without doubt, if she had spoken to them altogether, they would have backed each other up in laughing her to scorn. Reprove a man alone. A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies. You may be the means of bringing a man to Christ who has often heard the Word and only laughed at it, but who cannot resist a gentle admonition. In one of the states of America, there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions. What to do with him the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest, one Elder B\_\_\_\_\_ resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man; after that he got on horseback, and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside, and said, "Neighbour, I am under very great concern about your soul's salvation; I tell you I pray day and night for your soul's salvation." He left him, and rode home on his horse. The man went inside to his house after a minute or two, and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument; here's Elder B\_\_\_\_\_ been down here, he did not dispute, and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul; I cannot bear that you should be lost.' Oh! that fellow," he said, "I cannot answer him;" and the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife, and said, "I can't make this out; I never cared about my soul, but here's an elder, that has no connection with me, but I have always laughed at him, and he has come five miles this morning on horseback just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation. After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation too. He went in, shut the door, began to pray, and the next day he was at the deacon's house, telling him that he too was under concern about his salvation, and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved. Oh! that the everlasting God might make use of some of those now present in the same way, that they might be induced to

"Tell to others round  
What a dear Saviour they have found;  
To point to his redeeming blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God!"

III. I shall not detain you much longer; but there is a third point, upon which we must be very brief. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD?

First, tell it truthfully. Do not tell more than you know; do not tell John Bunyan's experience, when you ought to tell your own. Do not tell your mother you have felt what only Rutherford felt. Tell her no more than the truth. Tell your experience truthfully; for mayhap one single fly in the pot of ointment will spoil it, and one statement you may make which is not true may ruin it all. Tell the story truthfully.

In the next place, tell it very humbly. I have said that before. Do not intrude yourselves upon those who are older, and know more; but tell your story humbly; not as a preacher, not ex-cathedra, but as a friend and as a son.

Next, tell it very earnestly. Let them see you mean it. Do not talk about religion flippantly; you will do not good if you do. Do not make puns on texts; do not quote Scripture by way of joke: if you do, you may talk till you are dumb, you will do no good, if you in the least degree give them occasion to laugh by laughing at holy things yourself. Tell it very earnestly.

And then, tell it very devoutly. Do not try to tell your tale to man till you have told it first to God. When you are at home on Christmas-day, let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning, wrestle with God; and if your friends are not converted, wrestle with God for them; and then you will find it easy work to wrestle with them for God. Seek, if you can, to get them one by one, and tell them the story. Do not be afraid; only think of the good you may possibly do. Remember, he that saves a soul from death hath covereth a multitude of sins, and he shall have stars in his crown for ever and ever. Seek to be under God—Saviours in your family, to be the means of leading your own beloved brethren and sisters to seek and to find the Lord Jesus Christ, and then one day, when you shall meet in Paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there, and that your friends are there too, whom God will have made you the instrument of saving. Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be

entire and honest. Trust not yourself, but fear not to trust him. He can give you words. He can apply those words to their heart, and so enable you to "minister grace to the hearers."

To close up, by a short, and I think, a pleasant turning of the text, to suggest another meaning to it. Soon, dear friends, very soon with some of us, the Master will say, "Go home to thy friends." You know where the home is. It is up above the stars.

"Where our best friends, our kindred dwell,  
Where God our Saviour reigns."

Yon grey-headed man has buried all his friends; he has said, "I shall go to them, but they will not return to me." Soon his Master will say, "Thou hast had enough tarrying here in this vale of tears: go home to thy friends!" Oh! happy hour! Oh! blessed moment, when that shall be the word—"Go home to thy friends!" And when we go home to our friends in Paradise, what shall we do? Why, first we will repair to that blest seat where Jesus sits, take off our crown and cast it at his feet, and crown him Lord of all. And when we have done that, what shall be our next employ? Why, we will tell the blessed ones in heaven what the Lord hath done for us, and how he hath had compassion on us. And shall such a tale be told in heaven? Shall that be the Christmas Carol of the angels? Yes, it shall be; it has been published there before—blush not to tell it yet again—for Jesus has told it before, "When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." And thou, poor sheep, when thou shall be gathered in, wilt thou not tell how thy Shepherd sought thee, and how he found thee? Will thou not sit in the grassy meads of heaven, and tell the story of thine own redemption? Wilt thou not talk with thy brethren and thy sisters, and tell them how God loved thee and hath brought thee there? Perhaps thou sayest, "It will be a very short story." Ah! it would be if you could write now. A little book might be the whole of your biography; but up there when your memory shall be enlarged, when your passion shall be purified and your understanding clear, you will find that what was but a tract on earth will be a huge tome in heaven. You will tell a long story there of God's sustaining, restraining, constraining grace, and I



think that when you pause to let another tell his tale, and then another, and then another, you will at last, when you have been in heaven a thousand years, break out and exclaim, "O saints, I have something else to say." Again they will tell their tales, and again you will interrupt them with "Oh, beloved, I have thought of another case of God's delivering mercy." And so you will go on, giving them themes for songs, finding them the material for the warp and woof of heavenly sonnets. "Go home," he will soon say, "go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Wait awhile; tarry his leisure, and ye shall soon be gathered to the land of the hereafter, to the home of the blessed, where endless felicity shall be thy portion. God grant a blessing for his name's sake!

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## **A Golden Prayer**

Father, glorify thy name. - John 12:28

In the first part of my discourse this morning I shall strictly keep to my text, as the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and endeavor to show what it teaches us with regard to him. These are his own words, and it would be robbery to borrow them until first we have seen what they meant as they fell from his lips. Their most golden meaning must be seen in the light of his sacred countenance. Then, in the second part of my sermon, I shall try to point out how the petition before us may be used by ourselves, and I pray that divine grace may be given us that it may be engraven upon our hearts, and that each one of us may be taught by the Holy Spirit daily to say for himself, "Father, glorify thy name." I would suggest That these words should be to all the Lord's people in this church their motto for another year, and, indeed, their prayer throughout life. It will as well beseem the beginner in grace as the ripe believer; it will be proper both at the wicket - gate of faith, and at the portals of glory. Like a lovely rainbow let the prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," over - arch the whole period of

our life on earth. I cannot suggest a better petition for the present moment, nor indeed for any moment of our pilgrimage. Let us close the old year with it, and open the door of the new to the same note. As for the past, "Father, glorify thy name in the present fulfill this desire unto thy servants, and in the future do it yet more abundantly.

I. Let us look, then, at the words, first of all, IN RESPECT TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. They occur in the following connection. He had wrought a notable miracle in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The fame of the miracle had attracted many to hear him; enthusiastic crowds had gathered, and he had become so extremely popular that the Pharisees said, "the world hath gone after him." The people were willing to have made him a king, and a great concourse met him with branches of palm trees and cried, "Hosanna; blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." Our Lord passed in royal but humble pomp through the streets of Jerusalem, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. This public manifestation, the renown of the miracle, and the general talk of the populace, led to strangers hearing of him, and enquiring about him; so that certain intelligent Greeks of a very respectable order - for their mode of address to Philip shows their superior behavior - asked to be introduced to him. They would "see Jesus," not of course merely see him in the street, for that they could do if they pleased without applying to Philip; but they would have an interview with him, and learn more about his teaching and his claims. I suppose that the sight of these Greeks greatly gladdened the heart of the Savior, for he delighted to see men coming to the light. He seemed to say within himself, "Behold the nations come to me; the Gentiles arise and seek their Savior." He saw in those Greeks the advance guard of the Gentile world. He looked upon the strangers with delight, regarding them as representative men, the first of myriads who from the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea should come flocking to him, to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Our Lord rejoiced in spirit; his heart was glad within him, and he began to address himself to the people round about, and to the Greeks, who mingled with the throng. At that very moment the thought flashed across the Savior's mind, "But these nations who are to be born unto me, and to be saved by me, cannot be so born without birth - pangs, nor saved except I endure unspeakable suffering as their Redeemer." This fact came

vividly before our Lord's mind, and it rushed over his spirit like a raging torrent. He saw that he could not become the seed corn of a great harvest unless first of all he should fall into the ground and die. He was the one grain of wheat upon whom all depended, and he must lose comfort and life, and be buried in the earth, or else he would abide alone, and bring forth no fruit. He saw the vicarious suffering which lay in his way, and his soul was troubled.

Do not imagine that our Savior dreaded death in itself considered. He was far superior in sacred courage and strength of mind to any of his servants, and yet many of them have welcomed death, and others of them, such as the martyrs, have endured it in its most terrible forms, without fear, even expressing a holy delight in glorifying the name of God by their mortal agony. Our Lord was not less brave than these in prospect of his departure.

But never let it be forgotten that the death of Christ was a very peculiar one, and in fact stands by itself alone. His death was the vindication of justice, it was the death of the sin - bearer, it was a sacrificial, substitutionary, expiatory death, and this is very different from the death of a pardoned and justified believer, who passes out of the world resting on the atonement, and supported by a sense of having been reconciled to God by the great sacrifice. Our Lord was called to bear the enormous load of man's transgressions; over his holy soul the dark shadow of human guilt must pass, and on his sensitive spirit must be made to meet the iniquity of us all. His saints' deaths are blessed in the sight of the Lord, but he must be made a curse for us that we might be blessed in him: and as the mind of Christ perceived this clearly lying in the way of that triumph among the Gentiles which gave him joy, there was a struggle in his soul, and before the assembled people that struggle was manifested. The Greeks desired to see Jesus, and they did see him in a very remarkable matter, so that they must have been astounded at the sight. If they expected to see a king they did indeed behold a royal soul, but they saw him in such grief as falls not to the lot of common men. If they wished to see somewhat of his greatness of spirit and power of mind, they did see it, but it was a power which did not transfigure his face with glory, but filled it with an agony marring all its beauty. I shall not be too bold if I

say that Gethsemane was rehearsed in public upon the occasion before us. Our Lord's soul was troubled, so he says. He felt a sort of adumbration or foreshadowing of that midnight among the olives, in which his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." It was out of that conflict that our text came: in fact, our text is to his suffering in the midst of the crowd what "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" was to the agony of Gethsemane, or what "It is finished" was to the passion upon Calvary. It was the culminating point, the climax, and the conquest of a great mental battle; and when he had thus spoken he seemed to shake himself clear of the agony and to emerge from it with the memorials of it still upon him, but with his face set like a flint to go forward to the bitter and the glorious end, this being now his watchword, "Father, glorify thy name."

I shall want to call your attention, dear friends, briefly here, first, to the trouble of the Redeemer's soul. I always tremble within myself when I try to speak of the inner conflicts of our blessed Lord, for it is so easy to make a mistake and darken counsel by words without knowledge. His person is complex and therefore we readily confuse, yet he himself is but one, and it is equally dangerous to make over-nice distinctions. Loving jealousy of our Lord's honor makes us feel that we scarcely know how to speak of him. I remember an earnest admirer of art who in pointing with his walking-stick to the beauties of a famous picture pushed his cane through the canvas and ruined it; and it is possible that in our enthusiasm to point out the beauties and points of interest in the life and death of our Lord we may spoil it all. I fear lest in my ignorance I should make sorrow for myself by dishonoring him for whose honor I would gladly lay me down and die. Help me, O divine Spirit! This much is clear, that our Savior's heart was full of trouble.

He who could still the sea and bid the storms retreat was tempest-tossed in his own soul, and cast about him for anchorage. He who could drive the fever from its lair, or send a legion of demons into the deep, was nevertheless troubled in spirit and cried, "What shall I say?" Master of all worlds, supreme amongst the angels, and adored at his Father's right hand, yet he confesses, "Now is my soul troubled." Lord of all, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. How near akin it makes

him to us! How human! How compassed with infirmity! Ye worship him, and rightly so, but still he is a man and a mourner. Ye call him Master and Lord, and ye do well, yet he not only washed his disciples' feet, but his own feet trembled in the rough places of the way. He felt those same commotions of spirit which make our hearts sad within us and cause us to pour out our souls within us. Do not think of the Lord Jesus otherwise than as of a dear brother born for adversity, or a faithful husband sharing all our lot, being bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Did you cry out in anguish, "Now is my soul troubled"? Then remember that your Lord has used the same words. Are you half distracted? Are you tossed to and fro in your thoughts? Do you ever ask, "What shall I say?" Jesus also understands by sympathy what it is you mean. Do you look around you and feel that you know not what to do, and does your trembling heart suggest that you should pray, "Father, save me from this hour"? - in all this you may see the Well - beloved's footprints - you are not upon a new and strange track, he leads you through no darker rooms than he went through before.

With the like afflictions he has been afflicted; there is nothing in them novel or surprising to his sympathetic heart. Beloved friends, let me invite you to consider that not only did our Lord thus suffer, but it is joyful to reflect that he suffered all this without sin. Hence it follows that mental conflict is not in itself sinful; even the shrinking back of the flesh from suffering is not necessarily evil; and the question "What shall I say?" and the apparent distraction of the spirit for the moment as to what shall be its course, are not in themselves criminal.

There could be no sin in the Lord Jesus, and consequently there is not of necessity sin in our inward struggles, though I am very far from venturing to hope that in any one of them we are quite clear of fault. Our Lord's nature was so pure that however much it was stirred it remained clear; but in our case, though the stirring is not sinful, it sets in motion the sin which dwelleth in us, and we are defiled. Yet I do not believe that all those depressions of spirit which come of sickness, that all those wanderings of mind in the heat of fever, that all those shrinkings and drawings back from pain, which are essential to our humanity, are by our heavenly Father set down as sin, though sin is doubtless mixed with them. If they

be sinful in themselves, yet surely they are blotted out as soon as written down, for "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He pities rather than censures or condemns. Ye do not judge your children hardly for what they say when they are racked with pain or prostrated by weakness; you bear with their little fancies and peevishnesses, and the like, and you never taunt them with their follies afterwards: neither can I think that our heavenly Father would have us doubt our interest in Christ because in our semi - delirium we could not realize his love, nor would he have us question the grace which is in us because our feverish thoughts were near akin to despair. When the true heart struggles to love and trust and obey, but the poor brain is tortured with dark thoughts, the conflict is not all sinful, nor any of it necessarily so. There may be an awful struggle in the soul and yet the Father may be glorified; the sin lies not in the conflict but in the defeat, if defeat there be: the guilt is not in the shrinking from pain, but in permitting that natural feeling to hinder us from duty or to lead us to rebel against chastisement. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," is not a sinful utterance if it be followed by "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I feel so glad to think our Lord when he was passing through this inward conflict spoke out his feelings. It is instructive that he should have done so, for with his strength of mind he was quite capable of preserving a self - contained attitude and keeping his agony to himself: yet you notice that neither here, in which case he spoke so that others heard him; nor at Gethsemane, in which case he took three of his disciples to be with him, and went to them again and again for sympathy; nor even on the cross, in which case he cried aloud: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" did he endeavor to conceal his emotion from others. It may be that by this he intended to teach us wisdom; he would show us by his own example that it is well for us not to be too much shut up within ourselves. Smother not your sorrow, tell it out, or it may gather an ungovernable heat. That is the worst of grief which cannot weep or moan. Draw up the sluices, give a vent to pent up feeling: even though it be but a child who hears your tale it will relieve your mind to tell it. Anything is better than banking up the fires, and concentrating all the heat within the soul. Act not the stoic's part; be not ashamed to let it be known that you are a man, a man who can grieve and be troubled even as others. It may sometimes

be well to follow the poet's advice who says -

"Bear and still bear and silent be,  
Tell no man thy misery,"

but I question if the occasions are very frequent. At any rate, such is not the command of our Lord, nor does his example point in that direction.

In himself speaking out, our Lord gives us a full permit to speak too. We might have said, "No, I will not tell what is going on within, lest my weakness should seem to dishonor God." Now, we know that our Lord did not dishonor the Father by saying, "Now is my soul troubled," and by revealing the inward conflict of his soul; neither will the fact of our speaking out our grief necessarily dishonor our God. Jesus wept, and we may weep. Jesus told out his sorrow to his friends, and you may do the same.

In thus speaking, our Lord affords us the best of help, for his fellow-feeling is a grand support. Did he say, "Now is my soul troubled"? and did he scarce know what to ask? But did he at the last still triumph and resign himself into the Father's hands? Then, girt about by the selfsame power, we also will encounter the same sorrow after our measure, and endure until we triumph as he did. Even though in the triumph there should be clear evidence of our personal weakness, yet we will not regret it, since by that means our God shall be the more surely glorified by the more distinct revelation of his power.

I will say no more about the trouble of our Redeemer, because I would now ask you to fix your thoughts for a minute upon the firm resolve which the text sets forth. There is a battle, but from the very first moment to the last of it there is really no question in the Savior's mind about what he means to do: his purpose was settled beyond disturbance. The surface of his mind was ruffled, but deep down in his heart the current of the Redeemer's soul flowed on irresistibly in the ordained channel. He was even straitened till he had been baptized with the appointed baptism.

Observe the question raised, and see how really it was answered in his heart before he asked it. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?"

Father, save me from this hour." Must men be unsaved and Jesus be delivered from the lowering storm? If so, yonder Greeks need not ask to see him, for there will be no "life a look" at him, The disciples round about need not cling to him as their helper, for there is no help in him, unless he dies to redeem the sons of men. Shall men, then, be unredeemed? Shall the blood of atonement be unspilt, and no man be ransomed from going down to the pit? Shall he remain alone, the grain of wheat unsown? If he doth, he will be happy enough and glorious enough, for heaven is all his own. Doth he need men to make him blessed? Does he require worms of the dust to make him glorious? Should he remain alone, he will still be God and Lord. But, shall the death penalty be left to be borne by men, guilty men, who deserve to bear it? Shall there be no cross, no Calvary, no open tomb, no resurrection, no gates of heaven set wide open for coming souls? There is the question, and you see in the text how resolutely Jesus had settled it. He says in effect - "Father, glorify thy name by my death for this purpose have I come to this hour, that by my agony and bloody sweat, by my cross and passion, I may redeem the sons of men. Redeemed they must and shall be, cost me what it may. I have resolved to bear the penalty, and magnify thy law, and I will perform it, though hell itself be let loose against me and all its waves of fire dash over me. I will endure the cross, and despise the shame, to honor thee, my Father."

Observe right well that the text indicates the deep intent which steadied our Lord's resolve. Why is Christ resolved to die? Is it to save men? Yes, but not as the chief reason. His first prayer is not, "Father, save my people," but "Father, glorify thy name." The glory of God was the chief end and object of our Savior's life and death. It is that the Father's name may be illustrious that Jesus would have souls redeemed. His passion had for its main intent the exhibition of the attributes of God. And, brethren, how completely he has glorified Jehovah's name! Upon the cross we see the divine justice in the streaming wounds of the great Substitute: for the Son of God must needs die when sin is laid upon him. There also you behold infinite wisdom, for what but infallible wisdom could have devised the way whereby God might be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth.



There, too, is love, rich, free, boundless love - never so conspicuous as in the death of man's Redeemer. Till this day it still remains a question concerning the atonement which of the letters best is writ, the justice, the wisdom, or the love. In the atonement the divine attributes are all so perfectly glorified that no one crowds out the other: each one has its full display without in the least degree diminishing the glory of any other. Our blessed Lord, that the Father might be glorified, pushed on to the end which he had set before him. Whatever conflict might be within his spirit, his heart was fixed upon bearing to the death our load, and suffering to the end our penalty.

Now, brethren, I will detain you here with but one other thought - it is this, the grand result which came of it was that God was in very deed greatly glorified, and to this fact special testimony was given. A voice was heard out of heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." That voice speaks of the past: the incarnation of Christ had glorified the name of God. I am unable to describe to you how much of lustre the love of God receives from the fact of the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. It is the mystery of mysteries, the marvel of all marvels, that the Creator should espouse the nature of his creature, and that he should be found in fashion as a man. Oh, Bethlehem, thou hast exceedingly magnified the condescension of God. Angels might well sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Nor Bethlehem alone, but Nazareth, and the thirty years which our Lord spent on earth all illustrate the condescension, the pity, the longsuffering of God. Did God dwell among us thirty years? Did he abide in humility in the carpenter's shop for the best part of that time, and did he afterwards come forth to be a poor man, a teacher of peasants, a friend of sinners, a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men? Could the holy and the just, the infinite and the glorious thus, as it were, compress infinity into so small a space, and marry deity to such poverty and shame? It was so. Then tune your harps anew, ye seraphs, to tell the amazing love and condescension of "Immanuel, God with us." Well spake that voice - "I have glorified it." But hearken yet again, for it adds - "and will glorify it again." To my mind that word "again" sounds like certain voices I have heard in the Alps. The horn is sounded and then follows an echo; nay, twice, thrice, and perhaps fifty times the music is distinctly repeated, the

voices following each other in gradually melting strains. The metaphor is not complete, for in this case the echoes increase in volume; instead of diminishing they wax louder and louder. Lo, Jesus hangs upon the cross and dies, and God is glorified, for justice has its due. He lies in the grave till the third morning, but he bursts the bonds of death. Lo, God's great name is glorified again, since the divine power, truth, and faithfulness are all seen in the resurrection of Christ, Yet a few more days and he ascends into heaven, the Man, the God, and a cloud hides him from our sight, - he hath glorified the Father's name again by leading captivity captive. Then cometh Pentecost, and the preaching of the gospel among the heathen, and then is the name of God glorified by the outpouring of the Spirit. Every conversion of a sinner, and every sanctification of a believer, is a fresh glorifying of the name of the Father, and every reception of a perfected one into heaven - and surely they are entering heaven every day, troops of them climbing the celestial hills, drawn upward by almighty love - everyone, I say, in entering into Paradise glorifies Jehovah's name again. And, brethren, by - and - by, when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, then will the Father glorify his own name again. When in his own time the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, and when he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and we shall hear the gladsome acclamation, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and when cometh the end, and he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, and God shall be all in all - then shall the eternal echoes roll along the glories of the great Father God. The glorious name of the one Jehovah shall through all space and all eternity be magnified, and the prayer of our once suffering but now exalted Savior shall be fully answered, "Father, glorify thy name."

II. Now, brethren and sisters, we will use our text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. May the Holy Ghost direct us in so doing. I pray that this text may be our prayer from this time forth, "Father, glorify thy name." Have you, dear hearers, ever prayed this prayer? I trust I am addressing many to whom it is a very familiar desire, and yet I question if any here have ever presented it so earnestly as those from whom it has been forced by suffering and grief. God's birds often sing best in cages; at any rate, when they have been loose a little while, and their notes grow somewhat

dull, he tunes their pipes again if he puts them away awhile and clips their wings. Now this text, as far as we are concerned, whenever we can use it, indicates conflict ended. Sometimes we are in such a condition that we do not know which way to turn. We are in great affliction; it may not be so much outward trouble as distress of mind, which is worst of all. The water has leaked into the ship, and that is worse than an ocean outside. The vessel begins to fill, you use the pumps, but cannot keep it under. At such times you cry, "What shall I do? What shall I say? Where can I look? I am oppressed and overwhelmed." But there is an end of the conflict when you turn round and cry, "Father! Father!" A child may have lost its way and it may be sobbing its heart out in its distress; but the moment it sees its father it is lost no longer, it has found its way, and is at rest. Though there may be no difference in your position, nor change in your circumstances, yet if you catch a sight of your heavenly Father, it is enough; you are a lost child no more. When you can pray, "Father, glorify thy name," then there is no more question about "What shall I say?" You have said the right thing, and there let it end.

Now, brethren, concerning this next year upon which we are entering, I hope it will be a year of happiness to you, - I very emphatically wish you all a Happy New Year, - but nobody can be confident that it will be a year free from trouble. On the contrary, you may be pretty confident that it will not be so, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. We have each, beloved friends, some dear faces in which we rejoice, may they long smile upon us: but remember each one of these may be an occasion of sorrow during the next year, for we have neither an immortal child, nor an immortal husband, nor an immortal wife, nor an immortal friend, and therefore some of these may die within the year. Moreover the comforts with which we are surrounded may take to themselves wings before another year shall fulfill its months. Earthly joys are as if they were all made of snow, they melt even as the hoar frost, and are gone before we conclude our thanksgiving for their coming. It may be you will have a year of drought and shortness of bread; years lean and ill favored may be your portion. Ay, and yet more, perhaps during the year which has almost dawned you may have to gather up your feet in the bed and die, to meet your father's God. Well now, concerning this approaching year and its mournful possibilities, shall we grow gloomy and desponding? Shall we

wish we had never been born or ask that we may die? By no means. Shall we on the other hand grow frivolous and laugh at all things? No, that were ill - becoming in heirs of God. What shall we do? We will breathe this prayer, "Father, glorify thy name." That is to say, if I must lose my property, glorify thy name by my poverty; if I must be bereaved, glorify thy name in my sorrows; if I must die, glorify thy name in my departure. Now, when you pray in that fashion, your conflict is over, no outward fright nor inward fear remains if that prayer rises from the heart, you have now cast aside all gloomy forebodings, and you can thoughtfully and placidly pursue your way into the unknown to - morrow. Pass on, O caravan, into the trackless desert! Still proceed into the wilderness of the future, which no mortal eye hath seen, for yonder fiery - cloudy pillar leads the way and - all is well. "Father, glorify thy name," is our pillar of cloud, and, protected by its shade, we shall not be smitten by the heat of prosperity; "Father, glorify thy name," is our pillar of fire by night, nor shall the darkness of adversity destroy us, for the Lord shall be our light. March on, ye pilgrims, without a moment's delay because of fear. Tarry not for a single instant, this being your banner and your watchword, "Father, glorify thy name." Torturing doubts and forbodings of the future all end when the glorious name is seen over all.

Secondly, our text breathes a spirit which is the surrender of self. When a man can truly say, "Father, glorify thy name," he begins to understand that saying of our Savior concerning the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, for that prayer means, "Lord, do what thou wilt with me. I will make no stipulations, but leave all to thee. Remember that I am dust, and deal tenderly with me, but still glorify thy name. Do not spare me, if thereby thou wouldst be less glorious. Act not according to my foolish wishes or childish desires, but glorify thy name in me by any means and by all means." The prayer means - I am willing to be made nothing of; so that thy will may be done. I am willing to be as one dead and buried, forgotten, and unknown if thou mayest be magnified. I am ready to be buried and sown because I believe that this is the way by which I shall grow and bring forth fruit to thy praise.

This surrender includes obedient service, for our great Master goes on to say, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." True self - renunciation

shows itself in the obedient imitation of Christ. "Father, glorify thy name" means waiting the Lord's bidding and running in his ways. If the petition be written out at length it runs thus, - "Help me to copy my Savior's example, help me to follow in his blessed footsteps! This is my desire; passively to honor my heavenly Father by bearing his will, and actively to glorify him by doing his will. Lord, help me to do both of these, and never let me be forgetful that I am not my own, but wholly my Lord's." The prayer appears to me to be most properly used when it is made a personal one - "Father, glorify thy name in me. I am the recipient of so much mercy, get some glory out of me, I pray thee." Beloved, I think you must have noticed in this world that the man who really lives is the man who more than his fellows has learned to live for others and for God. You do not care for the preacher whose object is to display his own powers, you go away dissatisfied after hearing his bravest orations; but if any man shall only desire your soul's good and God's glory, you will put up with much eccentricity from him, and bear with many infirmities, because instinctively you love and trust the man who forgets himself. Now, what you thus see in preachers I beg you to try and consider in yourselves. If any of you are living for yourselves you will be unloveable; if you even act under the ambition to be loved you will miss your mark; but if you will love for love's sake, if you will seek to be Christ - like, if you will lay yourselves out to glorify God, to increase his kingdom, and to bless your fellow men, you will live in the highest and noblest sense. Seek not your own greatness, but labor to make Jesus great, and you will live. Christians live by dying.

Kill self and Christ shall live in you, and so shall you, yourself, most truly live. The way upward in true life and honor is to go downward in self - humiliation. Renounce all, and you shall be rich; have nothing, and you shall have all things. Try to be something, and you shall be nothing; be nothing, and you shall live; that is the great lesson which Jesus would teach us, but which we are slow to learn. "Father, glorify thy name" means let the corn of wheat be buried out of sight, to lose itself in its outgrowth. O self, thou art a dead thing, be thou laid deep in the sepulcher. Thou rotten carcase, for such thou art become since Jesus died for me, thou art an offense unto me! Away with thee! Do not poison my life, mar my motives, spoil my intents, hinder my self - denials, and defile

the chastity of my heart.

Thou dost prompt me to make provision for the flesh: away with thee, away with thee! "Father, glorify thy name." In our text, in the next place, a new care is paramount. The man has forgotten self, and self is buried like a grain of wheat, but now he begins to care for God's glory. His cry is, "Father, glorify thy name." Oh, if you can get rid of self you will feel at your heart a daily intensified longing to have the name of God glorified. Do ye not sometimes feel sick at heart as ye gaze upon this present generation? My soul is pained within me often when I see how everything is out of joint. Everything is now denied which from our youth we have regarded as sacred truth. The infallibility of Scripture is denied; the authenticity of one portion is challenged, and the inspiration of another called in question, and the good old book is torn to pieces by blind critics. Eternal verities against which only blaspheming infidels used to speak are now questioned by professed ministers of Christ. Doctrines which our sires never thought of doubting are now trailed in the mire, and that by those who profess to be teachers of God's word. "Father, glorify thy name" comes leaping to our lip because it is burning in our heart - burning there in holy wrath against the treachery of men. Indignation arises from our jealousy, and our eager spirits cry, "Oh, that God would glorify his name!" To many of us this is our heaviest care.

Brethren, we desire the Lord to glorify that name in ourselves by preventing our impatience in suffering, and keeping us from faintness in labor. We beseech our heavenly Father to destroy our selfishness, to cast out our pride, and to overcome every evil propensity which would prevent his getting glory out of us. Our soul is even as the clusters of the vine which belong to the owner of the vineyard: our whole nature is as the fruit for which the great vinedresser waits. Here fling me into the wine - vat; let every cluster and every grape be gathered and pressed. Great Lord, cast me into the wine - vat of thy service, and then express from me every drop of the essence of life. Let my whole soul flow forth to thee; let the ruddy juice burst forth on the right and on the left; and when the first rich liquor of my life is gone, then even to the utmost lees let me be pressed, till the last drop of the living juice which may bring glory to thee shall have come forth of me. Fling all away that will not turn into thy

glory, but use all that can be used: to the utmost glorify thy name. O thou great Father of my spirit, the care of thy child is to glorify thee, for if thou be a father thou shouldst have honor of thy children. "Honor thy father" is the first commandment with promise, and it is precious in our eyes. From our inmost hearts we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come."

Now, see how that care is divested of all sorrow by our casting it upon God. The prayer is not "Father, help me to glorify thy name," but it is "Father, glorify thy name" - thyself. Thy glory is too much for me to compass, do thou glorify thine own self. In thy providence so arrange my position and condition as to glorify thy name. By thy grace so sustain me, and sanctify me, that I may glorify thee. I cannot do it, but thou canst, and the care which I was glad to feel I am glad also to bring by faith to thee. "Father, glorify thy name."

And now, brethren, if you can pray in that fashion your confidence will come back to you; if you have been greatly distracted, calm peace will visit you again, for now you will say, "I will bear the Lord's will, and will be content therewith. I cannot quarrel with my Master's dealings any more, for I have asked him to glorify his name, and as I know that he is doing it I cannot murmur. How can I struggle against that which is really glorifying my Father? Your heart will cease to question and to quake, and nestle down beneath the eternal wings, in deep and happy peace. Filled with patience, you will take the cup which stood untasted, and grasp it with willingness if not with eagerness. "It is to glorify God," you say, "every drop of this cup is for his glory;" and therefore you put the chalice to your lip and drink straight on, and on, and on till you have drained the last drop, and find that "It is finished." I know you will not fail to do this if your soul has really felt the power of this prayer - "Father, glorify thy name." Why, sometimes it seems to me that it were worth while to pray to be burned at a stake, quick to the death, if by martyrdom we could glorify God. I could not desire such a death, and yet from one point of view I have often envied martyrs those ruby crowns which they cast at the feet of their dear Lord.

How honorable in them to have glorified God by so much suffering. Surely he is the grandest creature God has made who glorifies him most.

And who is he? Not the tall archangel of whom Milton sings, whose wand might make a mast for some great admiral, but the most insignificant nobody who has laid long upon her bed of weariness, and there has praised the Lord by perfect patience: - she, though apparently the least, may be the greatest glorifier of the Father. Perhaps the tiniest creature God has made will bring him more glory than leviathan, that maketh the deep to be hoary and causeth the waters to boil like a pot. That which most thoroughly yields itself to God, that which most completely annihilates itself into the eternal All - is most glorifying to him. May God of his infinite mercy bring us to this self - annihilation, this care for his glory only. Strive after it, beloved, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

One word to those of you who will have no sympathy with this sermon. You know that hymn in which the enquirer asks

"If I find him, if I follow,  
What reward is here?"

and the answer is

"Many a labor, many a sorrow,  
Many a tear."

Very discouraging this, is it not? You who look for mirth and selfish pleasure turn away in disgust. Yet the lines are very true. Jesus himself said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." But mark you, the day will come when those who were willing to suffer for Christ will be counted to be the only sane persons who ever lived, and when those who looked to the main chance, and cared for self, and disregarded God, and faith in Christ, and love for their fellow men, will be regarded as having been mere idiots and drivellers. Hear ye this parable.

It is spring time, and yonder is a farmer walking the furrows and sowing his seed. Those who know nothing of husbandry mock at him for his wastefulness with his grain. He is far too prodigal of good food. He is the wise man, is he not, who locks his granary door and preserves his corn?



Why should he go and fling it into the cold, thankless mould? Wait ye till the end of June, when the bloom is on the wheat. Wait ye till July and August have brought the months of harvest, and you shall see that he who gave his wheat to die shall, amidst the shouts of "Harvest home," be reckoned to have been wise and prudent; while he who kept the door of his granary bolted, through his sluggishness and selfishness, shall then be seen to be only fit for Bedlam, for he has no harvest save a mass of tangled weeds. Scatter ye, scatter ye your lives for others! Give yourselves up to Jesus. He who in this respect hateth his life shall find it, but he that keepeth it shall lose it. Still, O ye ungodly, if ye live to yourselves, God will yet have glory, and even glory out of you. Ye shall not rob him of his honor, nor tear a jewel from his throne. God will be glorified by you and in you in some form or other. Your everlasting lamentations, because of your great selfish mistakes, will vindicate the wisdom and the justice of God to all eternity. In a future state, though ye gnaw the flesh of your right arms for very anguish and sorrow and passion, you will be obliged to own that the warnings of the gospel were true, and that God is just. Your well deserved griefs shall help to make up the burden of that song which shall eternally celebrate the wisdom and goodness of God, for you will have to confess that Jesus was right and you were wrong; that to believe in him and to be his disciple was the right thing; and that to despise him, and to live unto yourself was what he told you it would be - namely, destruction and ruin.

God grant his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Good Cheer For Christmas**

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of

wines on the lees well refined. - Isaiah 25:6

We have nearly arrived at the great merry-making season of the year. On Christmas-day we shall find all the world in England enjoying themselves with all the good cheer which they can afford. Servants of God, you who have the largest share in the person of him who was born at Bethlehem, I invite you to the best of all Christmas fare - to nobler food than makes the table groan - bread from heaven, food for your spirit. Behold, how rich and how abundant are the provisions which God has made for the high festival which he would have his servants keep, not now and then, but all the days of their lives!

God, in the verse before us, has been pleased to describe the provisions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although many other interpretations have been suggested for this verse, they are all flat and stale, and utterly unworthy of such expressions as those before us. When we behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed - when we see him offered up upon the chosen mountain, we then discover a fulness of meaning in these gracious words of sacred hospitality, "The Lord shall make a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow." Our Lord himself was very fond of describing his gospel under the selfsame image as that which is here employed. He spoke of the marriage-supper of the king, who said "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready;" and it did not seem as if he could even complete the beauty of the parable of the prodigal son without the killing of the fat calf and the feasting and the music and dancing. As a festival on earth is looked forward to and looked back upon as an oasis amid a desert of time, so the gospel of Jesus Christ is to the soul its sweet release from bondage and distress, its mirth and joy. Upon this subject we intend to speak this morning, hoping to be helped by the great Master of the feast.

Our first head will be the feast; the second will be the banqueting-hall - "in this mountain;" the third will be the Host - "The Lord shall make a feast; and the fourth shall be the guests - he shall make it "unto all people."

I. First, then, we have to consider THE FEAST.

It is described as consisting of viands of the best, nay, of the best of the best. They are fat things, but they are also fat things full of marrow. Wines are provided of the most delicious and invigorating kind, wines on the lees, which retain their aroma, their strength, and their flavour; but these are most ancient and rare, having been so long kept that they have become well refined; by long standing they have purified, clarified themselves, and brought themselves to the highest degree of brightness and excellence. The best of the best God has provided in the gospel for the sons of men.

Let us attentively survey the blessings of the gospel, and observe that they are fat things, and fat things full of marrow.

One of the first gospel blessings is that of complete justification. A sinner, though guilty in himself, no sooner believes in Jesus than all his sins are pardoned. The righteousness of Christ becomes his righteousness, and he is accepted in the Beloved. Now, this is a delicious dish indeed. Here is something for the soul to feed upon. To think that I, though a deeply guilty one, am absolved of God, and set free from the bondage of the law! To think that I, though once an heir of wrath, am now as accepted before God as Adam was when he walked in the Garden without a sin; nay, more accepted still, for the divine righteousness of Christ belongs to me, and I stand complete in him, beloved in the Beloved, and accepted in him too! Beloved, this is such a precious truth, that when the soul feeds on it, it experiences a quiet peace, a deep and heavenly calm, to be found nowhere on earth besides. This is a kind of honey which never cloy, to be assured by the word of God, and by the witness of the Holy Ghost within you, that you are reconciled and brought nigh by the blood and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is a choice mercy. This is a fat thing indeed; but this is not all, it is a fat thing full of marrow too. There is an inner lusciousness in it when you reach the heart and soul of the matter, transcendent in richness; for remember that this righteousness, this acceptance, this justification, becomes ours in a perfectly legal way, one against which Satan himself cannot raise a demurrer, for our Substitute has paid our debt, therefore are we righteously discharged. Christ has

fulfilled the law, and made it honourable for us, and therefore are we justly accepted and beloved. Here is marrow indeed when we perceive the truth and reality of the substitution of Jesus, and grasp with heart and soul the fact of our great Surety standing in our stead at the bar of justice, that we might stand in his stead in the place of honour and love. What bliss it is to cry with the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Come hither, all ye whose spiritual tastes are purified by grace, and feed upon this choice provision, which shall be sweet to your taste, sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb.

Meditate upon a second blessing of the covenant of grace, namely, that of adoption. It is plainly revealed to us, that as many as have believed in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of their souls, are the sons of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Here, indeed, is a fat thing. What, shall a worm of the dust become a child of God? A rebel be adopted into the heavenly family? A condemned criminal not only forgiven, but actually made a child of God? Wonder of wonders! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" To which of the kings and princes of this earth did he ever say, "Thou art my son"? He has not spoken thus to the great ones and to the mighty, but God hath chosen the base things of this world and things that are despised, yea, and things that are not, and made these to be of the seed royal. The wise and prudent are passed over, but babes receive the revelation of his love. Lord, whence is this to me? What am I and what is my father's house, that thou shouldst speak of making me thy child? This gloriously fat thing is also "full of marrow." There is an inner richness in adoption, for, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Well does the apostle remind us that if children, then heirs, for we are thus assured of our blessed heritage. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Here

are royal dainties of which the Word has said most truly, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house."

Passing on from the blessing of adoption, let us remember that every child of God is the object of eternal love without beginning and without end. This is one of the fat things full of marrow. Is it so, that I, a believer in Jesus, unworthy as I am, am the object of the eternal love of God? What transport lies in that thought! Long before the Lord began to create the world, he had thought of me. Long ere Adam fell or Christ was born, and the angels sung their first choral over Bethlehem's miracle, the eye and the heart of God were towards his elect people. He never began to love them, they were always "a people near unto him." Is it not so written, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Some kick at the doctrine of election, but they are ill advised, since they labour to overturn one of the noblest dishes of the feast; they would dam up one of the coolest streams that flow from Lebanon; they would cover over with rubbish one of the richest veins of golden ore that make rich the people of God. For this doctrine of a love that hath no commencement, is the best wine of our Beloved, and "that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak." How joyously doth the heart exult and leap for very joy when this truth is brought home by the witness of the Spirit of God! then the soul is satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord.

Equally delightful is the corresponding reflection that this love which had no beginning shall have no end. He is a God that changeth not. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Where he has once set his heart of love upon a man, he never turns away from doing him good. He saith by the mouth of his servant the prophet, that he hateth putting away. Though we sin against him often, and provoke him to jealousy, yet still, as the waters of Noah, so is his covenant to us; for as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so he swears that he will not be wroth with us nor rebuke us. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not

have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Why, beloved, this indeed is a fat thing; and I may add that it is full of marrow when you remember that not merely has the Lord thought of you from everlasting, but loved you. Oh! the depth of that word "love," as it applies to the infinite Jehovah, whose name, whose essence, whose nature is love! He has loved you with all the immutable intensity of his heart, never more and never less; loved you so much that he gave his only begotten Son for you; loved you so well that nothing could content him but making you to be conformed into the image of his dear Son, and causing you to partake of his glory that you may be with him where he is! Come, feed on this, ye heirs of eternal life, for here are fat things full of marrow.

We should not, beloved, have completed this list if we had omitted one precious doctrine, which needs a refined taste perhaps, but which, when a man hath once learned to feed on it, seemeth to him to be best of all - I mean the great truth of union to Christ. We are plainly taught in the word of God that as many as have believed are one with Christ: they are married to him, there is a conjugal union based upon mutual affection. The union is closer still, for there is a vital union between Christ and his saints. They are in him as the branches are in the vine; they are members of the body of which he is the head. They are one with Jesus in such a true and real sense that with him they died, with him they have been buried, with him they are risen, with him they are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places. There is an indissoluble union between Christ and all his people: "I in them and they in me." Thus the union may be described: - Christ is in his people the hope of glory, and they are dead and their life is hid with Christ in God. This is a union of the most wonderful kind, which figures may faintly set forth, but which it were impossible for language completely to explain. Oneness to Jesus is one of the fat things full of marrow. For if it be so, indeed, that we are one with Christ, then because he lives we must live also; because he was justified by his resurrection, we also are justified in him; because he is rewarded and for ever sits down at his Father's right hand, we also have obtained the inheritance in him and by faith grasp it now, and enjoy its earnest. Oh, can it be that this aching head already has a right to a celestial crown!

That this palpitating heart has a claim to the rest which remaineth for the people of God! That these weary feet have a title to tread the sacred halls of the New Jerusalem! It is so, for if we are one with Christ, then all he has belongs to us, and it is but a matter of time, and of gracious arrangement when we shall come into the full enjoyment thereof. Truly, in meditation upon this topic, we may each of us exclaim, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

I cannot bring forth all the courses of my Lord's banquet; one serving man cannot bear before you the riches of such a surpassing feast; but I would remind you of one more, and that is the doctrine of resurrection and everlasting life. This poor world dimly guessed at the immortality of the soul, but it knew nothing of the resurrection of the body: the gospel of Jesus has brought life and immortality to light, and he himself has declared to us of Jesus, that he that believeth in him shall never die. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet should he live." Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Not the soul only, but the body also shall partake of immortality, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. We expect to die, but we are assured of living again. If the Lord come not, we know that our bodies shall see corruption; but here is our comfort, we dread no annihilation, that dark shadow never crosses our spirits; we dread no hell, no purgatory, no judgment - Christ hath perfected for ever them that are set apart; none can condemn whom he absolves. The saints shall judge the angels, and sit with their Lord in the day of the great assize. To us the coming of Christ will be a day of joy and of rejoicing: we shall be caught up together with him; his reign shall be our reign, his glory our glory. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, and as ye see your brethren and your sisters departing one by one from among you, sorrow not as those that are without hope, but say unto each other, "They are not lost, but they have gone before," for, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Here are fat things full of marrow, for ours is a glorious hope, and full of immortality. Our expected immortality is not that of mere existence, it is not the barren privilege of life without bliss, existence without happiness - it is full of glory; for "we

shall be like him when we shall see him as he is;" we shall be with God, at whose right hand there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. He shall make us to drink of the river of his pleasures; songs and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Oh, for the no more weeping,  
Within that land of love!  
The endless joy of keeping  
The bridal feast above!

Oh, for the hour of seeing  
My Saviour face to face!  
The hope of ever being  
In that sweet meeting-place."

Thus I have set before you a few of the fat things full of marrow which the King of kings has set before his guests at the wedding feast of his love.

Changing the run of the thought, and yet really keeping to the same subject, let me now bring before you the goblets of wine. "Wines on the lees - wines on the lees well refined." These we shall consider as symbolising the joys of the gospel. What are these? I can only speak of those which I have myself been permitted to sip at. One of the dearest joys of the Christian life is a sense of perfect peace with God. Oh, I tell you when one is quiet for awhile, and the din and noise of business is out of one's ears, it is one of the most delicious things in all the world to meditate upon God, and to feel he is no enemy to me, and I am no enemy to him. It is beyond comparison cheering, musingly to feel, I love him. If there be anything which I can do to serve him, I will do it. If there be any suffering which would honour him, if he would give me the strength to endure it, it should be my happiness, though it caused me to die a martyr's death a thousand times. If I could but honour my God, my Father, and my Friend, all should be acceptable to me. There is nothing between the Lord and me by way of difference or alienation; I am brought nigh through the blood of his dear and only begotten Son. He is my God, my Father, and my all, and I am his child. Some of us have tried the imaginary happiness of laughter; we have mixed with the giddy throng,



and tasted the wines of the house of carnal merriment, but our honest experience is that one single draught from the cup of salvation is worth rivers of worldly mirth.

"Solid joys and lasting pleasures  
Only Zion's children know."

A quiet heart, resting in the love of God, dwelling in perfect peace, hath a royalty about it which cannot for a moment be matched by the fleeting joys of this world.

Our joy sometimes flashes with a brighter light, but even then it is not less pure and safe. You may look upon this wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moveth itself aright, for there is no woe, no redness of the eyes reserved for those who drink even to inebriation of this sacred wine. This sacred exhilaration is caused by a sense of security. A child of God, when he has looked well to his Redeemer, and seen the merit of the precious blood, and the power of the never-ceasing plea, feels himself safe, perfectly safe. I do not understand the child of God reading his Bible and yet being afraid of being cast into hell. I can understand that the fear may cross his mind lest after all he should prove a castaway; but as he approaches once again to the foot of the cross, and looks up to Jesus, he feels that it cannot be. None were ever cast away who stood at the cross foot; for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." A child of God, with no hope but what he finds in Christ, has no cause to think his eternal state to be insecure. All are safe who are in Christ, even as all were safe who were in Noah's ark. No flood, no storm could hurt the man of whom it was said, "The Lord shut him in." The Lord has shut in all his people in Christ, and they are eternally safe in Christ. When the spirit knows that "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," then is it replenished with delight. When one feels that live or die, or work or suffer, all is well, how free from care is the heart! How divinely joyful to know that if one should lose all his earthly substance, the Lord will provide; that if one should be tempted, tempted greatly, yet with the temptation the way of escape shall be made! here is assurance rich with consolation. When one feels that all is safe, all safe eternally, for life or death all secured, I tell

you that this is wine on the lees, wine on the lees well refined, and he who wins a draught thereof need not envy the angels their celestial banquets.

This joy of ours will sometimes rise to an elevation yet more sublime when it is caused by communion with God. Believers, while engaged in prayer and praise, in service and in suffering, are enabled by the Holy Spirit to hold high converse with their Lord. Do not imagine that Abraham's speech with God was an unusual privilege. The father of the faithful did but enjoy what all the faithful ones participate in according to the grace given them. We tell to God our griefs; discoursing upon our sorrows not in fiction, but declaring them in real conversation, as when a man speaketh with his neighbour: meanwhile the Lord's Spirit whispers to us with the still small voice of the promise, such words as calm our minds and guide our feet. Yes, and when our Beloved takes us into the banqueting-house of real conscious fellowship with himself, and waves the love-banner over us, our holy joy is as much superior to all merely human mirth, as the heavens are above the earth. Then do we speak and sing with sacred zest, and feel as if we could weep for very joy of heart, for our Beloved is ours and we are his. His left hand is under our head, and his right hand doth embrace us, and our only fear is lest anything should grieve our Beloved and cause him to withdraw himself from us; for it is heaven on earth, and the fair antepast of heaven above to see his face, to taste his love. Communion with Christ is as the wine on the lees well refined.

We will place on the table one goblet more, of which you may drink as much as you will. We have provided for us the pleasures of hope, a hope most sure and steadfast, most bright and glorious - the hope that what we know to-day shall be outdone by what we shall know to-morrow; the hope that by-and-by what we now see, as in a glass darkly, shall be seen face to face. We shall say, as in heaven, as the Queen of Sheba did in Jerusalem, "The half hath not been told us." We are looking forward to a speedy day when we shall be unburdened of this creaking tabernacle, and being absent from the body shall be present with the Lord. Our hope of future bliss is elevated and confident. Oh, the vision of his face! Oh, the sight of Jesus in his exaltation! Oh, the kiss of his lips - the word, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from that dear mouth! and then for ever to lie

in his bosom. Begone, ye cares, begone, ye sorrows; if heaven be so near, ye shall not molest us. The inn may be a rough and poverty-stricken one, but we are only travellers, not tenants upon lease. This is not our place of resting; we are on our journey home! Beloved, in the prospect of the quiet resting-places in the land which floweth with milk and honey, you have wines on the lees well refined.

If we were not limited to time this morning, as, alas! we are, I should have reminded you that these joys of the believer are ancient in their origin, for that is shown in the text. Old wines are intended by "wines well refined;" they have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them, and have been cleared of all the coarser material. In the East, wine will be improved by keeping even more than the wines of the West! and even so the mercies of God are the sweeter to our meditations because of their antiquity. From old eternity, or ever the earth was, the covenant engagements of everlasting love have been resting like wines on the lees, and to-day they bring to us the utmost riches of all the attributes of God. I should also have reminded you of the fulness of their excellence, because the wine on the lees holds its flavour, and retains its aroma; and there is a fulness and richness about the blessings of divine grace which endears them to our hearts. The joys of grace are not fantastical emotions, or transient flashes of a meteoric excitement, they are based on substantial truth; are reasonable, fit, and proper. They belong not to the superficial and frothy emotions of mere feeling, but are deep, solemn, earnest motions, justified by the clearest judgment. Our bliss is not of the foam and the surge, it dwells in the innermost caverns of our heart. I would also remind you of their refined nature. No sin mingled with the joys of the gospel and the delights of communion - they are well refined. Gospel joys are elevating, they make men like angels. As in the gospel God comes down to men, so by the gospel men go up to God. I might also have shown you how absolutely peerless are the provisions of grace. There is no feast like that of the gospel, no meat like the flesh of Jesus, no drink like his blood, no joys like that which crowns the gospel feast.

II. I can say no more: the table is before you, and now we must pass on with great brevity to notice THE BANQUETING-HALL.

"In this mountain." There is a reference here to three things - the same symbol bearing three interpretations. First, literally, the mountain upon which Jerusalem is built. I do not doubt that the reference is here to the hill of the Lord upon which Jerusalem stood; the great transaction which was fulfilled at Jerusalem upon Calvary hath made to all nations a great feast. It was there where that centre cross bore upon it One who joined earth and heaven in mysterious union; it was there where amidst thick darkness the Son of God was made a curse for men; it was there where sorrow culminated that joy was consummated. On that very mountain where Jews and Gentiles met together, and with clamorous wrath cried, "Let him be crucified" - it was there in the giving up of the Only-begotten, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, that the Lord made a feast of fat things. Everything I have spoken of this morning is found in Christ. He is the resurrection and the life: in him we are justified, adopted, and made secure; every drop of joy we drink streams from his flowing veins.

A second meaning is the church. Frequently Jerusalem is used as the symbol of the church of God, and it is within the pale of the church that the great feast of the Lord is made unto all nations. I am in the truest sense a very sound churchman. I am indeed a high churchman; a most determined stickler for the church. I do not believe in salvation outside of the pale of the church. I believe that the salvation of God is confined to the church, and to the church alone. "But," says one, "what church?" Ay! that's the question: God forbid I should mean by that either the Baptist church, or the Independent church, or the Episcopalian church, or the Presbyterian, or any other - I mean the church of Jesus Christ, the company of God's chosen, the fellowship of the blood-bought, the family of believers, be they where they may, for them is provided the feast of fat things. Whatever outward and visible church they may have associated themselves with, they shall drink of the wines on the lees well refined; but the feast is only to be found where they are found who put their trust in Jesus. There is but one church in heaven and earth, composed of men called by the Holy Ghost, and made to live anew by his quickening power; and it is through the ministry of this church that an abundant feast is spread for all nations, a feast to which the nations are summoned by chosen herald, whom God calls to proclaim the good news of salvation by

Jesus Christ.

But, brethren, the mountain sometimes means the church of God exalted to its latter-day glory. This mountain is to be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. This text will have its grandest fulfillment in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then shall the glory of the gospel be unveiled more clearly than at this present. Men shall have a fuller perception of the glory of the Lord, and a deeper enjoyment of his grace; while happiness and peace shall reign with unmolested quiet. Soon shall come the golden age which has been so long foretold, for which we cry with unceasing expectation. The Lord send it speedily, and his be the praise.

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE HOST of the feast.

"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." Mark well the truth that in the gospel banquet there is not a single dish brought by man. The Lord makes it, and he makes it all. I know some would like to bring a little with them to the banquet, something at least by way of trimming and adornment, so that they might have a share of the honour; but it must not be, the Lord of hosts makes the feast, and he will not even permit the guests to bring their own wedding garments - they must stop at the door and put on the robe which the Lord has provided, for salvation is all grace from first to last, and all of him who is wondrous in working, and who doeth all things according to the counsels of his will. Out of all the precious truths which I spoke of at the beginning of this sermon, there is not one which comes from any source but a divine one; and of all the joys which I tried feebly to picture there is not one which takes its rise from earth's springs; they all flow from the eternal fount. The Lord makes the feast; and, observe, he does it, too, as the Lord of hosts, as a sovereign, as a ruler, doing as he wills amongst the sons of men, preparing what he wills for the good of his creatures, and constraining whom he wills to come to the marriage-feast. The Lord provides sovereignly as Lord of hosts, and all-sufficiently as Jehovah. It needed the all-sufficiency of God to provide a feast for hungry sinners. No other than the infinite "I AM" could provide a feast substantial enough to supply the wants of immortal spirits; but he has

done it, and you may guess of the value of the viands by the nature of our entertainer. If God spread the feast it is not to be despised; if the Lord has put forth all the omnipotence of his eternal power and Godhead in preparing the banquet for the multitude of the sons of men, then depend upon it it is a banquet worthy of him, one to which they may come with confidence, for it must be such a banquet as their souls require, and such as the world never saw before. O my soul, rejoice thou in thy God and King. If he provides the feast, let him have all the glory of it. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." O King immortal, eternal, invisible, thou feddest thy children in the wilderness with manna which dropped from heaven, and with water that flowed out of a flinty rock, and they gave thanks unto thy name; but now thou fillest us with nobler food. They did eat manna and are dead, but we live on the immortal bread, even Jesus, and therefore we can never die. They drank of the water which flowed from the rock, and yet they thirsted again, but we shall never thirst, but for ever abide near to thyself, while the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water. Therefore, blessed be thy name, yea, a thousand times blessed be thy name, O thou Most High! Let all heaven say "Amen" to the praises of our hearts, and let the multitude of thy children here on earth, for whom this feast is spread, laud and magnify and bless thy name from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.

#### IV. Lastly, a word or two upon THE GUESTS.

The Lord has made this banquet "for all people". What a precious word this is! "For all people." Then this includes not merely the chosen people, the Jews, whose were the oracles, but it encompasses the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, who by Jesus are brought nigh. The barbarian is invited to this feast; the Scythian is not rejected. The polished Greek finds an open door; the hardy Roman shall meet with an equal welcome. Caesar's household, if they come, shall receive a portion, and so shall the beggar's brethren. Blessed be God for that word, "unto all people," for it permits missionary enterprise in every land; however degraded a race may be, we have here provision made for it. This feast of fat things is made as much for the Sudra as for the Brahmin; the gospel is as much to be preached to the degraded Bushman as to the civilised Chinese. Dwell

on that word, "all people," and you will see it includes the rich, for there is a feast of fat things for them, such as their gold could never buy; and it includes the poor, for they being rich in faith shall have fellowship with God. "All people." This takes in the man of enlarged intelligence and extensive knowledge; but it equally encompasses the illiterate man who cannot read. The Lord makes this feast "for all people;" for you old people, if you come to Jesus you shall find that he is suitable to you; for you young men and maidens, and you little children, if you put your trust in God's appointed Saviour, there shall be much joy and happiness for you - "For all people"? Methinks, if I were now seeking and had not laid hold on Christ, this word, "all people" would be a great comfort to me, because it gives hope to all who desire to come. None have ever been rejected of all who have ever come to Christ and asked for mercy. Still is it true, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Some very odd people have come to him, some very wicked people, some very hardened people, but the door was never closed in any one's face. Why should Jesus begin hard dealings with you? He cannot, because he cannot change. If he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," make one of the "hims" that come, and he cannot cast you out. There is another thought, namely, that between the covers of the Bible there is no mention made of one person who may not come. There is no description given of a person who is forbidden to trust Christ. I should like you to look the book through, you who dream that Jesus will reject you, and find where it is said, "Such a one I will reject; such a one I will refuse." When you find such a rejecting clause, then you will have a right to be unbelieving, but till you do I beseech you do not needlessly torment yourself. Why needlessly sow doubts and fears? There will be enough of them without your making them for yourself. Do not limit what the Lord does not limit. I know he has an elect people; I rejoice in it - I hope you will rejoice in it too one day; and I know that his people have this marrow and fatness provided for them and for them alone; but still this does not at all conflict with the other precious truth that whosoever believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. If you believe in Jesus Christ, all these things are yours. Come, poor trembler, the silver trumpet soundeth, and this is the note it rings, "Come and welcome, come and welcome, come and welcome." The harsher trumpet of the law which waxed exceedingly loud and long at Sinai had this for its note, "Set bounds about the mount: let

none touch it lest they die." But the trumpet for Calvary sounds with the opposite note; it is, "Come and welcome, come and welcome, sinner, come! Come as you are, sinful as you are, hardened as you are, careless as you think you are, and having no good thing whatsoever, come to your God in Christ!" O may you come to him who gave his Son to bleed in the sinner's stead, and casting yourself on what Christ has done, may you resolve, "If I perish, I will trust in him; if I be cast away, I will rely on him." You shall not perish, but for you there shall be the feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. The Lord bless you very richly, for his name's sake. Amen.

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## **Good Earnests Of Great Success**

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. - Acts 6:7

Certain things preceded this prosperity—the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church; some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavour to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who should distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightway the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. Well might great grace rest upon them all, for they loved each other with a pure heart fervently. Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there be divisions amongst you, and one shall say, "I am for this," and another, "I am for that," how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, should be present with you, and working among you? But when we are



knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order, where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren conscientiously to disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a rent, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of any one that evening, contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us; surely he will bless us yet more abundantly than aforesaid."

Moreover, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of eighty or ninety; in fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other, that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens. If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist churches met together to pray, I should

have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be!" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday, and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless all our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? The Lord send prosperity. Amen, say we, amen from our hearts. And amen we hope all God's saints will say. May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country; and, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? My dear brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth: fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that loved him. The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savour of Jesus Christ's name: our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of his grace shall be displayed. Keep together, brethren, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured for such churches as do not enjoy it now; secondly, we shall have a word or two upon the results of such prosperity; and then, thirdly, upon the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.

## I. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?

If we pant to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. We must never begin our catalogue of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all thy quickening powers."

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon thee we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, there must be much plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck lately in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching about the gospel, but preaching the gospel. So it was

with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach "Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And it was the same with Luther. Luther's preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are ye saved, and by faith alone." They spake this, and they spake it again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they laboured with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And, my brethren, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the gospel of Christ. We must keep to this. This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified! Look to him—not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church-goings or your chapel-goings, but to Christ Jesus exalted. Look to him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you his children, and for ever to glorify you with himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday School teachers, you must teach this same gospel. I know you do, but full many Sunday School teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those

children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way—"Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath; do not buy sweets on a Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to heaven"—which is not true, and is not the gospel; for the same gospel is for little children as for grown-up men—not "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes, the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we must have much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to enquire this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well-skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands. As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king, and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that, though I hate heresy—I hope your majesty does not suspect me on that account—yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." Now, this was what made the gospel victorious in those days— the stern

integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no grace and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind. Oh! to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practised amongst professors that would have at once to be given up. As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all his power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it; you must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it. Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be holy living as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice, if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add individual, personal exertion. I am so full with one theme today, that if I plough in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it had got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticise it and pull it to pieces. But this was not orthodox; according to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valour and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything

before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But on a sudden they said in the council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home? We should be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armour be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armour once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it in practice.

Combined with this there must be much earnest prayer. The prayer of faith! have we not held it in high esteem, have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith—a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we

have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to this church in a month, ought we ever to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. I tell you, sirs, he can find ministers for his truth—ay, if he willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if he pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what he did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God? The Lord can find his men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham;" and as he could then, so he can now. Let us not despair. If we will but pray for it, our heavenly Father will deny his children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase, and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? then we must all get more intense glowing spiritual life. Do you understand me. There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, with the sluggard—

"You have woke me too soon, I must slumber again,"



and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality! Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! you are glad to get this second man to be your servant; he is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so. On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind; though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master; and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for him who has bought him with his precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord multiply the number of such; yea, may he make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself. It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my

groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other; wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring; the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth. If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I should preach indeed, and move your souls, I think. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

II. Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, **THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY—**souls are saved.

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for twelve months, in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless, that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength. Richard Knill once said, that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul. And he was right, and I may well stir you

up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?

"Let him be crowned with majesty,  
Who bowed his head in death,  
And let his praise be sounded high,  
By all things that have breath."

If you have not forgotten what he suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of his soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of his kingdom, the honour of his fame, the growing enthusiasm of his subjects—to make his excellency apparent, and his praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in your prayers and your efforts, that the number of his disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be to build up the church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of his bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighbourhood are thereby favouring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion, because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some object, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

III. But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, **THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH.**

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring. One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced; and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited; not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses, but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. "No," the good deacon says, "you know our pew-rents keep up very well; we have not a seat to let in the gallery!" "Ah!" and says the minister, "And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners; at least, if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them." That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpus is left to rot as it may, and to decay as many churches do. Now, were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days; but speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be. You will get to be very respectable over at the

Tabernacle; after I die you will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it. This is the tendency, however, of every church, it matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people have got to be too great for the gospel, and too proud to receive the truth in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen so long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit amongst us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity, which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly-coloured, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way; ay, and churches too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then "of course" they must go to church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system; the love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together; he is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple truth. "Give me that," says he, "and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I want it; but on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus; let me hear the story of the cross; let me see sinners led to Calvary—it is all I want, and I am well content if I have this."

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder perhaps what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O ye unconverted women, it is about you that we are concerned. And you, ye unconverted men, it is about you that we are anxious; we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you, and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ. Now look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice, it is said that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ. They were once the bigoted enemies of the gospel, but they became obedient to the faith. Why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived in immorality, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah! well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. A young woman wrote to me the other day— I do not know who she is, but she said, "I cannot tell anybody, but I have done so-and-so, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it it would break her heart." I do not know here, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she says, "Can I be saved?" Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the gospel, and yet sinned. Oh! well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are. Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at his feet. Trust him! Trust him! Do him the honour to believe that he can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been. Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe him; trust him, and he will be as good as ever you can think him to be; for when you think your highest thoughts of him, he is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost. The priests were obedient to the faith; why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved; why should not you be like them? Did you notice how it is described? They were obedient to the faith." Then it

seems that the gospel is all summed up in that word "faith." To be obedient to the faith; to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; to trust him because he has suffered in your stead; to believe that the divine justice is satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith. We sang at the Lord's Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Yes, just as you are come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf. We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected, that his cross should be despised, that his blood should be trampled on. O come to him! He will not reject you. Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. Breathe a silent prayer to him now. Cast your soul upon him, sink or swim.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude,  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

But he can do it. Rely on him, and eternal life is yours.

Brethren and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it

be our cry before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve him who served us even to the death. You will never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when constrained by the love of Christ, he said, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church. The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us, the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times. Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether he will not hear you, and you shall find he will to your soul's comfort. Amen.

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## **The Good Man's Life And Death**

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.- Philippians 1:21

How ominously these words follow each other in the text—"live," "die." There is but a comma between them, and surely as it is in the words so is it in reality. How brief the distance between life and death! In fact there is none. Life is but death's vestibule, and our pilgrimage on earth is but a journey to the grave. The pulse that preserves our being beats our death march, and the blood which circulates our life is floating it onward to the deeps of death. To-day we see our friends in health, to-morrow we hear of their decease. We clasped the hand of the strong man but yesterday, and to-day we close his eyes. We rode in the chariot of comfort but an hour ago, and in a few more hours the last black chariot must convey us to the home of all living. Oh, how closely allied is death to life! The lamb teat



sporteth in the field must soon feel the knife. The ox that loweth in the pasture is fattening for the slaughter. Trees do but grow that they may be felled. Yea, and greater things than these feel death. Empires rise and flourish, they flourish but to decay, they rise to fall. How often do we take up the volume of history, and read of the rise and fall of empires. We hear of the coronation and the death of kings. Death is the black servant who rides behind the chariot of life. See life! and death is close behind it. Death reacheth far throughout this world, and hath stamped all terrestrial things with the broad arrow of the grave. Stars die mayhap; it is said that conflagrations have been seen far off in the distant ether, and astronomers have marked the funerals of worlds, the decay of those mighty orbs that we had imagined set for ever in sockets of silver to glisten as the lamps of eternity. But blessed be God, there is one place where death is not life's brother, where life reigns alone; "to live," is not the first syllable which is to be followed by the next, "to die." There is a land where deathknells are never tolled, where winding-sheets are never woven, where graves are never digged. Blest land beyond the skies! To reach it we must die. But if after death we obtain a glorious immortality, our text is indeed true: "To die is gain."

If you would get a fair estimate of the happiness of any man you must judge him in these two closely connected things, his life and his death. The heathen Solon said, "Call no man happy until he is dead; for you know not what changes may pass upon him in life." We add to that—Call no man happy until he is dead; because the life that is to come, if that be miserable, shall far outweigh the highest life of happiness that hath been enjoyed on earth. To estimate a man's condition we must take it in all its length. We must not measure that one thread which reacheth from the cradle to the coffin. We must go further; we must go from the coffin to the resurrection, and from the resurrection on throughout eternity. To know whether acts are profitable, I must not estimate their effects on me for the hour in which I live, but for the eternity in which I am to exist. I must not weigh matters in the scales of time; I must not calculate by the hours, minutes and seconds of the clock, but I must count and value things by the ages of eternity.

Come, then, beloved; we have before us the picture of a man, the two

sides of whose existence will both of them bear inspection; we have his life, we have his death: we have it said of his life, "to live is Christ," of his death, "to die is gain;" and if the same shall be said of any of you, oh! ye may rejoice! Ye are amongst that thrice happy number whom the Lord hath loved, and whom he delighteth to honor.

We shall now divide our text very simply into these two points, the good man's life, and the good man's death.

I. As to HIS LIFE, we have that briefly described thus: "For me to live is Christ." The believer did not always live to Christ. When he was first born into this world he was a slave of sin, and an heir of wrath, even as others. Though he may have afterwards become the greatest of saints, yet until divine grace hath entered his heart, he is "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." He only begins to live to Christ when God the Holy Spirit convinceth him of his sin, and of his desperate evil nature, and when by grace he is brought to see the dying Saviour making a propitiation for his guilt. From that moment when by faith he sees the slaughtered victim of Calvary, and casts his whole life on him, to be saved, to be redeemed, to be preserved, and to be blest by the virtue of his atonement and the greatness of his grace, from that moment the man begins to live to Christ.

And now shall we tell you as briefly as we can what living to Christ means.

It means, first, that the life of a Christian derives its parentage from Christ. "For me to live is Christ." The righteous man has two lives. He has one which he inherited from his parents; he looks back to an ancestral race of which he is the branch, and he traces his life to the parent stock; but he has a second life, a life spiritual, a life which is as much above mere mental life, as mental life is above the life of the animal or the plant; and for the source of this spiritual life he looks not to father or mother, nor to priest nor man, nor to himself, but he looks to Christ. He says, "O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, thou art my spiritual parent; unless thy Spirit had breathed into my nostrils the breath of a new, holy and spiritual life, I had been to this day "dead in trespasses and sins." I owe my third principle, my spirit, to the implantation of thy grace. I had a body and a soul by my parents, I have

received the third principle, the spirit from thee, and in thee I live, and move, and have my being. My new, my best, my highest my most heavenly life, is wholly derived from thee. To thee I ascribe it. My life is hid with Christ in God. It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." And so the Christian says, "For me to live is Christ," because for me to live is to live a life whose parentage is not of human origin, but of divine, even of Christ himself. Again he intended to say, that Christ was the sustenance of his life, the food his newborn spirit fed upon. The believer hath three parts to be sustained. The body, which must have its proper nutriment; the soul, which must have knowledge and thought to supply it; and the spirit which must feed on Christ. Without bread I become attenuated to a skeleton, and at last I die; without thought my mind becomes dwarfed, and, and dwindles itself until I become the idiot, with a soul that hath just life, but little more. And without Christ my newborn spirit must become a vague shadowy emptiness. It cannot live unless it feeds on that heavenly manna which came down from heaven. Now the Christian can say, "The life that I live is Christ," because Christ is the food on which he feeds and the sustenance of his new-born Spirit.

The apostle also meant, that the fashion of his life was Christ. I suppose that every man living has a model by which he endeavors to shape his life. When we start in life, we generally select some person, or persons, whose combined virtues shall be to us the mirror of perfection. "Now," says Paul, "if you ask me after what fashion I mould my life, and what is the model by which I would sculpture my being, I tell you, it is Christ. I have no fashion, no form, no model by which to shape my being, except the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the true Christian, if he be an upright man, can say the same. Understand, however what I mean by the word "upright." An upright man mean" a straightt up man—a man that does not cringe and bow, and fawn to other men's feet; a man that does not lean for help on other men, but just stands with his head heavenward, in all the dignity of his independence, leaning nowhere except on the arm of the Omnipotent. Such a man will take Christ alone to be his model and pattern. This is the very age of conventionalities. People dare not now do a thing unless everybody else does the same. You do not often say, "Is a thing right?" The most you say is, "Does so-and-so do it?" You have some great personage or other in your family connection, who is looked upon

as being the very standard of all propriety; and if he do it, then you think you may safely do it. And oh! what an outcry there is against a man who dares to be singular, who just believes that some of your conventionalities are trammels and chains, and kicks them all to pieces and says, "I am free!" The world is at him in a minute; all the ban-dogs of malice and slander are at him, because he says, "I will not follow your model! I will vindicate the honor of my Master, and not take your great masters to be for ever my pattern." Oh! I would to God that every statesman, that every minister, that every Christian were free to hold that his only form, and his only fashion for imitation, must be the character of Christ. I would that we could scorn all superstitious attachments to the ancient errors of our ancestors; and whilst some would be for ever looking upon age and upon hoary antiquity with veneration, I would we had the courage to look upon a thing, not according to its age, but according to its rightness, and so weigh everything, not by its novelty, or by its antiquity, but by its conformity to Christ Jesus and his holy Gospel; rejecting that which is not, though it be hoary with years, and believing that which is, even though it be but the creature of the day, and saying with earnestness, "For me to live is not to imitate this man or the other, but 'for me to live is Christ.'"

I think, however, that the very center of Paul's idea would be this: The end of his life is Christ. You think you see Paul land upon the shores of Philippi. There, by the river-side, were ships gathered and many merchant men. There you would see the merchant busy with his ledger, and overlooking his cargo, and he paused and put his hand upon his brow, and said as he griped his money-bag, "For me to live is gold." And there you see his humbler clerk, employed in some plainer work, toiling for his master, and he, perspiring with work mutters between his teeth, "For me to live is to gain a bare subsistence." And there stands for a moment to listen to him, one with a studious face and a sallow countenance, and with a roll full of the mysterious characters of wisdom. "Young man," he says, "for me to live is learning." "Aha! aha!;" says another, who stands by, clothed in mail, with a helmet on his head, "I scorn your modes of life, for me to live is glory." But there walks one, a humble tent-maker, called Paul; you see the lineaments of the Jew upon his face, and he steps into the middle of them all and says, "For me to live

is Christ." Oh! how they smile with contempt upon him, and how they scoff at him, for having chosen such an object! "For me to live is Christ." And what did he mean! The learned man stopped, and said, "Christ! who is he? Is he that foolish, mad fellow, of whom I have heard, who was executed upon Calvary for sedition?" The meek reply is, "It is he who died, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "What?" says the Roman soldier, "and do you live for a man who died a slave's death? What glory will you get by fighting his battles?" What profit is there in your preaching, chimes in the trader. Ah! and even the merchant's clerk thought Paul mad; for he said, "How can he feed his family? how will he supply his wants if all he liveth for is to honor Christ?" Ay, but Paul knew what he was at. He was the wiser man of them all. He knew which way was right for heaven, and which would end the best. But, right or wrong, his soul was wholly possessed with the idea—"For me to live is Christ."

Brethren and sisters, can you say, as professing Christians, that you live up to the idea of the apostle Paul? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? I will tell you my opinion of many of you. You join our churches you are highly respectable men; you are accepted among us as true and real Christians; but in all honesty and truth I do not believe that for you to live is Christ. I see many of you whose whole thoughts are engrossed with the things of earth; the mere getting of money; the amassing of wealth, seems to be your only object. I do not deny that you are liberal, I will not dare to say that you are not generous, and that your cheque-book does not often bear the mark of some subscription for holy purposes, but I dare to say, after all, that you cannot in honesty say that you live wholly for Christ. You know that when you go to your shop or your warehouse, you do not think, in doing business, that you are doing it for Christ; you dare not be such a hypocrite as to say so. You must say that you do it for self-aggrandisement, and for family advantage. "Well!" says one, "and is that a mean reason?" By no means; not for you, if you are mean enough to ask that question, but for the Christian it is. He professes to live for Christ; then how IS it he dares to profess to live for his Master, and yet does not do so, but lives for mere worldly gain? Let me speak to many a lady here. You would be shocked if I should deny your Christianity. You move in the highest circles of life, and you would be astonished if I should presume to touch your piety, after your many

generous donations to religious objects; but I dare to do so. You—what do you do? You rise late enough in the day: you have your carriage out, and call to see your friends, or leave your card by way of proxy. You go to a party in the evening; you talk nonsense, and come home and go to bed. And that is your life from the beginning of the year to the end. It is just one regular round. There comes the dinner or the ball, and the conclusion of the day; and then Amen, so be it, for ever. Now you don't live for Christ. I know you go to church regularly, or attend at some dissenting chapel; all well and good. I shall not deny your piety, according to the common usage of the term, but I deny that you have got to anything like the place where Paul stood when he said, "For me to live is Christ." I, my brethren, know that with much earnest seeking I have failed to realize the fullness of entire devotion to the Lord Jesus. Every minister must sometimes chasten himself and say, "Am I not sometimes a little warped in my utterances? Did I not in some sermon aim to bring out a grand thought instead of stating a home truth? Have I not kept back some warning that I ought to have uttered, because I feared the face of man?" Have we not all good need to chasten ourselves, because we must say that we have not lived for Christ as we should have done? And yet there are, I trust, a noble few, the elite of God's elect, a few chosen men and women on whose heads there is the crown and diadem of dedication, who can truly say, "I have nothing in this world I cannot give to Christ—I have said it, and mean what I have said -

'Take my soul and body's powers,  
All my goods and all my hours,  
All I have, and all I am.'

Take me, Lord, and take me for ever." These are the men who make our missionaries; these are the women to make our nurses for the sick, these are they that would dare death for Christ; these are they who would give of their substance to his cause; these are they who would spend and be spent, who would bear ignominy, and scorn, and shame if they could but advance their Master's interest. How many of this sort have I here this morning? Might I not count many of these benches before I could find a score? Many there are who do in a measure carry out this principle; but who among us is there (I am sure he standeth not here in this pulpit) that

can dare to say he hath lived wholly for Christ, as the apostle did? And yet, till there be more Pauls, and more men dedicated to Christ, we shall never see God's kingdom come, nor shall we hope to see his will done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

Now, this is the true life of a Christian, its source, its sustenance, its fashion, and its end, all gathered up in one word, Christ Jesus; and, I must add, its happiness, and its glory, is all in Christ. But I must detain you no longer.

II. I must go to the second point, THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN. Alas, alas, that the good should die; alas, that the righteous should fall! Death, why dost thou not hew the deadly upas? Why dost thou not mow the hemlock? Why dost thou touch the tree beneath whose spreading branches weariness hath rest? Why dost thou touch the flower whose perfume hath made glad the earth? Death, why dost thou snatch away the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight? If thou wouldest use thine axe, use it upon the cumber-grounds, the trees that draw nourishment, but afford no fruit; thou mightest be thanked then. But why wilt thou cut down the cedars, why wilt thou fell the goodly trees of Lebanon? O Death, why dost thou not spare the church? Why must the pulpit be hung in black; why must the missionary station be filled with weeping? Why must the pious family lose its priest, and the house its head? O Death, what art thou at? touch not earth's holy things; thy hands are not fit to pollute the Israel of God. Why dost thou put thine hand upon the hearts of the elect? Oh stay thou, stay thou; spare the righteous, Death, and take the bad! But no, it must not be; death comes and smites the goodliest of us all; the most generous, the most prayerful, the most holy, the most devoted must die. Weep, weep, weep, O church, for thou hast lost thy martyrs; weep, O church, for thou hast lost thy confessors, thy holy men are fallen. Howl, fir tree, for the cedar hath fallen, the godly fail, and the righteous are cut off. But stay awhile; I hear another voice. Say ye thus unto the daughter of Judah, spare thy weeping. Say ye thus unto the Lord's flock, Cease, cease thy sorrow thy martyrs are dead, but they are glorified; thy ministers are gone, but they have ascended up to thy Father, and to their Father, thy brethren are buried in the grave, but the archangel's trumpet shall awake them, and their spirits are ever now

with God.

Hear ye the words of the text, by way of consolation, "To die is gain." Not such gain as thou wishest for, thou son of the miser, not such gain as thou art hunting for, thou man of covetousness and self-love; a higher and a better gain is that which death brings to a Christian.

My dear friends, when I discoursed upon the former part of the verse, it was all plain. No proof was needed; ye believed it, for you saw it clearly. "To live is Christ," hath no paradox in it. But "To die is gain," is one of the Gospel riddles which only the Christian can truly understand. To die is not gain if I look upon the merely visible, to die is loss, it is not gain. Hath not the dead man lost his wealth? though he had piles of riches, can he take anything with him? Hath it not been said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And which of all thy goods, canst thou take with thee? The man had a fair estate and a goodly mansion; he hath lost that. He can no more tread those painted halls, nor walk those verdant lawns. He had abundance of fame and honor; he hath lost that, so far as his own sense of it is concerned, though still the harp string trembles at his name. He has lost his wealth, and buried though he may be in a costly tomb, yet is he as poor as the beggar who looked upon him in the street in envy. That is not gain, it is loss and he hath lost his friends: he hath left behind him a sorrowing wife and children, fatherless, without his guardian care; he hath lost the friend of his bosom, the companion of his youth. Friends are there to weep over him, but they cannot cross the river with him; they drop a few tears into his tomb, but with him they must not and cannot go. And hath he not lost all his learning, though he hath toiled ever so much to fill his brain with knowledge? What is he now above the servile slave, though he hath acquired all knowledge of earthly things? Is it not said,

"Their memory and their love are lost  
Alike unknowing and unknown?"

Surely death is loss. Hath he not lost the songs of the sanctuary and the prayers of the righteous? Hath he not lost the solemn assembly, and the great gathering of the people? No more shall the promise enchant his ear,



no more shall the glad tidings of the gospel wake his soul to melody. He sleeps in the dust, the Sabbath-bell tolls not for him, the sacramental emblems are spread upon the table, but not for him. He hath gone to his grave, he knoweth not that which shall be after him. There is neither work nor device in the grave, whither we all are hastening. Surely death is loss. When I look upon thee, thou clay-cold corpse, and see thee just preparing to be the palace of corruption and the carnival for worms, I cannot think that thou hast gained. When I see that thine eye hath lost light, and thy lip hath lost its speech, and thine ears have lost hearing, and thy feet have lost motion, and thy heart hath lost its joy, and they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders have failed, and no sounds of tabret and of harp wake up thy joys, O clay-cold corpse, than hast lost, lost immeasurably. And yet my text tells me it is not so. It says, "To die is gain." It looks as if it could not be thus, and certainly it is not, so far as I can see. But put to your eye the telescope of faith, take that magic glass which pierces through the veil that parts us from the unseen. Anoint your eyes with eyesalve, and make them so bright that they can pierce the ether and see the unknown worlds. Come, bathe yourself in this sea of light, and live in holy revelation and belief, and then look, and oh how changed the scene! Here is the corpse, but there the spirit; here is the clay, but there the soul, here is the carcass, but there the seraph. He is supremely blest; his death is gain. Come now, what did he lose? I will show that in everything he lost, he gained far more. He lost his friends, did he? His wife, and his children, his brethren in church fellowship, are all led to weep his loss. Yes, he lost them, but, my brethren what did he gain? He gained more friends than e'er he lost. He had lost many in his lifetime, but he meets them all again. Parents, brethren and sisters who had died in youth or age, and passed the stream before him, all salute him on the further brink. There the mother meets her infant, there the father meets his children, there the venerable patriarch greets his family to the third and fourth generation, there brother clasps brother to his arms, and husband meets with wife, no more to be married or given in marriage, but to live together, like the angels of God. Some of us have more friends in heaven than in earth. We have more dear relations in glory, than we have here. It is not so with all of us, but with some it is so; more have crossed the stream than are left behind. But if it be not so, yet what friends we have to meet us there! Oh, I reckon on the day of death if it were for the

mere hope of seeing the bright spirits that are now before the throne; to clasp the hand of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to look into the face of Paul the apostle, and grasp the hand of Peter; to sit in flowery fields with Moses and David, to bask in the sunlight of bliss with John and Magdalene. Oh how blest! The company of poor imperfect saints on earth is good; but how much better the society of the redeemed. Death is no loss to us by way of friends. We leave a few, a little band below, and say to them, "Fear not little flock," and we ascend and meet the armies of the living God, the hosts of his redeemed. "To die is gain." Poor corpse! thou hast lost thy friends on earth; nay, bright spirit, thou hast received a hundred fold in heaven.

What else did we say he lost? We said he lost all his estate, all his substance and his wealth. Ay, but he has gained infinitely more. Though he were rich as Cræsus, yet he might well give up his wealth for that which he hath attained. Were his fingers bright with pearls, and hath he lost their brilliancy? The pearly gases of heaven glisten brighter far. Had he gold in his storehouse? Mark ye, the streets of heaven are paved with gold, and he is richer far. The mansions of the redeemed are far brighter dwelling places than the mansions of the richest here below. But it is not so with many of you. You are not rich, you are poor. What can you lose by death? You are poor here, you shall be rich there. Here you suffer toil, there you shall rest for ever. Here you earn your bread by the sweat of your brow but there, no toil Here wearily you cast yourself upon your bed at the week's end, and sigh for the Sabbath, but there Sabbaths have no end. Here you go to the house of God, but you are distracted with worldly cares and thoughts of suffering; but there, there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues, Death will be gain to you in point of riches and substance.

And as for the means of grace which we leave behind, what are they when compared with what we shall have hereafter? Oh, might I die at this hour, I think I would say something like this, "Farewell Sabbaths,—I am going to the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Farewell minister; I shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, when the Lord God shall give me light, and be my life for ever and ever. Farewell ye songs and sonnets of the blessed; farewell, I shall not need your melodious burst; I shall hear the

eternal and unceasing hallelujahs of the beatified. Farewell, ye prayers of God's people; my spirit shall hear for ever the intercessions of my Lord, and join with the noble army of martyrs in crying, 'O Lord, how long?' Farewell, O Zion! Farewell, house of my love, home of my life! Farewell, ye temples where God's people sing and pray; farewell, ye tents of Jacob, where they daily burn their offering!-I am going to a better Zion than you, to a brighter Jerusalem, to a temple that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!" O my dear friends, in the thought of these things, do we not, some of us, feel as if we could die!

"E'en now by faith we join our hands  
With those that went before,  
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
Upon th' eternal shore.

One army of the living God,  
At his command we bow,  
Part of the host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now."

We have not come to the margin yet, but we shall be there soon: we soon expect to die.

And again, one more thought. We said that when men died they lost their knowledge, we correct ourselves. Oh, no, when the righteous die they know infinitely more than they could have known on earth.

"There shall I see and hear and know  
All I desired or wished below;  
And every power find sweet employ,  
In that eternal world of joy."

"Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face." There, what "eye hath not seen nor ear heard" shall be fully manifest to us. There, riddles shall be unravelled, mysteries made plain, dark texts enlightened, hard providences made to appear wise. The meanest soul in heaven knows more of God than the greatest saint on earth. The greatest saint on earth may have it said of him, "Nevertheless he that is least in the

kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Not our mightiest divines understand so much of theology as the lambs of the flock of glory. Not the greatest master-minds of earth understand the millionth part of the mighty meanings which have been discovered by souls emancipated from clay. Yes, brethren, "To die is gain." Take away, take away that hearse, remove that shroud; come, put white plumes upon the horse's heads and let gilded trappings hang around them. There, take away that fife, that shrill sounding music of the death march. Lend me the trumpet and the drum. O hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah; why weep we the saints to heaven; why need we lament? They are not dead, they are gone before. Stop, stop that mourning, refrain thy tears, clap your hands, clap your hands.

"They are supremely blest,  
Have done with care and sin and woe;  
And with their Saviour rest."

What! weep! weep! for heads that are crowned with coronals of heaven? Weep, weep for hands that grasp the harps of gold? What, weep for eyes that see the Redeemer? What, weep for hearts that are washed from sin, and are throbbing with eternal bliss! What, weep for men that are in the Saviour's bosom?—No, weep for yourselves, that you are here. Weep that the mandate has not come which bids you to die. Weep that you must tarry. But weep not for them. I see them turning back on you with loving wonder, and they exclaim, "Why weepest thou?" What, weep for poverty that it is clothed in riches? What, weep for sickness, that it hath inherited eternal health? What, weep for shame, that it is glorified; and weep for sinful mortality, that it hath become immaculate? Oh, weep not, but rejoice. "If ye knew what it was that I have said unto you, and whither I have gone, ye would rejoice with a joy that no man should take from you." "To die is gain." Ah, this makes the Christian long to die—makes him say,

"Oh, that the word were given!  
O Lord of Hosts, the wave divide,  
And land us all in heaven!"

And now, friends, does this belong to you all? Can you claim an interest in it? Are you living to Christ? Does Christ live in you? For if not, your

death will not be gain. Are you a believer in the Saviour? Has your heart been renewed, and your conscience washed in the blood of Jesus? If not, my bearer, I weep for thee. I will save my tears for lost friends; there, with this handkerchief I'd staunch mine eyes for ever for my best beloved that shall die, if those tears could save you. O, when you die, what a day! If the world were hung in sackcloth, it could not express the grief that you would feel. You die. O death! O death! how hideous art thou to men that are not in Christ! And yet, my hearer, thou shalt soon die. Save me thy bed of shrieks, thy look of gall, thy words of bitterness! Oh that thou couldst be saved the dread hereafter! Oh! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! who is he that can preach of it? Horrors strike the guilty soul! It quivereth upon the verge of death; no, on the verge of hell. It looketh over, clutching hard to life, and it heareth there the sullen groans, the hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts, which come up from the pit that is bottomless, and it clutcheth firmly to life, clasps the physician, and bids him hold, lest he should fall into the pit that burneth. And the spirit looketh down and seeth all the fiends of everlasting punishments, and back it recoileth. But die it must. It would barter all it hath to coin an hour; but no, the fiend hath got its grip, and down it must plunge. And who can tell the hideous shriek of a lost soul? It cannot reach heaven; but if it could, it might well be dreamed that it would suspend the melodies of angels, might make even God's redeemed weep, if they could hear the wailings of a damned soul. Ah! you men and women, ye have wept; but if you die unregenerate, there will be no weeping like that, there will be no shriek like that, no wail like that. May God spare us from ever hearing it or uttering it ourselves! Oh, how the grim caverns of Hades startle, and how the darkness of night is frightened, when the wail of a lost soul comes up from the ascending flames, whilst it is descending in the pit. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Christ is preached to you. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Believe on him and live, ye guilty, vile, perishing; believe and live. But this know—if ye reject my message, and depise my Master, in that day when he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man, Jesus Christ, I must be a swift witness against you. I have told you—tat your soul's peril reject it. Receive my message, and you are saved; reject it—take the responsibility on your own head. Behold, my skirts are clear of your blood. If ye be damned, it is

not for want of warning. Oh God grant, ye may not perish.

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## Good News

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. -  
Proverbs 25:25

This is a text for summertime rather than for a winter's evening. It is only on one of our hottest summer days that we could fully appreciate the illustration here employed; we need to be parched with thirst to be able to feel the value of cold waters to quench our thirst. At the same time, I think that we can, without any very great stretch of imagination, put ourselves into the position of some to whom cold waters have been almost like life from the dead. Look at Hagar, in the wilderness with her child, whom she has cast under one of the shrubs, that she may not see him die. The water in the bottle is spent, and she longs for a cooling draught that might save the young lad's life. Then the Lord opened her eyes, so that she saw a well of water in the desert, and as she filled her bottle from it she understood what cold waters are to a thirsty soul. Think also of the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness crying out in agony because there was no water for them to drink. Then they began to murmur against the Lord, and against Moses; but how joyful they were when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling stream, and they rushed to it, and drank to the full. If you want another personal example of the blessing of cold water to a thirsty soul, think of Samson. Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass he has slain a thousand men; but the dust of the conflict, and the heat, and the exhaustion had caused such an intense thirst to come upon him that he is ready to die. Then he lifts up his voice to the Lord; and the same God, who had made the jawbone to be so mighty a weapon against the Philistines, opens for him a spring of water in that very jawbone, and he drinks, and is refreshed, and magnifies the name of the Lord. So, you see, there are occasions when cold waters are inexpressibly precious to thirsty souls; and Solomon, who seems to have known something of their value, says that good news from a far country is equally pleasant, and refreshing, and reviving.

This proverb is true in its most literal interpretation. When we are in a far country, separate from those we love, there is no greater pleasure than that of receiving letters from them, with tidings of their welfare. Even the little details about household affairs—the minor events which we should scarcely have noticed if we had been there—become exceedingly interesting to us; and the longer we have been away from home, the more dear everything becomes to us when we hear of it in the far country where, for a while, our lot has been cast I suppose that merchants, who have costly ventures in distant parts, also long for good news from the far country which is still their home wherever they may be. Solomon had sent his ships to various foreign countries, and when the news came from Joppa that the vessels were in sight which had come back from India, or from the Pillars of Hercules, bringing all manner of precious things, the merchant prince was highly pleased, and felt that "as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." And this, which is a literal fact, may become an illustration of spiritual truth; and I am going to use it in that way as God, the Holy Spirit, may guide me.

First, good news from God for sinners is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. Secondly, good news from heaven for saints is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. And, thirdly, good news in heaven from earth—the good news which reaches that far country, every now and then,—is to angels and glorified Saints as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

I. First, then, (and may God bless this first head very richly!) GOOD NEWS FROM GOD FOR SINNERS is like cold water to the thirsty.

Sin has led the sinner into a far country. That part of the description of the prodigal son, who gathered all-together, and went into a far country, aptly describes the condition of the whole human race. Man, before the Fall, was near to God, he communed with him. But when Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," after they had disobeyed him, they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Practically, by his sin, Adam set out on a long journey away from his happy home; and, soon, he was so far off that, when God came where he had formerly communed with him, he had to cry to him, "Adam, where art thou?" In like manner, we are alienated from God by wicked works, far off from



him in character, for he is light, and we are darkness; he is truth, and we are falsehood; he is love, and we are just the opposite. We are also far off from God in our aims and objects, for we aim, not at the good of others, nor at his glory, but we seek earthly things. We are, by nature, far off from God in the whole bent and current of our life, which no longer runs in a parallel line with the life of God as first imparted to man, but runs rather according to the fashion of the life of Satan, so that we yield ourselves up to the evil influence of that foul spirit who worketh in the children of disobedience.

When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he becomes conscious of this distance, and he feels, in a measure, like the lost spirits in hell who realize that there is a great gulf fixed between them and God. At first, the convicted sinner fancies that gulf can never be passed; and the longer he looks into its awful depths,—the longer his eyes try to gaze across it to the other side,—the more he discovers that he is far off from his God, and that there is a vast, yawning chasm between him and his Maker. If any of you, dear friends, are conscious of being thus at a distance from God, I have come as a messenger from him bringing to you his words of mercy and grace, which should be to you as good news from a far country.

And the first piece of good news that I have to give you is, that God has not forgotten you. You are a lost sheep, and you have almost forgotten your Shepherd; perhaps, you have altogether forgotten him; but your Shepherd has been counting over the number of his sheep, and he finds that there is one missing, for there are only ninety and nine where there should be a hundred, and he is deeply concerned about the one that has gone astray.

God has not only remembered that there is such a person as you but he remembers you with pity. It is wonderful to notice how he speaks. Sometimes, he cries, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Like as a father pitieth his children, so is it with our God, he pities those who wander away from him. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God takes no delight in your sin, and no delight in the shame and sorrow which your sin will bring upon you unless you turn

from it, but he will take delight in you if you return to him. He still cries to you, "Return ye now every one from his evil way;" and he still remembers you in pity and compassion. Notwithstanding your forgetfulness of him, and your wilful rebellion against him, he doth remember you still; for God is love, and there is love in his heart even towards sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. That, surely, is good news to you, and if God thus thinks of you in pity, should not you think of God with deep, heartfelt penitence and contrition?

But there is even better news from God for you than this, namely, that he has prepared the way by which you may come back to him. Do you ask, "How can that be, for there is a wall of partition between us? How can I ever get to God? Surely, the justice of God, on account of my sin, raises an impassable barrier between us. That justice stands like the cherubim with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, lest, haply, I should attempt to return to my God." That is quite true, yet listen to this, poor, guilty sinner. God must be just, that is certain; and, being just, he must punish thy sin. But hast thou not heard that he has given his only-begotten Son that he might stand in the sinner's stead, and bear the punishment that was due on account of the sinner's guilt? That cherub's flaming sword has been quenched in Jesus's, precious blood. That middle wall of partition Christ has broken down, even as the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Oh, what a mighty rent was that! Not a little slit, part of the way down; but from the top to the bottom. So has Jesus Christ demolished the barrier which stood between a justly angry God and a guilty but repenting sinner, and now there is a way of approach, for the very worst of men and women, right up to the throne of the Most High. By the blood of Jesus, once shed for many, for the remission of sins, the guiltiest foot of man may come. Ay, by that blood-besprinkled way, the most condemned sinner may come without fear of being repulsed. The chasm has been filled, the gulf bridged over, and if thou truly believest in Jesus Christ, thou mayest, in his name, and for his sake, come back to thy Heavenly Father. That wise resolve within thy heart, which says, "I will arise and go to my Father," should be at once carried into effect, for thy Father hath prepared the way by which thou mayest come back to him, and, to encourage thee, he has sprinkled it with the blood of his dear Son,—the surest sign and token of

his love to sinners that even God himself could give. Here, then, is good news from a far country. Your Father thinks of you, poor prodigal; and he has paved the way for you to come back to his own house and heart.

Is there any more good news for you? Ay, that there is, far more than I can tell you. This is another piece of it, God has sent you his Word, and sent you his servants, to invite you to come back to him. It is very gracious for God to prepare the way; but it is even more gracious for him to invite you to make use of that way. There are, sometimes, cases of necessity when a man thrusts himself upon the notice of another, and seeks his aid in some great emergency. It is a dark and stormy night, and the wanderer, who has lost his way, knocks at the first door he sees, and asks for shelter. But that is not your case. You also are a wanderer, and you need shelter, but mercy's door stands wide open, and God has sent his messengers to invite you to come in. If the door had been closed, it would have been a wise action, on your part, to knock, and ask for admission, or even to cause the kingdom of heaven to suffer violence, and to take the blessing by force. But that is not necessary. Think, then, of the goodness of God, who invites, entreats, exhorts, and persuades sinners to come unto him. Nay, mere, there is a text,—a blessed text, I think,—which says, "Compel them to come in." The great King bids his servants to seize them by the mighty force of love, and to draw them in with tears and entreaties again and again repeated, until they yield. "Compel them to come in," says he, "that my house may be filled." This is good news indeed. Such gracious invitations as these make up still more good news: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white, as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: for I have redeemed thee." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Is not this good news for poor sinners? O my Master,

bless thou thine own words of grace and mercy to all who hear or read them, and make them to be like cold waters to a thirsty soul!

There is still more good news beyond all this, and I will tell you some of it. It is good news that many have already returned to their Father, and have been welcomed. Some of these are your own friends and relatives,—your brother, your sister, your father, your mother. This good news does not relate to anything which is merely a matter of experiment. The experiment has been made so often—the blessed experiment of proving whether God will receive repenting sinners or no,—that it is a matter of certainty now. Why, you even know one, who used to be your companion in every kind of folly and sin,—and he has sought and found the Savior. Did he not tell you so, the other day? And there was one, who seemed to he even worse than you,—at least, he went further in open sin than you have ever done; yet he sought the Lord, and he was not rejected. Now, when I see so many come to Christ, and find that he never casts out one of them, what ought I to infer from that? Why, that, he will not cast me out if I come to him. If from my Master's door I saw a stream of sinners coming back, with sad countenances, and all shaking their heads, and saying, "We have been denied admittance, we were too guilty to go in;" or, "We were not fit;" or, "We were not sensitive enough;" or something of that kind, then, methinks, I should not dare to go; but if the footprints of sinners all run towards Christ, and never is there a single footprint of a penitent sinner turned back by him;—if I see him drawing men unto himself, according to his word, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;"—and if I never see him repelling or repulsing one sinner, however black or crimson he may be, I may well say, "Come, my poor guilty soul, why shouldst not thou have acceptance too?" At any rate,

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"I'll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose scepter pardon gives;  
Perhaps he may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives.

I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know

I must for ever die.

And if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the King have tried  
This were to die (delightful thought!)  
As sinner never died;"—

for no sinner ever did seek Jesus Christ by faith in vain. That, surely, is good news from a far country.

And, once again, we have to bring this good news,—that the Lord has not only made a way for his poor wandering children to come back to him, but he has provided all the means needed to bring them back. You recollect that, when Joseph sent for his father Jacob to come to him in Egypt, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was still alive; the news, that he was, under Pharaoh, ruler over all Egypt, seemed too good to be true; but when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent, then his spirit revived. "Waggons" is the word in our translation, but I expect that Joseph also sent some of the best chariots that Egypt could produce to carry poor old Jacob and all his family down into Egypt; and I do not wonder that the spirit of the patriarch revived when he saw those waggons or chariots. There is many a poor sinner who says, "Yes, I know that there is a way of salvation; but, then, my feet are lame, so how can I run along that way! I know that there is saving truth in the Bible, and blessed be God for that; but how shall I ever learn that truth? I know that Christ is himself the Truth, but how can that Truth be mine? I know that there is eternal life, and that Christ is the Life as well as the Truth and the Way, but I am spiritually dead, can I ever have that life?" Yes, you can, for our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Way, but he is also the power by which we run in that way. He is not only the Truth, but he gives us the illuminating Spirit to lead us into the Truth; and he is not only the Life, but he puts that Life into us, and sustains and perfects it. You have nothing to do, sinner, but to give yourself up to the leading, guiding, directing, assisting, quickening of the blessed Spirit of God. It is true that you must believe, but he will give you the grace of faith. It is true that you must repent, but it is also true that he works repentance in us. There must and there will be a change of life in all true converts but it is the Holy Spirit who converts you and turns you completely round. There

must be sanctification in genuine believers, but it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. There is nothing asked of you, in the gospel, but what the gospel itself gives you. Those things which, in one part of Scripture, are put as precepts, are, in other parts of Scripture, among the promises. What the Lord bids the sinner do, he enables the sinner to do, just as, when Jesus said to the man that was paralyzed, "Take up thy bed, and walk," with the command he gave the power to obey it; and when he said to another man, "Stretch out thy hand, withered though it be," the miraculous power, that gave the nerves and muscles force again, went with the mandate from the lips of Jesus. In like manner, trust thou the Lord to give thee the power to lay hold on the gospel. The very eye, with which to look at the brazen serpent, is his gift; and that gift he is prepared to bestow upon all who come to him for it. Is not this good news from a far country?

And this, too, is good news,—that thou mayest come to Christ at once. If, at this moment, thou art enabled to trust the Lord Jesus, he is thine. The way home looks very far, but the good news I have to bring you is that you can be there in a moment. That is to say, far off as thou art from God, if thou believest in Jesus, thou art brought to God that very instant. As soon as the Holy Spirit enables thee to trust in Jesus, thou art brought near to God at once. What said our Savior to the dying thief? "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." You perhaps will not have an immediate entrance into the paradise above, but may live a little longer here; but, as soon as thou dost believe in Jesus, thou shalt be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; thou shalt have instantaneous forgiveness, and, at the same time, it shall be as permanent as it is instantaneous, and as complete as it is immediate. This is the good news which comes to you by the gospel.

And what thou hast to do with it is this, believe the Father's word, and trust thyself wholly to what Christ has done for sinners. May the Divine Spirit take thee off from all other ways of salvation, and bring thee to trust to this alone, and make thee abhor and loathe even to detestation, anything like confidence in thy prayers, or thy tears, thy doings, thy sufferings, thy preparings, thy repentings, or anything else; for it is none but Jesus who can bring a sinner near to God. All that you spin, you will

have to unravel; all that you build, will have to come down; all that you can bring to God, you will have to take back again. You must come to him empty-handed, with nothing of your own, and simply rest where God himself doth rest,—in the blessed person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus who is all in all.

Now, if thou art spiritually thirsty, this good news will be to thee as a draught of cold water; but if thou art not thirsty, thou wilt not partake of it. It is little use to praise cold water to a man who is already drunk with the world's intoxicating draughts, or to those who have no thirst, and who will despise it. If there is anyone here who does not feel that he is a sinner, or who thinks that he has no great guilt, and who has no true sorrow of heart on account of his sin,—I might as well walk into St. Paul's Cathedral, and talk to the statues there, or into Westminster Abbey, and preach to the dust beneath my feet, as preach to you. Cold waters are for the thirsty, and the good news of mercy and salvation is for the guilty. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel your deep need, and give you intense spiritual thirst; for, then, Jesus Christ and the good news from the far country would be precious to you!

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject, which is, GOOD NEWS FROM HEAVEN FOR SAINTS. That also is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

Does someone ask, "Is there any news from heaven?" Yes, there is; and that shall be my first remark in this part of my theme,—that news does still come from heaven. There is an invisible telegraph between us and the glory-land; we are not cut off from communication with those who are there. Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven, but it was not merely a dream. Never was there anything more real than that vision of the night, for there is a blessed means of communication between this far-off land and the goodly land beyond the river. Our prayers and sighs and tears, our praises and thanksgivings, get there all right; they are not, lost en route. They reach the great heart of God, and messages come down to us from him in response to them. How do they come? Well, they come by the Holy Spirit sealing home to the soul the promises of the Word. Do you know, experimentally, what I mean by that! "Ah!" says someone, "do I not?" Every now and then, some blessed portion of

Scripture seems as if it were set on fire, and, as you read it, it blazes out before your eyes, just as, sometimes, we see the lamps that are being got ready for an illumination. There is some grand device; and, before it is lit up, it is little more than an array of pipes; but how different it looks after they have lit it all! So, there is many a text of Scripture which is like that design; you can see something of what it means, but you should see it when it is lit up. How very different it is then! You sometimes get a promise from the Word whispered into your ear, and it is just as new to you as if it had never been written down eighteen hundred or three or four thousand years ago. It is as fresh to you as if the eternal pen had written it to-day, and written it for you alone. Some of us I hope, many of us—know how the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them unto us,—leads us into the very heart and soul of the precious blessings of the covenant of grace. This is as good news from a far country, and is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

And often, too, the Lord Jesus Christ sends us news concerning the fellowship which he intends us to enjoy with him. Still do godly men walk with God as Enoch did. Do not imagine that God has gone away, and that no longer may we speak to him as a man speaketh with his friend. No, for truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Still does Jesus lay bare his heart to his beloved. Still may we say with the spouse, and have the prayer answered, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." There are still sweet intercourses and blessed love passages between Christ and his chosen, of which the world knows not; but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Yes, there is good news from a far country for the saints of God.

And, dear friends, it should be our earnest aim to keep unbroken our intercourse with heaven, for it is the most refreshing thing beneath the sun, This world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our intercourse with Christ. So long as I can say that the Lord is mine, all things here below are of small account; but if I once get a doubt about that matter, and if I cease to walk with God, then what is there here below that can content my immortal spirit? Without Christ, this world is to us as thorns without the roses, and as bitters without the sweets of life.



But thou, O Lord, makest earth to be a heaven to thy saints even when they lie in dungeons, when thy presence cheers them. But were, they translated to the palaces of kings, and thereby lost thy blessed company, those palaces would be worse than prison-houses to them. It is most important that you, who are obliged to mingle with the world, should maintain your intercourse with Christ; for that is the only way to keep yourself clear from its corruptions. And you, who have much to do in the church, must keep up your intercourse with Christ; for that is the only way of preserving your service from becoming mechanical, and of preventing you from doing good works as a mere matter of routine. You, too, who have much to suffer, or even much to enjoy, must keep up this holy intercourse, or else your soul will soon be like a thirsty land where there is no water.

It may be that I am addressing some, who have not had much news lately from the far country of heaven. You are going there, one day, and—

"There your best friends, your kindred, dwell;  
There God your Savior reigns;—

but you have had no news from there lately. If it is so with you, I hope you feel as some of us did, a little while ago, when we were in the South of France. "No letters?" we asked, as the time came for our usual post. When the next day came, and there were still no letters, we enquired, "What is the matter?" and they said, "There is deep snow on the railway, the trains cannot travel, so the mails cannot be brought on." Another day passed, and as the snow was not gone, we had no letters. When the letters did come, they were very sweet, and all the sweeter because we had had to wait for them. And there were more of them than usual, for those that had been delayed came tumbling in two or three at a time. I hope it may be so with you and your good news from heaven. If there have been any snow-drifts between your soul and Christ,—and that does happen sometimes in this cold world;—if there is, between you and the Savior, a chilly air, and a frozen mass of unbelief, so that the trains cannot travel to and fro;—oh, cry mightily to the Lord to melt these snows, and clear them away; and, I warrant you, if you do so, when you get communication restored, and fellowship renewed, it will be exceedingly sweet. I hope you will often feel that you cannot have too much of it, and seek to have more

and more. Say, as the spouse did in the Song, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." Let this dark season of interrupted fellowship, into which you have passed, only make you the more desperately in earnest to get out of it, so that, when that fellowship is restored, you may be able to say, "I held him, and would not let him go." Get such a firm grip of him again, such a grip as you had when first you knew him,—when the love of your espousals was upon you,—when you were newly married to the blessed Bridegroom, and say again, "I held him, and would not let him go." God grant to you that there may be no more lukewarmness, no more of being neither cold nor hot; and may the cold atmosphere, through which you have passed in his absence, make your heart grow all the warmer towards him now that you have him again. May you cling to him now with an intensity of affection that you have never reached before!

What is this good news of which I have been speaking? Well, dear friends, I think that this good news may be summed up thus. God is working in providence, and making all things work together for your good if you belong to him. Your heart is heavy just now, and your harp is hanging on the willows. Yet God is permitting that to happen for your good. The bitter drugs you have to take are nauseous to you, but they are to work together with other things for your good; wherefore, be of good cheer.

The next piece of good news is that Jesus is pleading for you. Remember how he said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Jesus has thy name upon his breastplate,—yea, graven on the palms of his hands." You are not forgotten of him; is not that good news? When somebody comes to you in a foreign land, you like to hear him say, "When I was at your home, they were all talking about you, and they all sent loving messages to you. I saw your portrait in a locket, and I could tell that you were not forgotten." You are glad to hear that; and Jesus has your names graven on the palms of his hands, and he is pleading for you before the mercy-seat, you are not forgotten up there.

Another piece of good news is that he is coming here again,—coming here for you,—coming to be admired by you and the rest of his redeemed family when he comes to take his people up to their eternal home. The

message which he has sent is, "Behold, I come quickly." What is your answer to that? I think I hear you say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It will not be very long before you will be with him, or else he will be with you. In a short time, you will have ended your pilgrimage here; the days of your banishment from home will be over. Wait a little longer; only a few more tears, and, then,—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on his gentle breast."

Is not that good news?

There is another piece of news, which you have often heard before,—that is, that a great many of the saints have got home already. There is good news from the Fair Havens. Many have entered there,—thousands, millions,—who have had as stormy a sea to traverse as you yourself have had; but their Pilot has brought them to their desired haven. Many, whom we loved on earth, have gone home to be "for ever with the Lord." They are all right; all is well with them. The sheep are getting home to the fold; the children are going home to their Father's house above.

I have another piece of good news, and that is, beloved brother or sister, that there is a house there for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it ready for you. There is a crown there which nobody's head but yours can ever wear. There is a seat in which none but yourself can sit. There is a harp that will be silent till your fingers strike its strings. There is a robe, made for you, which no one else can wear. And let me also tell you that they are wanting you up there. "Oh!" say you, "they are so happy, and so perfect that they surely do not want me." But they do. What does Paul say in the Epistle to the Hebrews? "They without us should not be made perfect." Nor can they; there cannot be a perfect body till all the members are there. It cannot be a perfect heaven till all the saints are there. Jesus Christ has not all the jewels of his crown yet, and he will have a perfect crown. So they are looking for you, and waiting and watching for you, and all is ready for your reception. You shall go home soon; therefore, live in hope; and having this hope within you, purify yourselves, come out from the world more and more. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our

vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." There is good news for you; is it not like cold waters to a thirsty soul?

### III. Now, lastly, and very briefly. SOMETIMES, IN HEAVEN, THEY GET GOOD NEWS FROM EARTH

Our text may be applied to the angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." We do not know how they receive news about us; and it is no use speculating concerning the matter; but there is one thing that we are sure of,—that is, in heaven, they know when a sinner repents, for our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." That is, to them, good news from a far country. The angels all know about Jesus having died, and every time they see a repenting sinner washed in the blood of the atonement, they must rejoice for Jesus' sake, because he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

I believe, too, brethren, that they get good news from a far country when you, who are running the Christian race run well; for how does Paul put it in the 12th of Hebrews? Does he not tell us that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses? And who are these witnesses? Why, those he had been speaking of,—those brave men and women who had performed such valorous deeds by the power of faith,—whose names he had inscribed on the triumphal arch of the 11th chapter of his Epistle. These are they who gaze upon us from their lofty seats, and they see us as we run the race, and note how we do it; and they clap their hands, as the spectators were wont to do in the old Roman foot races, and rejoice over the grace that is manifested in us, and it is as cold water to their souls when they see what God does for his struggling, suffering people.

And, moreover, there is another piece of good news that reaches the far country; that is, when the Church of God is being built up, and the gospel is spreading in the earth. When the world was created, did not the morning stars sing together, and shout for joy? And do you not think that, as this new spiritual world is being fashioned by the pierced hands, the spirits above are looking down, and watching the wondrous process? I am

sure they do. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory; and appear, not only to those who are watching here below, who are workers together with him, but also to those who have gone above, who rejoice together with him in his gracious work below.

And I believe it is also good news from a far country when the saints one by one finish their course. They get tidings up there when another saint is crossing the Jordan of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and it must be precious also in the sight of the angels and the redeemed from among men. John Bunyan pictures the shining ones as coming down to the river's brink, and I can easily conceive that it is so. I can well imagine their glad welcome to the spirit as, disencumbered of this poor body, it comes forth from the stream of death, and taking it up to the pearly gates of the celestial city. Then there is good news from a far country. I sometimes like to send a message home by some whose hands I grasp as they are in the last article of death. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, said to one aged Christian who was dying, "I hope they have not forgotten to send for old Rowley;" and then he added, "Take my love up to the three glorious Johns, the apostle John, and John Bunyan, and John Newton." "I have sometimes felt inclined to do the same. Surely, a spirit there will not forget anything that was good here below, and pass, in utter unconsciousness, into the next world. It will have enough to do to think of Christ, and to behold his glory; but, mayhap, the mind will be so expanded as to be able to think of other things beside. This, however, I do not know; but this I am sure of,—that, as one by one they, for whom the Savior died, come home, there must be joy. As they rejoice over repenting sinners, so do they rejoice over perfected saints who are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and who come up cleansed and delivered from anything like sin through the precious blood of the Lamb. Then is there good news for them from the far country.

I cannot help feeling that I am addressing some who know nothing about the good news of which I have been speaking. For their benefit, let me tell you a story I have heard concerning one of our English pilots. A vessel was off the coast of Kent, gently sailing, as the seamen thought, towards their desired haven. A pilot, who was watching them, observing the

extreme danger in which they were went at his utmost speed to warn them of their peril. He was hardly aboard before he shouted to the captain, "The Goodwins! The Goodwins! "They were almost on to those fatal sands, and they did not know it. At once, the course of the vessel was changed, and all sail possible was set, and they were saved as by the skin of their teeth. So, I come to you thoughtless, careless ones, and I cry to you, "Hell lieth right ahead of you,—eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Put your helm hard aport, up with such sail as you have: and may God send the breath of his Eternal Spirit to blow you or these breakers which already seem booming with the certainty of your eternal doom! "O God, almighty and ever-merciful, save them by thy grace! Save them by the precious blood of Jesus, for his dear name's sake! Amen and Amen.

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## **Good Works**

Zealous of good works. - Titus 2:14

We shall not be afraid of leading any of you into a legal spirit this morning through what we shall say, for after our frequent exhortations to avoid anything like trusting in your works, attended as they have been, we trust, by the Holy Spirit, we are not afraid that you will so misunderstand us, as to suppose that when we speak of good works, to-day, we shall in any way whatsoever wish you to imagine that they can promote your eternal salvation. We laboured when here the Sabbath morning before last, to let you know the difference between the two covenants, the covenant of grace and the covenant of works; we shall beg you to remember what we then said, and if by any slips of the tongue we should say anything that should look like legality, we beg you will put the

two together, and wherein we shall err from the great truth of justification by faith, to reject our testimony.

"Zealous of good works." There are some who hear us preach high doctrine, and constantly declare that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, who, therefore, suppose that we cannot preach good works, and that we could not preach a good sermon of exhortation to Christians, to live in holiness. Well, we will not say that we can preach a good sermon, but we will say that we will try and preach one as to that matter that shall be as good as theirs, and as much lead the children of God to live in holiness as any of their exhortations can do, grounded as they are on trusting in the flesh, and based as they are on threatenings, regulations and promises, which they hope will induce God's children, but which are well enough for slaves, though of little avail in operating on the true-born believer. The children of God are a holy people; - for this very purpose were they born and brought into the world, that they should be holy; for this they were redeemed with blood and made a peculiar people. God's end in election, the end of all his purposes, is not answered until they become a people "zealous of good works."

Now, this morning, we shall first of all tell you the nature of good works, for there are many things called good works that are not so at all; secondly, we shall trace good works to their origin - find where good works come from; thirdly, we shall attempt to show you the use of good works; and we shall close up by endeavoring to prove that our doctrines, those of free, distinguishing, discriminating grace, have a tendency to make us who believe them "zealous of good works."

I. First, then, we are about to answer the question, WHAT ARE GOOD WORKS? Now, I dare say we shall offend many here when we tell them what good works are; for in our opinion good works are the rarest things in the world, and we believe we might walk for many a mile before we should see a good work at all. We use the word good now in its proper sense. There are many works which are good enough between man and man, but we shall use the word good in a higher sense to-day as regards God. We think we shall be able to show you that there are very few good works anywhere, and that there are none out of the pale of Christ's

church. We think, if we read Scripture rightly, that no work can be good unless it is commanded of God. How this cuts off a large portion of what men will do in order to win salvation! The Pharisee said he tithed mint, anise, and cummin; could he prove that God commanded him to tithe his mint, his anise, and his cummin? Perhaps not. He said he fasted so many times a week; could he prove that God told him to fast? If not, his fasting was no obedience. If I do a thing that I am not commanded to do, I do not obey in doing it. Vain, then, are all the pretences of men, that by mortifying their bodies, by denying their flesh, by doing this, that, or the other, they shall therefore win the favour of God. No work is good unless God has commanded it. A man may build a long row of almshouses, but if he build without reference to the commandment, he has performed no good work.

Again: nothing is a good work unless it is done with a good motive; and there is no motive which can be said to be good but the glory of God. He who performs good works with a view to save himself, does not do them from a good motive, because his motive is selfish. He who does them also to gain the esteem of his fellows and for the good of society, has a laudable motive, so far as man is concerned; but it is, after all, an inferior motive. - What end had we in view? If for the benefit of our fellow-creatures, then let our fellow-creatures pay us; but that has nought to do with God. Work is not good, unless a man does it with a view to God's glory, and he has been brought into subjection to God's divine will, so that in everything he has an eye to the Most High, and works in order to promote his glory and honor in the world. And even, beloved, when our works are done from the best motives, nothing is a good work unless it is done with faith; for "without faith it is impossible to please God." Like Cain, we may build the altar, and lay the first fruits of the salt of faith, there it will lie - it will not be accepted by God, for without faith it is impossible to please him. Bring me a man who all his life long has been spending his health and strength for his fellow-creatures; fetch me some public officer, who has fully discharged his trust, who has laboured night and day, even to the wearing down of his constitution, because he believed that England expected every man to do his duty, and he wished to do it; bring me that man; let me see all his charitable works; let me witness the most lavish benevolence, the most profuse bounty; tell me



that he has always, with a consistent motive, laboured for his country; and then, if he cannot answer this question. "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" I shall be bound in all honesty to tell him that he has not done a solitary good work in all his life, so far as God is concerned.

Furthermore, when we have faith in God, and perform all our works with the best of motives, even then we have not so much as a solitary good work, until the blood of Christ is sprinkled thereon. Looking on all that we have ever done in our lives, can we find a solitary thing which we dare call good until Christ's blood is put upon it? Grant there is something good about it, for the Spirit wrought it in our souls; there is much also that is evil about it, for even our best exercises are so terribly spoiled, marred, and ruined by the sins and imperfections that are in them, that we dare not call them good, until Jesus Christ hath sprinkled them with his blood, and taken the stain away. Oh how often have I thought to myself, "Now, I have laboured to preach God's word; I have not spared, at all times, before friends or foes, and I hope I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God!" And yet, beloved, how many of those sermons have not been good works at all, because I had not an eye to my Master's honor at the time, or because there was not faith mixed with them but I preached in a desponding, low, miserable frame; or, perhaps, I had some natural aim, even in the winning of souls; for I have often feared, even when we rejoice to see souls converted, that we may have some evil motive, such as honoring ourselves, that the world may say, "See how many souls are brought to God by him!" And even when the church associates in doing holy works, have you not noticed that something selfish creeps in - a wish to exalt our own church, to glorify our own people, and to make ourselves mighty. I am sure, beloved, if you sit down and pull your good works to pieces, you will find so many bad stitches in them that they need to be all unstitched and done over again. There are so many spots and blurs about them, that you need to have them washed in the blood of Christ to make them good for anything.

And now, beloved, do you think you have any good works? "Oh!" you say "I am afraid I have not many myself-nay, I know I have not; but thanks be unto his love, he who accepted my person in Christ, accepts my works through Christ; and he who blessed me in him, that I should be a chosen

vessel, has been pleased to accept that which he himself poured into the vessel, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace, where he hath made me accepted in the beloved.'"

And now, ye moralists, ye who have trusted in yourselves that ye are righteous, if what I have said be true, what has become of all your holiness? You are saying "I am a charitable man." Grant that you are! I tell you to go and appeal to your fellow-creatures, and let them pay you for your charity. You say, "Ay, but I am a consistent and moral man. I am a great credit to the country; if all men would act as I do, what a good thing for this world and generation!" Of course you have served your generation. Then send in your bill, and let your generation pay you. I tell you, you have toiled for nought; you have only sown the wind, and likely enough you will reap the whirlwind. God owes you nothing; you have not lived to his honor; you must honestly confess that you have not performed a single action with a desire to please him; you have laboured to please yourself - that has been the highest motive you have had; you felt that if you were good you would go to heaven, and that if you were evil you would be sure to go to hell. You have been thoroughly selfish, from first to last. Reckon up your accounts and settle with yourself. God owes you nothing; you have done nothing for him; and if you have, then consider within yourself, you have so much violated God's commands, and so frequently done all you could to injure your Maker, if it were possible, that all your accounts are easily struck off. And as for your good works, where are they? Where are they? Ah! it is a figment and a fiction, a laugh and a dream. Good works in sinners? There are no such things. Augustine well said, "Good works, as they are called, in sinners, are nothing but splendid sins." This is true of the best works of the best man, who is out of Christ, they are nothing but splendid sins - vanished sins. God forgive you, dear friends, for your good works! You have as great need to be forgiven for your good works as you have for your bad ones, if you are out of Christ; for I reckon they are both alike, bad, if they come to be sifted.

## II. And now, secondly, WHERE DO GOOD WORKS COME FROM?

It is an old maxim, that nature can never rise above itself. Water, coming from the top of a hill, will rise as high as its source; but unless there is

some extraordinary pressure put upon it, it will never rise higher. So of human nature, Scripture says it is exceedingly vile; we cannot expect good works out of an evil nature. Can a bitter well send forth sweet water? As poison groweth not on healthful trees, with healthful fruit, so cannot healthy fruit grow on poisonous trees. We must not look for good works in an evil nature any more than we should look for the grapes of Sorek on the vines of Gomorrah. We cannot expect to find good works coming from nature; truly it is vain and idle to think that good works can arise from the natural man. "Where, then," you ask, "do they come from?" We answer, good works come from a real conversion, brought about by the Spirit of God. Until our conversion, there is not the shadow of goodness about us. In the eye of the world we may be reputable and respectable, but in the eye of God we are nothing of the sort. Could we look into our hearts, as we sometimes look into other people's faces, we should see very much there which would drive out of our souls the very imagination of good works before our heart is changed. How many things there are in the world, which we have upon our tables and which we even eat, that if we were to put beneath our microscope we should be afraid to touch, for we should see all kinds of loathsome creatures creeping and crawling about in them - such things as we never conceived! and so it is with human nature. When once the human heart is put under the microscope of Scripture, and we see it with a spiritual eye, we see it to be so vile and filthy, that we are quite sure that until we have a new heart and a right spirit, it would be just as impossible to expect to find good works in an unrighteous, unconverted man, as to hope to see fire burning in the midst of the ocean. The two things would be incongruous. Our good works, if we have any, spring from a real conversion; yet more, they spring also from a constant spiritual influence exercised upon us, from the time of conversion even until the hour of death. Ah! Christian, thou wouldst have no good works if thou hadst no fresh influence day by day. Thou wouldst not find the grace given thee at the first hour sufficient to produce fruit to-day. It is not like the planting of a tree in our hearts, which naturally of itself bringeth forth fruit; but the sap cometh up from the root of Jesus Christ. We are not trees by ourselves, but we are branches fixed on the living vine. Good works, I know whence you come! Ye come floating down on the stream of grace, and if I did not have that stream of grace always flowing, I should never find good works coming

from me. Good works from the creature? Impossible! Good works are the gifts of God, his choice pearls, which he sendeth down with his grace.

And again: we think that good works spring from union with Christ. We believe that the more a man knows and feels himself to be one with Jesus, the more holy will he be. The very fact that Christ and the Christian become one, makes the Christian Christ-like. Why is a Christian's character like Christ's character? Only for this reason, that is joined and united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why doth that branch bring forth grapes? Simply because it has been engrafted into the vine, and therefore it partakes of the nature of the stem. So, Christian, the only way whereby thou canst bring forth fruit to God is by being grafted into Christ and united with him. You Christians who think you can walk in holiness without keeping up perpetual fellowship with Christ have made a great mistake. If you would be holy, you must live close to Jesus. Good works spring only thence. Hence we draw the most powerful reasons against anything like trusting in works; for as works are only the gift of God, how utterly impossible does it become for an unrighteous, unconverted, ungodly man, to produce any such good works in himself. And if they are God's gifts, how little merit can there be in them.

III. We have thus tried to trace good works to their origin and foundation. And now we come to the third point, which is, **WHAT IS THE USE OF GOOD WORKS?**

I am rather fond of being called an Antinomian, for this reason, that the term generally applied to those who hold truth very firmly and will not let it go. But I should not be fond of being an Antinomian. We are not against the law of God. We believe it is no longer binding on us as the covenant of salvation; but we have nothing to say against the law of God. "The law is holy; we are carnal, sold under sin." None shall charge us truthfully with being Antinomians. We do quarrel with Antinomians; but as for some poor souls, who are so inconsistent as to say the law is not binding, and yet try to keep it with all their might, we do not quarrel with them! they will never do much mischief; but we think they might learn to distinguish between the law as a covenant of life and a direction after we have obtained life.

Well, we do love good works. Do you ask, of what use are they? I reply, first: Good works are useful as evidences of grace. The Antinomian says, - But I do not require evidences; I can live without them. This is unreasonable. Do you see yonder clock? That is the evidence of the time of day. The hour would be precisely the same if we had not that evidence. Still, we find the clock of great use. So we say, good works are the best evidence of spiritual life in the soul. Is it not written, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" Loving the brethren is a good work. Again, "If any man abide in me, he shall bring forth fruit." Fruits of righteousness are good works, and they are evidence that we abide in Christ. If I am living in sin day by day, what right have I to conclude I am a child of God? A man comes to this chapel, and while he hears the gospel, he exclaims, "What delicious truth! what heavenly doctrine!" Yet when he leaves the place, you may see him enter one public-house for another, and get intoxicated. Has this man any right to think himself an heir of heaven? The man who comes to God's house, and drinks "wine on the lees, well refined," and then goes away and drinks the cup and enjoys the company of the ungodly, gives no evidence that he is a partaker of divine grace. He says, "I do not like good works." Of course he does not. "I know I shall not be saved by good works." Of this we are certain, for he has none to be saved by. Many are ready enough to say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to the cross I cling;"

who believe they are children of God, because, though they have no good works as evidence, they think they have faith. Ah, sir! you have faith, and there is another gentleman quite as respectable as you are, who has faith; I shall not tell you his name this morning, but he is better than you are, for it is said, "He believes and trembles," while you sit unmoved by the most powerful appeals. Yes you who think you are children of God while you live in sin, you are in the most dreadful error. There is no delusion, if you except the delusion of the Pharisee, which is more dreadful than the delusion of a man, who thinks that sin and grace can reign together. The Christian has sins of heart, over which he groans and laments, but as regards his outward life, he is kept, so that the evil one touches him not;

the Lord keeps him under the shadow of his wing; he doth not, except in some falls, allow him to turn out of the way. Works are the evidence of our faith; by faith our souls are justified before God; by works our faith is justified before ourselves and fellow-men.

Secondly, we think good works are the witnesses or testimony to other people of the truth of what we believe. Every Christian was sent into the world to be a preacher; and just like every other creature that God has made, he will always be preaching about his Lord. Doth not the whole world preach God? Do not the stars, while they shine, look down from heaven and say there is a God? Do not the winds chaunt God's name in their mighty howling? Do not the waves murmur it upon the shore, or thunder it in the storms? Do not the floods and the fields, the skies and the plains, the mountains and the valleys, the streamlets and the rivers, all speak for God? Assuredly they do; and a new-born creature - the man created in Christ - must preach Jesus Christ wherever he goes. This is the use of good works. He will preach, not with his mouth always, but with his life. The use of good works is, that they are a Christian's sermon. A sermon is not what a man says, but what he does. You who practice are preaching; it is not preaching and practising, but practising is preaching. The sermon that is preached by the mouth is soon forgotten, but what we preach by our lives is never forgotten. There is nothing like faithful practice and holy living, if we would preach to the world. The reason why Christianity does not advance with a mightier stride, is simply this: - that professors are in a large measure a disgrace to religion, and many of those who are joined to the church have no more godliness than those who are out of it. If I preached such a contradictory sermon on a Sunday as some of you have preached the most part of your lives, you would go out and say, "We will not go again till he can be a little more consistent with himself." There is a difference in the very tone of the voice of some people when they are in the chapel engaged in prayer, and when they are in the workshop; you would hardly think them the same persons. Out upon your inconsistency! Professors, take heed lest your inconsistencies should blot your evidence, and some of you should be found manifesting, not inconsistency, but a most fearful consistency, because living in sin and iniquity, and therefore being consistent with yourselves in hypocrisy.

In the third place, good works are of us to a Christian as an adornment. You will all remember that passage in the Scriptures, which tells us how a woman should adorn herself. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." The adornment of good works, the adornment in which we hope to enter heaven, is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; but the adornment of a Christian here below, is his holiness, his piety, his consistency. If some people had a little more piety, they would not require such a showy dress; if they had a little more godliness, to set them off, they would have no need whatever to be always decorating themselves. The best ear-rings that a woman can wear, are the ear-rings of hearing the Word with attention. The very best ring that we can have upon our finger is the ring which the father puts upon the finger of the prodigal son, when he is brought back; and the very best dress we can ever wear, is a garment wrought by the Holy Spirit, the garment of a consistent conduct. But it is marvellous, while many are taking all the trouble they can to array this poor body, they have very few ornaments for their soul; they forgot to dress the soul. Oh! no; they are too late at chapel, all because of that other pin, which they might have left out. They come here just when the service is beginning, because, forsooth, they have so much to put on, they could not be expected to be here in time. And there are Christian men and Christian women, who forget what God has written in his word, which is as true now as ever it was, that Christian women should array themselves with modesty. It would be a good thing, perhaps, if we went back to Wesley's rule, to come out from the world in our apparel, and to dress as plainly and neatly as the Quakers, though alas! they have sadly gone from their primitive simplicity. I am obliged to depart a little sometimes, from what we call the high things of the gospel; for really the children of God cannot now be told by outward appearance from the children of the devil, and they really ought to be; there should be some distinction between the one and the other; and although religion allows distinction of rank and dress, yet everything in the Bible cries out against our arraying ourselves, and making ourselves proud, by reason of the goodliness of our apparel. Some will say, "I wish you would leave that alone!" Of course you do, because it applies to yourself. But we let

nothing alone which we believe to be in the Scriptures; and while I would not spare any man's soul, honesty to every man's conscience and honesty to myself demands, that I should always speak of that which I see to be an evil breaking out in the Church. We should always take care that in everything we keep as near as possible to the written Word. If you want ornaments here they are. Here are jewels, rings, dresses, and all kinds of ornament; men and women, ye may dress yourselves up till ye shine like angels. How can you do it? By dressing yourselves out in benevolence, in love to the saints, in honesty and integrity, in uprightness, in godliness, in brotherly-kindness, in charity. These are the ornaments which angels themselves admire, and which even the word will admire; for men must give admiration to the man or the woman who is arrayed in the jewels of a holy life and godly conversation. I beseech you, brethren, "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

IV. Thus have I told you the use of good works. Now just a moment or two to tell you that the religion which we profess in this place, and which we preach, is **CALCULATED TO PRODUCE GOOD WORKS IN THE CHILD OF GOD.**

Some say that what is called Calvinism, which is an alias for the true gospel, is calculated to lead men into sin. Now, we will refute that, just by reminding them, that the holiest people in the world have been those who professed the doctrine which we hold. If you ask who in the dark ages were the great moral lights of the world, the answer will be, such as Athanasius, Ambrose, Chrysostom; and then coming lower still, such men as Wickliffe, Jerome of Prague, and Calvin; and every one of these held the doctrines which we love to proclaim. And just let me remind you, there never were better men in the world than the Puritans, and every one of them held fast the truth we love. I happened to find in a book the other day a statement which pleased me so much, that I thought I would read it to you. The writer says, "The Puritans were the most resolved Protestants in the nation; zealous Calvinists; warm and affectionate preachers. They were the most pious and devout people in the land; men of prayer in secret and in public, as well as in their families. Their manner of devotion was fervent and solemn, depending on the assistance of the Divine Spirit. They had a profound reverence for the holy name of God,



and were great enemies not only to profane swearing, but to foolish talking and jesting. They were strict observers of the Lord's day, spending the whole of it in public and private devotion and charity. It was the distinguishing mark of a Puritan, in these times, to see him going to church twice a day, with his Bible under his arm; and while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, &c., on the eve of the Sabbath, these with their families were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, repeating sermons, catechising their children, and prayer. Nor was this the work only of the Lord's day, but they had their hours of family devotion in the week days; they were circumspect, as to all excess in eating and drinking, apparel, and lawful diversions; being frugal, industrious, exact in their dealings, and solicitous to give every one his own." That is a noble testimony to puritanic truth and the power of the gospel. But I have one, which I think will please you, in another part of the book. A learned Infidel says of the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, that "When compared with their antagonists, they have excelled, in no small degree, in the most rigid and respectable virtues; that they have been an honor to their own age, and the best model for imitation to every age succeeding." Only think of an infidel speaking like that. I think it was an infidel that said, "Go the Arminians to hear about good works; but go to the Calvinists to see them exhibited." And even Dr. Priestly, who was a Unitarian, admits that, "They who hold the doctrines of grace, have less apparent conformity to the world, and more of a principle of real religion, than his own followers: and that they who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God and less to man than others, have the greatest elevation of piety."

And just now, as the Unitarians are bringing up all their great men - so great that we never heard their names to this day - and endeavouring to do all they can in London, to bring people to Unitarianism, we would just tell them this fact. Dr. Priestly ascribes the coolness of Unitarianism to their becoming more indifferent to religious doctrine - and accounts for the fact of their chapels not being well attended, by saying that Unitarians have a very slight attachment to their religious doctrines. What a mercy! for if they continued to hold them, they would inevitably be lost. A man who denies the divinity of Christ is sure to be lost. It is idle for them to

talk of their being Christians; they might as well talk of being holy angels. The best proof I can give you of the holy tendency of our doctrines is this great fact, viz.: - That in every age those who have held the doctrines of grace have exhibited in their lives a holy walk and conversation.

But once more: in just hastily running over the doctrines, we ask, what could more tend to make men holy, than the truths we preach? Do we not teach you, that God has chosen to himself a people who must be holy? Is that an unholy doctrine? Do we not tell you that God has chosen to himself a people who in this world shall show forth his praise, by holy living? Is that an unholy doctrine? And we have told you that the Holy Ghost gives a new heart, and a right spirit, and that there is something more required than you can do yourselves; that you are unable to perform such good things as God expects from you, therefore God the Spirit must renovate you. Do you call that an unholy doctrine? Is the doctrine, that men by nature are vile and need renewing grace, unholy? And the doctrine that the true saints will certainly hold on to the end: is that unholy? Methinks the contrary to these doctrines are the most unholy in the world. Is the doctrine that only those who believe have an interest in the blood of Christ an unholy thing? Is the doctrine that I preach, that Christ has redeemed only such as live in holiness, having been brought thereto by the Holy Ghost, an unholy thing? Methinks not. We challenge all those who love to speak against our doctrines to prove that there is a single one of them which has an unholy tendency. Charge us with not holding good works? Come and try to get into our church, and you will soon have a proof that you are wrong. Why, we would not have you, sir, if you would give us a thousand pounds, unless we considered you were a holy man. If you have not good works, it will be a long time before we will receive you; and if you were to steal into our church, you would be turned out in a week, if you lived in sin and unrighteousness; for it would soon be reported to the pastor and deacons, and you would see whether we did not hold the necessity of good works. If you did not exhibit them every day we would cast you out from amongst us, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Our church order is the best refutation of the calumny.

What more can we say, then? We hope we have proved our points to all

honest and consistent men. We only send you away, ye hypocrites, with this ringing in your ears, "Except ye have the spirit of Christ, ye are none of his." Except ye live like Christ, ye shall not be with Christ at last; if your spirit be not sanctified in this world, you will not find that God will sanctify you when you come before his throne. But you, poor sinners, who have no holiness of your own, and no good works at all; I know you have not any, because you are not a child of God. Do you feel that you have not? Come then, and Christ will give you some: he will give you himself. If you believe on the Lord Jesus, he will wash you from all your sins, give you a new heart, and henceforth your life shall be holy, your conduct shall be consistent, he shall keep you to the end, and you shall most assuredly be saved. God bless this testimony to any such as are living in sin, that they may be reclaimed from it; for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Gospel Missions**

And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.- Acts 13:49

I shall not confine myself to the text. It being an old custom to take texts when we preach, I have taken one, but I shall address you, at large, upon a subject which I am sure will occupy your attention, and has done for many days and years past—the subject of gospel missions. We feel persuaded that all of you are of one mind in this matter, that it is the absolute duty as well as the eminent privilege of the Church to proclaim the gospel to the world. We do not conceive that God will do his own work without instruments, but that, as he has always employed means in the work of the regeneration of this world, he will still continue to do the same, and that it becomes the Church to do its utmost to spread the truth wherever it can reach the ear of man. We have not two opinions on that

point. Some churches may have, but we have not. Our doctrines, although they are supposed to lead to apathy and sloth, have always proved themselves to be eminently practical; the fathers of the mission were all zealous lovers of the doctrines of the grace of God; and we believe, the great supporters of missionary enterprise, if it is to be successful, must always come from those who hold God's truth firmly and boldly, and yet have fire and zeal with it, and desire to spread it everywhere. But there is a point on which we have great division of opinion, and that is as to the reason why we have had so little success in our missionary labours. There may be some who say the success has been proportionate to the agency, and that we could not have been more successful. I am far from being of their opinion, and I do not think they themselves would express it on their knees before Almighty God. We have not been successful to the extent we might have expected, certainly not to an apostolic extent, certainly with nothing like the success of Paul or Peter, or even of those imminent men who have preceded us in modern times, and who were able to evangelize whole countries, turning thousands to God. Now, what is the reason of this? Perhaps we may turn our eyes on high, and think we find that reason in the sovereignty of God, which hath withholden his Spirit, and hath not poured out his grace as aforetime. I shall be prepared to grant all men may say on that point, for I believe in the ordination of everything by Almighty God. I believe in a present God in our defeats as well as in our successes; a God as well in the motionless air as in the careering tempest; a God of ebbs as well as a God of floods. But still we must look at home for the cause. When Zion travails, she brings forth children; when Zion is in earnest, God is in earnest about his work; when Zion is prayerful, God blesses her. We must not, therefore, arbitrarily look for the cause of our failure in the will of God, but we must also see what is the difference between ourselves and the men of Apostolic times, and what it is that renders our success so trifling in comparison with the tremendous results of Apostolic preaching. I think I shall be able to show one or two reasons why our holy faith is not so prosperous as it was then. In the first place, we have not Apostolic men; in the second place, they do not set about their work in an Apostolic style; in the third place, we have not Apostolic churches to back them up; and in the fourth place, we have not the Apostolic influence of the Holy Ghost. in the measure which they had it in ancient times.

I. First, WE HAVE FEW APOSTOLIC MEN IN THESE TIMES. I will not say we have none; here and there we may have one or two, but unhappily their names are never heard; they do not start out before the world, and are not noted as preachers of God's truth. We had a Williams once, a true apostle, who went from island to island, not counting his life dear unto him; but Williams is called to his reward. We had a Knibb, who toiled for his Master with seraphic earnestness, and was not ashamed to call an oppressed slave his brother; but Knibb, too, has entered into his rest. We have one or two still remaining, precious and treasured names; we love them fervently, and our prayers shall ever rise to heaven on their behalf. We always say, in our prayers, "God bless such men as Moffat! God bless those who are earnestly toiling and successfully labouring!" But cast your eyes around, and where can we find many such men? They are all good men; we find no fault with them; they are better than we; we, ourselves, shrink into nothingness compared with them; but we must still say of them that they are less than their fathers, they differ from the mighty Apostles in many respects, which we think even they would not be slow to own. I am not speaking of missionaries only, but of ministers too; for I take it we have as much to mourn over in regard to the spread of the gospel in England as in foreign lands, and much to regret the lack of men filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In the first place, we have not men with Apostolic zeal. Converted in a most singular way, by a direct interposition from heaven, Paul, from that time forward became an earnest man. He had always been earnest, in his sin and in his persecutions; but after he heard that voice from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" and had received the mighty office of an apostle, and had been sent forth a chosen vessel to the Gentiles, you can scarce conceive the deep, the awful earnestness which he manifested. Whether he did eat, or drink, or whatsoever he did, he did all for the glory of his God; he never wasted an hour; he was employing his time either in ministering with his own hands unto his necessities, or else lifting those hands in the Synagogue, on Mars-hill, or anywhere where he could command the attention of the multitude. His zeal was so earnest, and so burning, that he could not (as we unfortunately do) restrain himself within a little sphere; but he preached the Word everywhere. It was not enough for him to have it handed down that he was the Apostle of Pisidia,

but he must go also to Pamphylia; it was not enough that he should be the great preacher of Pamphylia and Pisidia, but he must go also to Attalia; and when he had preached throughout all Asia, he must needs take ship to Greece, and preach there also. I believe not once only did Paul hear in his dream the men of Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us," but every day and hour he heard the cry in his ears from multitudes of souls, "Paul, Paul, come over and help us." He could not restrain himself from preaching. "Woe is unto me" he said "if I preach not the gospel. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ." Oh! if you could have seen Paul preach, you would not have gone away as you do from some of us, with half a conviction, that we do not mean what we say. His eyes preached a sermon without his lips, and his lips preached it, not in a cold and frigid manner, but every word fell with an overwhelming power upon the hearts of his hearers. He preached with power, because he was in downright earnest. You had a conviction, when you saw him, that he was a man who felt he had a work to do and must do it, and could not contain himself unless he did do it. He was the kind of preacher whom you would expect to see walk down the pulpit stairs straight into his coffin, and then stand before his God, ready for his last account. Where are the men like that man? I confess I cannot claim that privilege, and I seldom hear a solitary sermon which comes up to the mark in earnest, deep, passionate longing for the souls of men.

We have no eyes now like the eyes of the Saviour, which could weep over Jerusalem; we have few voices like that earnest impassioned voice which seemed perpetually to cry, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." If ministers of the gospel were more hearty in their work of preaching; if, instead of giving lectures and devoting a large part of their time to literary and political pursuits, they would preach the Word of God, and preach it as if they were pleading for their own lives, ah! then, my brethren, we might expect great success; but we cannot expect it while we go about our work in a half-hearted way, and have not that zeal, that earnestness, that deep purpose which characterized those men of old.

Then, again, I take it we have not men in our days who can preach like

Paul—as to their faith. What did Paul do? He went to Philippi; did he know a soul there? Not one. He had his Master's truth, and he believed in the power of it. He was unattended and devoid of pomp, or show, or parade; he did not go to a pulpit with a soft cushion in it to address a respectable congregation, but he walked through the streets and began to preach to the people. He went to Corinth, to Athens, alone, single-handed, to tell the people the gospel of the blessed God. Why? Because he had faith in the gospel and believed it would save souls, and hurl down idols from their thrones. He had no doubt about the power of the gospel; but now-a-days, my brethren, we have not faith in the gospel we preach. How many there are who preach gospel, which they are afraid will not save souls; and, therefore, they add little bits of their own to it in order, as they think, to win men to Christ! We have known men who believed Calvinistic doctrines, but who preached Calvinism in the morning and Arminianism in the evening, because they were afraid God's gospel would not convert sinners, so they would manufacture one of their own. I hold that a man who does not believe his gospel to be able to save men's souls, does not believe it all. If God's truth will not save men's souls, man's lies cannot; if God's truth will not turn men to repentance, I am sure there is nothing in this world that can. When we believe the gospel to be powerful, then we shall see it is powerful. If I walk into this pulpit, and say, "I know what I preach is true," the world says I am an egotist. "The young man is dogmatical." Ay, and the young man means to be; he glories in it, he keeps it to himself as one of his peculiar titles, for he does most firmly believe what he preaches. God forbid that I should ever come tottering up the pulpit stairs to teach anything I was not quite sure of, something which I hoped might save sinners, but of which I was not exactly certain. When I have faith in my doctrines, those doctrines will prevail, for confidence is the winner of the palm. He who hath courage enough to grasp the standard, and hold it up, will be sure enough to find followers. He who says, "I know," and asserts it boldly in his Master's name, without disputing, will not be long before he will find men who will listen to what he says, and who will say, "This man speaks with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." That is one reason why we do not succeed: we have not faith in the gospel. We send educated men to India in order to confound the learned Brahmins. Nonsense! Let the Brahmins say what they like, have we any business to dispute with them? "Oh, but

they are so intellectual and so clever." What have we to do with that? We are not to seek to be clever in order to meet them. Leave the men of the world to combat their metaphysical errors; we have merely to say, "This is truth: he that believeth it shall be saved, and he that denieth it shall be damned." We have no right to come down from the high ground of divine authoritative testimony; and until we maintain that ground, and come out as we ought to do, girded with the belt of divinity—preaching not what may be true, but asserting that which God has most certainly revealed—we shall not see success. We want a deeper faith in our gospel; we want to be quite sure of what we preach. Brethren, I take it we have not the faith of our fathers. I feel myself a poor drivelling thing in point of faith. Why, methought sometimes I could believe anything; but now a little difficulty comes before me, I am timid, and I fear. It is when I preach with unbelief in my heart that I preach unsuccessfully; but when I preach with faith and can say, "I know my God has said, that in the self-same hour he will give me what I shall preach, and careless of man's esteem, I preach what I believe to be true," then it is that God owns faith and crowns it with his own crown.

Again: we have not enough self-denial, and that is one reason why we do not prosper. Far be it from me to say aught against the self-denial of those worthy brethren who have left their country to cross the stormy deep and preach the Word. We hold them to be men who are to be had in honour; but still I ask, where is the self-denial of the Apostles now-a-days? I think one of the greatest disgraces that ever was cast upon the church in these days was that last mission to Ireland. Men went over to Ireland, but like men who have valour's better part, brave bold men, they came back again, which is about all we can say of the matter. Why do they not go there again? Why, they say the Irish "hooted" at them. Now, don't you think you see Paul taking a microscope out of his pocket, and looking at the little man who should say to him, "I shall not go there to preach because the Irish hooted me?" "What!" he says, "is this a preacher?—what a small edition of a minister he must be, to be sure!" "Oh! but they threw stones at us; you have no idea how badly they treated us!" Just tell that to the Apostle Paul. I am sure you would be ashamed to do so. "Oh! but in some places the police interfered, and said that we should only create a riot." What would Paul have said to that? The police interfering! I did not



know that we had any right to care about governments. Our business is to preach the Word, and if we must be put in the stocks there let us lie; there would come no hurt of it at last. "Oh! but they might have killed some of us." That is just it. Where is that zeal which counted not its life dear so that it might win Christ? I believe that the killing of a few of our ministers would have prospered Christianity. However we might mourn over it, and none more than myself, I say the murder of a dozen of them would have been no greater ground for grief than the slaughter of our men by hundreds in a successful fight for hearths and homes. I would count my own blood most profitably shed in so holy a struggle. How did the gospel prosper aforetime? Were there not some who laid down their lives for it; and did not others walk to victory over their slain bodies; and must it not be so now? If we are to start back because we are afraid of being killed, heaven knows when the gospel is to spread over the world—we do not. What have other missionaries done? Have they not braved death in its direst forms, and preached the Word amid countless dangers? My brethren, we say again, we find no fault, for we, ourselves, might err in the same manner; but we are sure we are therein not like Paul. He went to a place where they stoned him with stones, and dragged him out as dead. Did he say, "Now for the future I will not go where they will ill-treat me?" No, for he says, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck." I am sure we have not the self-denial of the Apostles. We are mere carpet-knights and Hyde-park-warriors. When I go to my own house and think how comfortable and happy I am, I say to myself, "How little I do for my Master! I am ashamed that I cannot deny myself for his truth, and go everywhere preaching his Word." I look with pity upon people who say "Do not preach so often; you will kill yourself." O my God! what would Paul have said to such a thing as that? "Take care of your constitution; you are rash; you are enthusiastic." When I compare myself with one of those men of old, I say, "Oh that men should be found calling themselves Christians, who seek to stop our work of faith and labour of love, for the sake of a little consideration about the 'constitution,' which gets all the stronger for the preaching of God's Word."

But I hear some one whispering, "You ought to make a little allowance." My dear friend, I make all allowance. I am not finding fault with those

brethren; they are a good sort of people; we are "all honorable men;" but I will only say, that in comparison with Paul, we are less than nothing, and vanity; little insignificant Lilliputian creatures, who can hardly be seen in comparison with those gigantic men of old.

Ones of my hearers may perhaps hint that this is not the sole cause, and he observes, "I think you ought to make excuse, for ministers now cannot work miracles." Well, I have considered that too, and certainly it is a drawback, but, I take it, not a very great one; for if it had been, God would not have allowed it to exist. He gave that gift to the Church in its infancy, but now it needs it no longer. We mistake in attributing too much to miracles. What was one of them? Wherever the Apostles went they could speak the language of the people. Well, in the time it would have taken Paul to walk from here to Hindostan, we could learn Hindostani, and we can go over in a very little time by the means of travelling that are now provided: so that is no great gain there. Then, again, in order to make the gospel known amongst the people, it was necessary that miracles should be worked, so that every one might talk about it; but now there is a printing press to aid us. What I say to-day, within six months will be read across the Alleghanies; and so with other ministers, what they say and what they do can soon be printed off and distributed everywhere; so they have facilities for making themselves known which are not much behind the power of miracles. Again, we have a great advantage over the Apostles. Wherever they went they were persecuted, and sometimes put to death; but now, although occasionally we hear of the massacre of a missionary, the occurrence is rare enough. The slaughter of an Englishman anywhere would provoke a fleet of men-of-war to visit the offence with chastisement. The world respects an Englishman wherever he goes; he has the stamp of the great Caesar upon him; he is the true cosmopolite—the citizen of the world. That could not be said of the poor despised Jews. There might be some respect paid to Paul, for he was a Roman citizen, but there would be none paid to the rest. We cannot be put to death now without a noise being made. The murder of two or three ministers in Ireland would provoke a tumult through the country; the government would have to interpose, the orderly of the land would be up in arms, and then we might preach with an armed constabulary around us, and so go through the land, provoking the priests, startling antichrist,

and driving superstition to its dens for ever.

II. In the second place, WE DO NOT GO ABOUT OUR WORK IN AN APOSTOLIC STYLE. How is that? Why, in the first place, there is a general complaint that there is not enough preaching by ministers and missionaries. They sit down interpreting, establishing schools, and doing this, that, and the other. We have nothing to find fault with in this; but that is not the labour to which they should devote themselves; their office is preaching, and if they preached more, they might hope for more success. The missionary Chamberlain preached once at a certain place, and years afterwards disciples were found there from that one sermon. Williams preached wherever he went, and God blessed him; Moffat preached wherever he went, and his labours were owned. Now we have our churches, our printing-presses, about which a great deal of money is spent. This is doing good, but it is not doing the good. We are not using the means which God has ordained, and we cannot therefore expect to prosper. Some say there is too much preaching now-a-days, in England. Well, it is the tendency of the times to decry preaching, but it is "the foolishness of preaching" which is to change the world. It is not for men to say, "If you preached less, you might study more." Study is required well enough if you have a settled church; but the Apostles needed no study, I apprehend, but they stood up and delivered out the simple cardinal truths of religion, not taking one text, but going through the whole catalogue of truth. So I think, in itinerant evangelical labours, we are not bound to dwell on one subject, for then we need to study, but we shall find it profitable to deal out the whole truth wherever we go. Thus we should always find words to hand, and truths ever ready to teach the people.

In the next place I conceive that a great mistake has been made in not affirming the divinity of our mission, and standing fast by the truth, as being a revelation not to be proved by men, but to be believed; always holding out this, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." I am often grieved when I read of our missionaries holding disputes with the Brahmins, and it is sometimes said that the missionary has beaten the Brahmin because he kept his temper, and so the gospel had gained great honour by the dispute. I take

it that the gospel was lowered by the controversy. I think the missionary should say, "I am come to tell you something which the One God of heaven and earth hath said, and I tell you before I announce it, that if you believe it you shall be saved, and if not, you shall be damned. I am come to tell you that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh, to die for poor unworthy man, that through his mediation, and death, and suffering, the people of God might be delivered. Now, if you will listen to me you shall hear the word of God: if you do not, I shake the dust of my feet against you, and go somewhere else." Look at the history of every imposture; it shows us that the claim of authority insures a degree of progress. How did Mahommed come to have so strong a religion in his time? He was all alone, and he went into the market-place and said, "I have received a revelation from heaven." It was a lie, but he persuaded men to believe it. People looked at his face; they saw that he looked upon them earnestly as believing what he said, and some five or six of them joined him. Did he prove what he said? Not he. "You must," he said, "believe what I say, or there is no Paradise for you." There is power in that kind of thing, and wherever he went his statement was believed, not on the ground of reasoning, but on his authority, which he declared to be from Allah; and in a century after he first proclaimed his imposture, a thousand sabres had flashed from a thousand sheaths, and his word had been proclaimed through Africa, Turkey, Asia, and even in Spain. The man claimed authority—he claimed divinity; therefore he had power. Take again the increase of Mormonism. What has been its strength? Simply this—the assertion of power from heaven. That claim is made, and the people believe it, and now they have missionaries in almost every country of the habitable globe, and the book of Mormon is translated into many languages. Though there never could be a delusion more transparent, or a counterfeit less skilful, and more lying upon the very surface, yet this simple pretension to power has been the means of carrying power with it. Now, my brethren, we have power; we are God's ministers; we preach God's truth; the great Judge of heaven and earth has told us the truth, and what have we to do to dispute with worms of the dust? Why should we tremble and fear them? Let us stand out and say, "We are the servants of the living God; we tell unto you what God has told us, and we warn you, if you reject our testimony, it shall be better for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." If the people cast that away we have

done our work. We have nothing to do with making men believe; ours is to testify of Christ everywhere, to preach and to proclaim the gospel to all men.

But there is one passage in the Bible which seems to militate against what I have said, if the common translation be true—the passage which says that Paul "disputed in the school of one Tyrannus." But this is better rendered in English, he "dialogued in the school of one Tyrannous." Albert Barnes says, that "disputed is not a happy translation," for there is no such idea conveyed by the word. Jesus, when he preached, "dialogued." When the man came and said to him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he "dialogued" with him. When another said unto him, "Speak, Lord, unto my brother, that he divide with me the inheritance," Christ did not dispute with him, but he "dialogued." His usual style was to address the people, and but rarely to dispute with men. We might give up all the books that have been written in defence of Christianity if we would but preach Christ, if, instead of defending the outposts, we were to say, "God will take care of them," and were at once to make a sortie on the enemy; then by God's Holy Spirit we should carry everything before us. O, Church of God! believe thyself invincible, and thou art invincible; but stay to tremble, and fear, and thou art undone. Lift up thy head and say, "I am God's daughter; I am Christ's bride." Do not stop to prove it, but affirm it; march through the land, and kings and princes shall bow down before thee, because thou hast taken thine ancient prowess and assumed thine ancient glory.

I have one more remark to make here with regard to the style in which we go to work. I fear that we have not enough of the divine method of itinerancy. Paul was a great itinerant: he preached in one place, and there were twelve converted there; he made a church at once; he did not stop till he had five hundred; but when he had twelve, he went off to another place. A holy woman takes him in; she has a son and daughter; they are saved and baptized—there is another church. Then he goes on; wherever he goes the people believe and are baptized, wherever he meets a family who believe, he or his companion baptizes all the house, and goes about his way still forming churches and appointing elders over them. We, now-a-days, go and settle in a place, make a station of it, and work around it

by little and little, and think that is the way to succeed. No, no! ravage a continent; attempt great things and great things shall be done. But they say if you just pass over a place it will be forgotten like the summer shower, which moistens all, but satisfies none. Yes, but you do not know how many of God's elect may be there; you have no business to stop in one place; go straight on; God's elect are everywhere. I protest if I could not itinerate this country of England, I could not bear to preach. If I preached here always, many of you would become gospel hardened. I love to go ranging here, there, and everywhere. My highest ambition is this, that I may be found going through the entire land, as well as holding my head quarters in one position. I do hold that itinerancy is God's great plan. There should be fixed ministers and pastors, but those who are like apostles should itinerate far more than they do.

III. But I have a third thing to say which will strike home to some of us: that is, that WE HAVE NOT APOSTOLIC CHURCHES. Oh! had you seen an Apostolic church, what a different thing it would appear to one of our churches! as different, I had almost said, as light from darkness, as different as the shallow bed of the brook that is dried by summer is from the mighty rolling river, ever full, ever deep and clear, and ever rushing into the sea. Now, where is our prayerfulness compared with theirs? I trust that we know something of the power of prayer here, but I do not think we pray like they did. "They broke bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with singleness of heart, giving glory to God." There was not a member of the Church, as a rule, who was half-hearted; they gave their souls wholly to God; and when Anaias and Sapphira divided the price, they were smitten with death for their sin. Oh! if we prayed as deeply and as earnestly as they did, we should have as much success. Any measure of success we may have had here has been entirely owing under God to your prayers; and wherever I have gone, I have boasted that I have a praying people. Let other ministers have as prayerful a people; let missionaries have as many prayers from the Church, and, all things being equal, God will bless them, and there will be greater prosperity than ever.

We have not the Apostolic mode of liberality. In the Apostles' days they gave all their substance. It was not demanded of them then, and it is not now, no one thinks of asking such a thing; still we have run to the other

extreme, and many give nothing at all. Men who have thousands and tens of thousands are so eternally considerate for their families, albeit they are provided for, that they give nothing more than the servant girl who sits next to them. It is a common saying, that members of Christian Churches do not give in proportion to their wealth. We give because it is genteel and respectable. A great many of us give I hope, because we love the cause of God; but many of us say, "There is a poor bricklayer, working hard all the week and only earning just enough to keep his wife and family: he will give a shilling; now, I have so many pounds a week—I am a rich man—what shall I give? why, I will give half-a-crown." Another says, "I will give ten shillings this morning." Now, if they measured their wealth in comparison with his, they would see that he gives all he has left above his maintenance, while they give comparatively nothing. My brethren, we are not half Christians; that is the reason why we have not half success. We are Christianised, but I question whether we are thoroughly so. The Spirit of God hath not entered into us to give us that life, and fire, and soul, which they had in these ancient times.

IV. But lastly, as the result of the other things which have gone before, and perhaps partly as the cause of them too, **WE HAVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THAT MEASURE WHICH ATTENDED THE APOSTLES.** I see no reason whatever, why, this morning, if God willed it, I should not stand up and preach a sermon which should be the means of converting every soul in the place. I see no reason why I should not, tomorrow, preach a sermon which should be the means of the salvation of all who heard it, if God the Spirit were poured out. The word is able to convert, just as extensively as God the Spirit pleases to apply it; and I can see no reason why, if converts come in by ones and twos now, there should not be a time when hundreds and thousands shall come to God. The same sermon which God blesses to ten if he pleased he could bless to a hundred. I know not but that in the latter days when Christ shall come and shall begin to take the kingdom to himself, every minister of God shall be as successful as Peter on the day of Pentecost. I am sure the Holy Spirit is able to make the word successful, and the reason why we do not prosper is that we have not the Holy Spirit attending us with might and energy as they had then. My brethren, if we had the Holy Spirit upon our ministry, it would signify very little about our talent. Men might be poor

and uneducated; their words might be broken and ungrammatical; there might be no polished periods of Hall, or glorious thunders of Chalmers; but if there were the might of the Spirit attending them, the humblest evangelists would be more successful than the most pompous of divines, or the most eloquent of preachers. It is extraordinary grace, not talent, that wins the day; extraordinary spiritual power, not extraordinary mental power. Mental power may fill a chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church. Mental power may gather a congregation; spiritual power will save souls. We want spiritual power. Oh! we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power, and when they speak they have not the Holy Spirit with them; but we know others, simple hearted worthy men who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach in their country place, and the Spirit of God clothes every word with power; hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are born again. Spirit of the living God! we want thee. Thou art the life, the soul; thou art the source of thy people's success; without thee they can do nothing, with thee they can do everything.

Thus I have tried to show you what I conceive to be the causes of our partial non-success. And now permit me, with all earnestness, to plead with you on behalf of Christ and Christ's Holy Gospel, that you would stir yourselves up to renewed efforts for the spread of his truth, and to more earnest prayers, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Ah! my friends, could I show you the tens of thousands of spirits who are now walking in outer darkness; could I take you to the gloomy chamber of hell, and show you myriads upon myriads of heathen souls in utterable torture, not having heard the word, but being justly condemned for their sins; methinks you could ask yourselves, "Did I do anything to save these unhappy myriads? They have been damned, and can I say I am clear of their blood?" Oh! God of mercy, if these skirts be clear of my fellow creatures' blood, I shall have eternal reason to bless thee in heaven. Oh! Church of Christ! thou hast great reason to ask thyself whether thou art quite clean in this matter. Ye say too often, ye sons of God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Ye are too much like Cain; ye do not ask yourselves whether God will require your fellow-creatures blood at your hands. Oh! there is a truth which says, "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will be



require at the watchman's hands." Ah! there ought to be more of us who are preaching to the heathen, and yet, perhaps, we are indolent and doing little or nothing. There are many of you, yea all of you, who ought to be doing far more than you are for evangelical purposes and the spread of Christ's gospel. Oh! put this question to your hearts; shall I be able to say to the damned spirit if he meets me in hell, "Sinner, I did all I could for thee?" I am afraid some will have to say, "No, I did not; it is true I might have done more; I might have laboured more, even though I might have been unsuccessful, but I did not do it." AH, my dear friends, I believe there is a great reason for some of us to suspect whether we believe our religion at all. An infidel once met a Christian. "Because," said the other, "for years you have passed me on my way to my house of business. You believe, do you not, there is a hell, into which men's spirit are cast?" "Yes, I do," said the Christian. "And you believe that unless I believe in Christ I must be sent there?" "Yes." "You do not, I am sure, because if you did you must be a most inhuman wretch to pass me, day by day, and never tell me about it or warn me of it." I do hold that there are some Christians who are verily guilty in this matter; God will forgive them, the blood of Christ can even wash that out, but they are guilty. Did you ever think of the tremendous value of a single soul. My hearers, if there were but one man in Siberia unsaved, and all the world were saved besides, if God should move our minds, it would be worth while for all the people in England to go after that one soul. Did you ever think of the value of a soul? Ah! ye have not heard the howls and yells of hell; ye have not heard the mighty songs and hosannas of the glorified; ye have no notion of what eternity is, or else ye would know the value of a soul. Ye who have been broken by conviction, humbled by the Spirit, and led to cry for mercy through the covenant Jesus; ye know something of what a soul's value is, but many of my hearers do not. Could we preach carelessly, could we pray coldly, if we knew what a precious thing it is about which we are concerned? No, surely we should be doubly in earnest that God will please to save sinners. I am sure the present state of affairs cannot go on long; we are doing next to nothing; Christianity is at a low ebb. People think it will never be much better; that it is clear impossible to do wonders in these days. Are we in a worse condition than the Roman Catholic nations were when one man, a Luther, preached? Then God can find a Luther now. We are not in a much worse state than when Whitfield began to preach, and yet God can find

his Whitfields now. It is a delusion to suppose that we cannot succeed as they did. God helping us we will; God helping us by his Spirit we will see greater things than this, at any rate, we will never let God's Church rest if we do not see it prosper, but we will enter our earnest hearty protest against the coldness and lethargy of the times, and as long as this our tongue shall move in our mouth, we will protest against the laxity and false doctrine so rampant throughout the Churches, and then that happy double reformation—a reformation in doctrine and Spirit, will be brought about together. Then God knoweth but what we shall say, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows," and ere long the shout of Christ shall be heard. He, himself, shall descend from heaven; and we shall hear it said and sung, "Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

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## **Grace Abounding**

I will love them freely. - Hosea 14:4

This sentence is a body of divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fullness is a true Master in divinity. "I will love them freely," is a condensation of the glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. The sense hinges upon the word "freely." "I will love them freely." Here is the glorious, the suitable, the divine way by which love streams from heaven to earth. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are. It may be that he can love angels because of their goodness; but he could not love us for that reason; the only manner in which love can come from God to fallen creatures is expressed in the word "freely." Here we have spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it.

Since the word "freely" is the very key-note of the text, we must observe

its common meaning among men. We use the word "freely" for that which is given without money and without price. It is opposed to all idea of bargaining, to all acceptance of an equivalent, or that which might be construed into an equivalent. A man is said to give freely when he bestows his charity on applicants simply on the ground of their poverty, hoping for nothing again. A man distributes freely when, without asking any compensation, he finds it more blessed to give than to receive. Now God's love comes to men all free and unbought; without our having merit to deserve, or money to procure it. I know it is written, "Come, buy wine and milk," but is it not added "Without money and without price?" "I will love them freely;" that is "I will not accept their works in barter for my love; I will not receive their love as a recompense for mine; I will love them, all unworthy and sinful though they be."

Men give "freely" when there is no inducement. A great many presents of late have been given to the Princess of Wales, and 'tis well and good; but the position of the Princess is such that we do not view it as any great liberality to subscribe to a diamond necklace, since those who give are honored by her acceptance. Now the freeness of God's love is shown in this, that the objects of it are utterly unworthy, can confer no honor, and have no position to be an inducement to bless them. The Lord loves them freely. Some persons are very generous to their own relations, but here, again, they can hardly be said to be free, because the tie of blood constrains them. Their own children, their own brother, their own sister—if men will not be generous here, they must be mean through and through. But the generosity of our God is commended to us in that he loved his enemies, and while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for us. The word "freely" is "exceeding broad" when used in reference to God's love to men. He selects those who have not the shadow of a claim upon him, and sets them among the children of his heart.

We use the word "freely," when a favor is conferred without its being sought. It can hardly be said that our King in the old histories pardoned the citizens of Calais freely when his Queen had first to prostrate herself before him, and with many tears to induce him to be merciful. He was gracious, but he was not free in his grace. When a person has been long dogged by a beggar in the streets, though he may turn round and give

liberally to be rid of the clamorous applicant, he does not give "freely." Remember, with regard to God, that his grace to man was utterly unsought. He does give grace to those who seek it, but none would ever seek that grace unless unsought grace had first been bestowed. Sovereign grace waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. The love of God goes forth to men when they have no thought after him; when they are hastening after all manner of sin and wantonness. He loves them freely, and as the effect of that love, they then begin to seek his face. But it is not our seeking, our prayers, our tears, which incline the Lord to love us. God loves us at first most freely, without any entreaties or beseechings, and then we come both to entreat and to beseech his favor.

That which comes without any exertion on our part comes to us "freely." The rulers digged the well, and as they digged it they sang "Spring up, O well!" In such a case, where a well must be digged with much labor, the water can hardly be described as rising freely. But yonder, in the laughing valley, the spring gushes from the hill-side, and lavishes its crystal torrent among the shining pebbles. Man pierced not the fountain, he bored not the channel, for, long ere he was born, or ever the weary pilgrim bowed himself to its cooling stream, it had leaped on its joyous way right freely, and it will do so, as long as the moon endureth, freely, freely, freely. Such is the grace of God. No labor of man procures it; no effort of man can add to it. God is good from the simple necessity of his nature; God is love, simply because it is his essence to be so, and he pours forth his love in plenteous streams to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving objects, simply because he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom will have compassion," for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

If you ask an illustration of the word "freely," I point to yonder sun. How freely he scattereth his life-giving beams. Precious as gold are his rays, but he scattereth them like the dust; he sows the earth with orient pearl, and bejewels it with emerald and ruby and sapphire, and all most freely. You and I forget to pray for the sun's light, but it comes at its appointed season; yea, on that blasphemer who curses God, the day ariseth, and the sunlight warms him as much as the most obedient child of the heavenly Father. That sunbeam falls upon the farm of the miser, and upon the field

of the churl, and bids the grain of the wicked expand in its genial warmth and produce its harvest. That sun shines into the house of the adulterer, into the face of the murderer, and the cell of the thief. No matter how sinful man may be, yet the light of day descends upon him unasked for and unsought. Such is the grace of God; where it comes it comes not because sought, or deserved, but simply from the goodness of the heart of God, which, like the sun, blesseth as it wills. Mark you the gentle winds of heaven, the breath of God to revive the languishing, the soft breezes. See the sick man at the sea-side, drinking in health from the breezes of the salt sea. Those lungs may heave to utter the lascivious song, but the healing wind is not restrained, and whether it be breast of saint or sinner, yet that wind ceaseth not from any. So in gracious visitations, God waiteth not till man is good before he sends the heavenly wind, with healing beneath its wings; even as he pleaseth so it bloweth, and to the most undeserving it cometh. Observe the rain which drops from heaven. It falls upon the desert as well as upon the fertile field; it drops upon the rock that will refuse its fertilizing moisture as well as upon the soil that opens its gaping mouth to drink it in with gratitude. See, it falls upon the hard-trodden streets of the populous city, where it is not required, and where men will even curse it for coming, and it falls not more freely where the sweet flowers have been panting for it, and the withering leaves have been rustling forth their prayers. Such is the grace of God. It does not visit us because we ask it, much less, because we deserve it; but as God wills it, and the bottles of heaven are unstopped, so God wills it, and grace descends. No matter how vile, and black, and foul, and godless, men may be, he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and that free, rich, overflowing goodness of his can make the very worst and least deserving the objects of his best and choicest love.

Do understand me. Let me not leave this point till I have well defined its meaning. I mean this, dear friends: when God says, "I will love them freely," he means that no prayers, no tears, no good works, no almsgivings are an inducement to him to love men, nay, that not only nothing, in themselves, but nothing anywhere else was the cause of his love to them; not even the blood of Christ; not even the groans and tears of his beloved Son. These are the fruits of his love, not the cause of it. He does not love because Christ died, but Christ died because the Father

loved. Do remember that this fountain of love has its spring in itself, not in you, nor in me, but only in the Father's own gracious, infinite heart of goodness. "I will love them freely," spontaneously, without any motive *ab extra*, but entirely because I choose to do it.

In the text we have two great doctrines. I will announce the first one; establish it; and then endeavor to apply it.

I. The first great doctrine is this, that **THERE IS NOTHING IN MAN TO ATTRACT THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIM.**

We have to establish this doctrine, and our first argument is found in the origin of that love. The love of God to man existed before there was any man. He loved his chosen people before any one of them had been created; nay, before the world had been made upon which man dwells he had set his heart upon his beloved and ordained them unto eternal life. The love of God therefore existed before there was any good thing in man, and if you tell me that God loved men because of the foresight of some good thing in them, I again reply to that, that the same thing cannot be both cause and effect. Now it is quite certain that any virtue which there may be in any man is the result of God's grace. Now if it be the result of grace it cannot be the cause of grace. It is utterly impossible that an effect should have existed before a cause; but God's love existed before man's goodness, therefore that goodness cannot be a cause. Brethren, the doctrine of the antiquity of divine love is graven as with the point of a diamond upon the very forehead of revelation; when the children were not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the purpose of election still stood; while we were yet like clay in the mass of creatureship, and God had power to make of the same dump a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor, he chose to make his people vessels unto honor; this could not possibly have been because of any good thing in them, for they themselves were not, much less their goodness. Our Savior's words—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," reveal not only the sovereignty but the freeness of divine affection.

Do you not know, dear friends, in the second place, that the whole plan of divine goodness is entirely opposed to the old covenant of works. Paul is very strong on this point, where he expressly tells us that if it be of grace

it cannot be of works, and if it be of works it cannot be of grace, the two having no possibility of commingling. Our God, speaking by the prophet, says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them." The covenant of grace is as wide as the poles asunder from the covenant of works. Now the tenour of the covenant of works is this—"This do and thou shalt live;" if, then, we do the thing which the covenant of works requires of us we live, and we live as the result of our own doing. But the very opposite must be the case in the covenant of grace. It can never be as the result of anything we do that we are saved under that covenant, or else the two are the same, or at least similar, whereas, the whole Bible through they are set in contradistinction the one against the other, as arranged upon opposite principles, and acting from different springs. Oh! you who think that anything in you can make God love you, stand at the foot of Sinai and learn the only thing that can lead God to accept man on the ground of law, and that is perfect obedience. Read the ten commandments through and see if you can keep one of them in the fullness of its spirit; and I am sure you will be compelled to cry out—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad. Great God, I have sinned." And yet if you would stand on the footing of what you are, you must take the whole ten, and you must keep them throughout an entire life, and never fail in the slightest point, or else abhorred of God you must certainly be. The covenant of grace does not speak on that wise at all. It views man as guilty, and having nothing to merit; and it says, "I will, I will, I will;" it says not "If they will," but "I will and they shall. I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean, and from all their iniquities I will cleanse them." That covenant does not look upon man as innocent, but as guilty. "When I passed by I saw them in their blood, and I said live; yea, when I saw them in their blood I said, live." The first covenant was a contract: "Do this and I will do that;" but the next has not the shadow of a bargain in it; it is—"I will bless you, and I will continue to bless you; though you abound in transgressions, yet I will continue to bless till I make you perfect and bring you to my glory at the last." It cannot be, then, that there is anything in man that makes God love him, because the whole plan of the covenant is opposed to that of works.

Thirdly, the substance of God's love—the substance of the covenant which springs from God's love—clearly proves that it cannot be man's goodness which makes God love him. If you should tell me that there was something so good in man that therefore God gave him bread to eat and raiment to put on, I might believe you. If you tell me that man's excellence constrained the Lord to put the breath into his nostrils, and to give him the comforts of this life, I might yield to you. But I see yonder, God himself made man; I see that God, that man, at last fastened to the tree; I see him on the tree expiring in agonies unknown, I hear his awful shriek,—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani; "I see the dreadful sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son, who was not spared but freely delivered up for us all, and I feel certain that it would be nothing short of blasphemy if I should admit that man could ever deserve such a gift as the death of Christ. The very angels in heaven with an eternity of obedience, could never have deserved so great a gift as Christ in the flesh dying for them; and oh! shall we who are all over foul and defiled, shall we look to that dear cross, and say, "I deserved that Savior?" Brethren, this were the height of infernal arrogance; let it be far from us; let us rather feel that we could not deserve such love as this, and that if God loves us so as to give his Son for us, it must be from some hidden motive in his own will, it cannot be because of any good thing in us.

Further, if you will remember the objects of God's love as well as the substance of it, you will soon see that it could not be anything in them which constrains God to love them. Who are the objects of God's love? Are they Pharisees, the men who fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all they possess? No, no, no. Are they the moralists who touching the law are blameless, and who walk in all the observances of their religion without a slip? No; the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before them. Who are they who are the chosen of God? Let the whole tribe now in heaven speak for themselves, and they will say, "We have washed our robes; (they needed it; they were black,) and we have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Appeal to any of the saints on earth, and they will tell you that they never could perceive any good thing in themselves. I have searched my own heart I hope with some degree of earnestness, and so far from finding any reason in myself why God should love me, I can find a thousand reasons why he should destroy



me, and drive me for ever from his presence. The best thoughts we have are defiled with sin, our very faith is mixed with unbelief; the noblest devotion which we ever paid to God is far inferior to his deserts, and is marred with infirmity and fault. Remember that many of those who are the true servants of God were once the very worst servants of Satan. Does it not surprise you that men who were the companions of the harlot are now saints of the Most high? The drunkard, the blasphemer, the man who defied man's laws as well as God's—such were some of us, but we are washed, but we are cleansed, but we are sanctified. I never did meet, and I never expect to meet with any saved soul that would ever for a moment tolerate the thought of there being any goodness in itself to merit God's esteem. No; vile and full of sin I am, and if thou hast mercy on me, O God, it is because thou wilt, for I merit none.

Further, constantly are we informed in Scripture that the love of God and the fruit of the love of God are a gift. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Now, if the Lord stands bargaining with you and with me, and says, "I will give you this if—if—if—" then he does not love freely; but if, on the other hand, it is simply, and purely, and only a gift bestowed as such, not for any recompence afterwards to be given, then the gift is a pure and true gift, and so the text is warranted in saying, "I will love them freely." Now, the gift of God is eternal life, and dear friends, if you and I ever get it, we must obtain it as a free gift from God, but by no means as wages which we have earned, for our poor earnings will bring us death; only God's gift can yield us life.

Everywhere throughout the Word the Lord's love is greatly and wonderfully commended. We are told that as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above our ways. Now, if the Lord loved men for some loveliness in them, there would be nothing wonderful in it; you and I can do the same. I hope I can love a man who possesses moral excellence. You feel, each of you, that if a man's conduct towards you is grateful and good, you cannot but love him, or if you do not, it becomes a fault on your part. With reverence let me say it, if there be something good in man it is no wonder that God should love him; it would be unjust if he did not. If naturally in man there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be any commendable repentance, or any

acceptable faith, man ought to be loved; this is not a thing to amaze the ages, nor to set the angels singing, nor to move the mountains and hills in astonishment; but for God to love a man who is bad all over; to love him when there is every reason for hating him, when there is not a trace of goodness in him, oh! this is enough to make the rocks break their silence and the hills burst forth into music.

This is the first doctrine. I cannot preach upon it as I would this morning, for my voice is very weak, and the pain of speaking distracts my mind; but it matters not how I preach upon it, for the subject itself is so exceedingly full of comfort to a really awakened soul, that it needs no garnishing of mine: choice dainties need no skill in the carver—their own lusciousness secures them rich acceptance.

But what is the practical use of it? To you who are going about to establish your own righteousness, here is a death-blow to your works, and carnal trustings. God will not love you meritoriously. God will love you freely. Wherefore go ye about, then, spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. You may boast as you will, but you will have to come to God on a par with the worst of the worst; when you do come you will have to be accepted, you that are the best of men, just on the same terms as if you had been the foulest of the foul. Therefore go not about, busy not yourselves with all this fancied righteousness, but come to Jesus as you are, come now, without any works of yours, for you must so come or not at all. God has said, "I will love them freely," and depend upon it he will never love you in any other way. You may think you are toiling to heaven, when you shall be only tunnelling your way through mountains of self-righteousness down to the depths of hell.

This doctrine offers comfort to those who do not feel fit to come to Christ. Do you not perceive that the text is a death-blow to all sorts of fitness? "I will love them freely." Now if there be any fitness necessary in you before God will love you then he does not love you freely, at least this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it is "I will love you freely." You say "Lord, but my heart is so hard." "I will love you freely." "But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish." "I will not love you because you feel your need; I will love you freely." "But I do not feel that

softening of spirit that I could desire." Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition, for there are no conditions; the covenant of grace has no conditionality whatever. These are the unconditional, sure mercies of David; so that you without any fitness may come and venture upon the promise of God which was made to you in Christ Jesus, when he said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." No fitness is wanted; "I will love them freely." Sweep all that lumber and rubbish out of the way! Oh! for grace in your hearts to know that the grace of God is free, is free to you, without preparation, without fitness, without money, and without price!

Nor does the practical use of our doctrine end here. There are some of you who say, "I feel this morning that I am so unworthy; I can well believe that God will bless my mother; that Christ will pity my sister; I can understand how yonder souls can be saved, but I cannot understand how I can be; I am so unworthy." "I will love them freely." Oh! does not that meet your case? If you were the most unworthy of all created beings, if you had aggravated your sin till you had become the foulest and most vile of all sinners, yet "I will love them freely," puts the worst on an equality with the best, sets you that are the devil's cast-aways, on a par with the most hopeful. There is no reason for God's love in any man, if there is none in you, you are not worse off than the best of men, for there is none in them; the grace and love of God can come as freely to you as they can to those that have long been seeking them, for "I am found of them that sought me not."

Yet once more here. I think this subject invites backsliders to return; indeed, the text was specially written for such—"I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." Here is a son who ran away from home. He enlisted for a soldier. He behaved so badly in his regiment that he had to be drummed out of it. He has been living in a foreign country in so vicious a way that he has reduced his body by disease. His back is covered with rags; his character is that of the vagrant and felon. When he went away he did it on purpose to vex his father's heart, and he has brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. One day the young lad receives a letter full of love. His father writes—"Return to me, my child; I will forgive you all; I will love you freely." Now if this letter

had said—"If you will humble yourself so much, I will love you; if you will come back and make me such-and-such promises, I will love you;" if it had said, "If you will behave yourself for the future, I will love you,"—I can suppose the young man's proud nature rising; but surely this kindness will melt him. Methinks the generosity of the invitation will at once break his heart, and he will say, "I will offend no longer, I will return at once." Backslider! without any condition you are invited to return. "I am married unto you," saith the Lord. If Jesus ever did love you he has never left off loving you. You may have left off attending to the means of grace; you may have been very slack at private prayer, but if you ever were a child of God you are a child of God still, and he cries "How can I give thee up? How can I set thee as Admah? How can I make thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled together; I am God, and not man; I will return unto him in mercy. Return, backslider, and seek thine injured Father's face. I think I hear a murmur somewhere—"Well, this is very, very, very Antinomian doctrine." Ay, objector, it is such doctrine as you will want one day; it is the only doctrine which can meet the case of really awakened sinners. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

II. Since it is written. "I will love them freely," we believe that **NOTHING IN MAN CAN BE AN EFFECTUAL BAR TO GOD'S LOVE.**

This is the same doctrine put in another shape. Nothing in man can be the cause of God's love, so nothing in man can be an effectual hindrance to God's love—I mean such an effectual hindrance as to prevent God from loving man. How shall I prove it? If there be anything in any man which can be a bar to God's grace, then this would have been an effectual hindrance to its coming to any of the human race. All men were in the loins of Adam, and if there were a bar in you to God's love, that would have been in Adam; consequently, being in Adam, it would have been a block to God's love to the race altogether. If there be some sin in you, I say, which can effectually prevent God from showing grace to you, then that was in Adam, seeing you were in the loins of Adam, and it would therefore have been an effectual hindrance to God's grace from the race in any one of its members. Seeing God's grace found no barriers over which it could not leap, no floodgates which it could not burst, no

mountains it could not overtop, I am persuaded there is nothing in you why God should not show his grace to you.

Besides, one would think that if there be a bar in any it would have prevented the salvation of those who are undoubtedly saved. Mention any sin you like, and I will assure you upon divine authority that men have committed such sins and have yet been saved. Talk of a deed that has blackened the man's character for ever, that deed of foul adultery and murder; yet that did not stop God's love from flowing to David; and even if you have gone that length, and I suppose there is no person here who has gone farther, even that cannot prevent divine love from lighting upon you. As God does not love because there is excellence, so he does not refuse to love because there is sin. Let me select the case of Manasseh; he shed innocent blood very much; he bowed before idols; what was worse, he made his children to pass through the fire to the son of Hinnom, put his own child to death as a sacrifice to the false god, and yet for all that God's love laid hold upon him, and Manasseh became a bright star in heaven, though once as vile as the lost in hell. If there be anything in you, then, that makes you think God cannot love you, I reply, Impossible, for surely your sins do not exceed those of the chief of sinners. Paul says he was the chief of sinners, and he meant it; he spoke by inspiration, and there is no doubt he was. Now if the biggest of sinners has passed through the strait gate, there must be room for the next biggest; if the greatest sinner in the world has been saved, then there is a possibility for you and for me, for we cannot be such great sinners as the very chief of sinners. But I will dare to say that even if we were, even if we could exceed Paul, yet even that could be no barrier; for man's sin, to say the most of it, is but the act of a finite creature, but God's grace is the act of infinite goodness. God forbid that I should depreciate your offenses, they are loathsome, they are hellish in themselves; still they are only a creature's deeds, the deeds of a worm that to-day is and to-morrow is crushed; but the grace, the love, and the pity of God, oh! these are infinite, eternal, everlasting, boundless, matchless, quenchless, unconquerable, and therefore the grace of God can overcome and prove itself mightier than your guilt and sin. There is no bar, then, or else there would have been a bar in the case of others.

Would it not mar the sovereignty of God if there should be a man in whom there was something that would effectually prevent God's love from flowing to him? Then it would not be, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" no, it would be "I will have mercy on those I can have mercy on; but there is such-and-such a man, I cannot have mercy on him, for he is gone too far." No, glory be to God for that sentence—"I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." The devil may say, "What, on that man, on that man! He has gone too far." "Ah!" but says God, "if I will it, he has not gone too far; I will have mercy on him." I do not know that I ever felt more the boundless sovereignty of the grace of God than when I looked that text in the face and saw it—not "I will have mercy on those that are vialing to have it;" or, "I will have mercy on penitents," no—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." And so, if God wills to save you, there can be no bar to it, or else that would be a marring and a limiting of the sovereignty of God.

Would not this be a great slur cast upon the grace of God? Suppose I could find out a sinner so vile that Jesus Christ could not reach him; why then the devils in hell would take him through their streets as a trophy; they would say, "This man was more than a match for God; his sin was too great for God's grace." What says the Apostle? "Where sin abounded"—that is you, poor sinner;—"where sin abounded"—what sins you plunged into last night, and on other black occasions,— "where sin abounded"—what? Condemnation? Hopeless despair? No, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." I think I see the conflict in the great arena of the universe. Man piles a mountain of sin, but God will match it, and he upheaves a loftier mountain of grace; man heaps up a still huger hill of sin, but the Lord overtops it with ten times more grace; and so the contest continues till at last the mighty God plucks up the mountains by the roots and buries man's sin beneath them as a fly might be buried beneath an Alp. Abundant sin is no barrier to the superabundant grace of God.

And then, dear friends, would it not detract glory from the gospel, if it could be proved that there was some man in whom the gospel could not work its way? Suppose that the gospel which is "worthy of all acceptance" could not meet certain cases. Suppose I picked out twelve men who were

so diseased that the gospel remedy could not meet their case; oh! then I think I should stop my mouth from all glorying in the cross. I could no more say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," for then it would not be the power of God unto salvation to every one that beheyeth. No, it would be the power of God to all except that dozen. But oh! as often as I come into this pulpit, it gives me joy to know that I have a gospel to preach which is suitable to every case. A friend told me the other day that many notorious characters stole in at times. Thank God for that. "Ah!" said some, "but they come only to laugh." Never mind; thank God if they come. "Oh! but they will make mockery of it." Nay, the Lord knows how to turn mockers into weepers. Let us hope for the worst, and labor for the most hopeless.

The love of God has provided means to meet the extremest case. They are twofold; the power of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. Do you tell me that sin is a barrier? I answer, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin." The atonement of Christ is capable of removing from men, all sorts, sizes, and dyes of iniquity. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Ah," cries one, "man's hard-heartedness stands in the way of God's love." Beloved, the Holy Spirit is ready to meet the case of the hard heart. "Limit not the Holy One of Israel." Is anything too hard for the Lord? You tell me that unbelief is a bar. I answer "No," for cannot the Holy Spirit make the unbelieving believe, yea, if the Holy Spirit once comes into effectual contact with the most unbelieving and obstinate spirit it must believe at once. Look at the jailer, a few minutes ago he had been putting Paul in the stocks. What, what, what, what is this that comes over him? "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe," says the Apostle, and he does believe, and becomes as phant as a child. Out on the men who think that man is master over God! If he willed to stop at this moment the most bloody persecutor, the most filthy and licentious man, if he willed to turn the blackest-hearted atheist into one of the most brilliant of saints, there is nothing in his way to stop him; in a moment omnipotent love can do it; the means are provided, both in the blood of Christ for cleansing, and in the power of the Spirit for renewing the inner man. Therefore, I say it is established beyond doubt, that there is nothing in man which can

conquer divine love.

"What is the practical use of this," says one. The practical use of this is to set the gate of mercy wide open. I like always to preach sermons which leave the door of mercy on the jar for the worst of sinners, but this morning I set it wide open. A man has dropped in here who has been thinking for years, "I gave myself up to sin in my youth, and I have gone astray ever since—there is no hope for me." I tell you, soul, all that you have ever done is no bar to God's love to you, for he does not love you because of anything good in you, and that which is black in you cannot prevent his loving you if he so wills it. I tell thee what I would have thee do. I have seen those like unto thee come to the foot of the cross, and they have said—

"Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

If thou in thy soul canst now trust the love of God in Christ, thou art saved; no matter whosoever thou mayest be, thou art saved this morning, and thou shalt go out of this house a regenerate soul, for thou hast believed in Jesus, therefore the love of God is come to thee, all thy past life is forgotten and forgiven; all thy past ingratitude, and blasphemy, and sin are cast into the depths of the sea; and, as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed thy transgressions from thee. I have known the time when, if I had heard the sermon of this morning, faint and feeble though it be, I should have danced for joy. I feel an intense inward satisfaction and delight while preaching it, for I believe it is the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Christ died not for the righteous but for sinners. He gave himself for our sins and not for our righteousness; this old Lutheran doctrine—this grand doctrine which shook old Rome to her very foundations, methinks must give poor sinners comfort and peace. I know that many will see nothing in it. Of course, none but the sick see any value in the healing medicine. I know there are some here who will think the sermon is not for them. Oh! may the Spirit of God make some accept of this comfort; but they will not unless the Spirit of God makes them. Too many of us are like foolish patients, who will not



take the physician's medicine, and he has need to hold us, and thrust it down before we will take it. This is how the Lord dealeth with many, not against their will, but yet against their will as it used to be, he giveth them the medicine of his grace, and maketh them whole.

To sum up all in one, what I mean is this: there have straggled in here this morning the poor working man, the struggling mechanic, the gay young fop, the man who leads a fast life, the wretch who leads a coarse life, the woman, perhaps, who has gone far astray; I mean to say to such, you are lost, but the Son of man is come to seek and to save you. I mean to say to you, sons and daughters of moral parents, who are not converted, but perhaps feel yourselves even worse than the immoral, I mean to say to you that you are not past hope yet. God will love you freely, and this is how his love is preached to you—"Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Come as you are; God will accept you as you are. Come as you are, without any preparation or fitness; come as you are, and where the cross is lifted high with the bleeding Son of God upon it, fall flat on your face, accepting the love manifested there, willingly receiving this day the grace which God willingly and freely gives.

As sinners, without any qualification, as sinners, as undeserving sinners, my Lord will receive you graciously and love you freely.

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## **Grace Abounding Over Abounding Sin**

Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. - Romans 5:20

The first sentence will serve as a preface; the second sentence will be the actual text.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound." Man was a sinner before the law of Ten Commandments had been given. He was a sinner through the offense of his first father, Adam; and he was, also, practically a sinner by his own personal offense; for he rebelled against the light of nature, and the inner light of conscience. Men, from Adam downward, transgressed against that memory of better days which had been handed down from father to son, and had never been quite forgotten. Man everywhere, whether he knew anything about the law of Moses or not, was alienated from his God. The Word of God contains this truthful estimate of our race: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The law was given, however, according to the text, "that the offense might abound." Such was the effect of the law. It did not hinder sin, nor provide a remedy for it; but its actual effect was that the offense abounded. How so?

It was so, first, because it revealed the offense. Men did not in every instance clearly discern what was sin; but when the law came, it pointed out to man that this evil, which he thought little of, was an abomination in the sight of God. Man's nature and character was like a dark dungeon which knew no ray of light. Yonder prisoner does not perceive the horrible filthiness and corruption of the place wherein he is immured, so long as he is in darkness. When a lamp is brought, or a window is opened and the light of day comes in, he finds out to his dismay the hideous condition of his den. He spies loathsome creatures upon the walls, and marks how others burrow out of sight because the light annoys them. He may, perhaps, have guessed that all was not as it should be, but he had not imagined the abundance of the evils. The light has entered, and the offense abounds. Law does not make us sinful, but it displays our sinfulness. In the presence of the perfect standard we see our shortcomings. The law of God is the looking-glass in which a man sees the spots upon his face. It does not wash you—you cannot wash in a looking-glass; but it prompts you to seek the cleansing water, The design of the law is the revealing of our many offenses, that, thereby, we may be

driven out of self-righteousness the Lord Jesus, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.

The law causes the offense to abound by making an offender to stand without excuse. Before he knew the law perfectly, his sin was not so wilful. While he did but faintly know the commands, he could, as it were, but faintly break them; but as soon as he distinctly knows what is right, and what is wrong, then every cloak is taken away from him. Sin becomes exceeding sinful when it is committed against light and knowledge. Is it not so with some of you? Are you not forced to admit that you commit many sins in one, now that you have been made to know the law, and yet wilfully offend against it, by omission or commission? He who knows his Master's will and does it not, will be beaten with many stripes, because he is guilty of abounding offenses. The law enters to strip us of every cloak of justification, and so to drive us to seek the robe of Christ's righteousness. Next, I think the law makes the offense to abound by causing sin to be, more evidently, a presumptuous rebellion against the great Lawgiver. To sin in the front of Sinai, with its wonderful display of divine majesty, is to sin indeed. To rebel against a law promulgated with sound of trumpet, and thunders, and pomp of God, is to sin with a high hand and a defiant heart. When thou hast heard the Ten Commands, when thou knowest the law of the kingdom, when thy Maker's will is plainly set before thee, then to transgress is to transgress with an insolence of pride which will admit of no excuse.

Once more: the entrance of the law makes the offense to abound in this sense, that the rebellious will of man rises up in opposition to it. Because God commands, man refuses; and because he forbids, man desires. There are some men who might not have sinned in a particular direction if the commandment had not forbidden it. The light of the law, instead of being a warning to them to avoid evil, seems to point out to them the way in which they can most offend. Oh, how deep is the depravity of human nature! The law itself provokes it to rebel. Men long to enter, because trespassers are warned to keep away. Their minds are so at enmity against God, that they delight in that which is forbidden, not so much because they find any particular pleasure in the thing itself, but because it shows their independence and their freedom from the restraints of God.

This vicious self-will is in all of us by nature; for the carnal mind is enmity against God; and therefore the law, though in itself holy and just and good, provokes us to do evil. We are like lime, and the law is as cold water, which is in itself of a cooling nature; yet, no sooner does the water of the law get at the lime of our nature, than a heat of sin is generated: thus, "the law entered, that the offense might abound."

Why, then, did God send the law? Is it not an evil thing that the offense should abound? In itself it may seem so to be; but God dealeth with us as physicians sometimes deal with their patients. A disease, which will be fatal if it spends itself within the patient, must be brought to the surface: the physician therefore prescribes a medicine which displays the evil. The evil was all within, but it did not abound as to its visible effects; it is needful that it should do so, that it may be cured. The law is the medicine which throws out the depravity of man, makes him see it in his actions, and even provokes him to display it. The evil is in man, like rabbits in yonder brushwood: the law sets alight to the cover, and the hidden creatures are seen. The law stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool, and proves how foul the waters are. The law compels the man to see that sin dwelleth in him, and that it is a powerful tyrant over his nature. All this is with a view to his cure. God be thanked when the law so works as to take off the sinner from all confidence in himself! To make the leper confess that he is incurable is going a great way towards compelling him to go to that Divine Savior, who alone is able to heal him. This is the object and end of the law towards men whom God will save.

Consider for a moment. You may take it as an axiom, a thing self-evident, that there can be no grace where there is no guilt: there can be no mercy where there is no sin. There can be justice, there can be benevolence; but there cannot be mercy unless there is criminality. If you are not a sinner God cannot have mercy upon you. If you have never sinned God cannot display pardoning grace towards you, for there is nothing to pardon. It were a misuse of words to talk of forgiving a man who has done no wrong, or to speak of bestowing undeserved favor upon a person who deserves reward. It would be an insult to innocence to offer it mercy. You, must, therefore, have sin or you cannot have grace-that is clear.

Next, consider that there will be no seeking after grace where there is no

sense of sin. We may preach till we are hoarse, but you, good people, who have never broken the law, and are not guilty of anything wrong, will never care for our message of mercy. You are such kind people that, out of compliment to religion, you say, "Yes, we are sinners. We are all sinners." But you know in your heart of hearts you do not mean it. You will never ask for grace; for you have no sense of shame or guilt. None of you will seek mercy, till first you have pleaded guilty to the indictment which the law of God presents against you. Oh, that you felt your sins! Oh, that you knew your need of forgiveness! for then you would see yourselves to be in such a condition that only the free, rich, sovereign grace of God can save you.

Furthermore, I am sure that there will be no reception and acceptance of grace by any man, till there is a full confession of sin and a burdensome sense of its weight. Why should you receive grace when you do not want it? What is the use of it to you? Why should you bow your knee to God, and receive, as the free gift of his charity, that which you feel you deserve? Have you not already earned eternal life? Are you not as good as other people? Have you not some considerable claim upon God? Do I startle you with these plain questions? Have I not heard you say much the same? The other day when we preached the electing love of God, you grumbled and muttered that God was unjust to choose one rather than another. What did this mean? Did it not mean that you felt you had some claim upon God? O sir, if this is your spirit, I must deal plainly with you! If you have any claim upon your Maker, plead it, and be you sure that he will not deny you your just rights. But I would advise you to change your method of dealing with your Judge: you will never prevail in this fashion. In truth, you have no claim upon him; but must appeal to his pure mercy. You are not in a position for him to display free grace to you till your mouth is shut, and you sit down in dust and ashes, silently owning that you deserve nothing at his hands but infinite displeasure. Confess that whatever he gives you that is good and gracious must be given freely to one who deserves nothing. Hell gapes at your feet: cease from pride, and humbly sue out a pardon. You see, then, the use of the law: it is to bring you where grace can be fitly shown you. It shuts you up that you may cry to Jesus to set you free. It is a storm which wrecks your hopes of self-salvation, but washes you upon the Rock of Ages. The condemning

sentence of the law is meant to prepare you for the absolution of the gospel. If you condemn yourself and plead guilty before God, the royal pardon can then be extended towards you. The self-condemned shall be forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus, and the sovereign grace of God. Oh, my hearer, you must sit down there in the dust, or else God will not look at you! You must yield yourself to him, owning his justice, honoring his law: this is the first condition of his mercy, and to this his grace brings all who feel its power. The Lord will have you bow before him in self-abhorrence, and confess his right to punish you. Remember, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," and he will have you know this, and agree to it. His grace must reign triumphantly, and you must kiss its silver scepter.

Thus has the first sentence served us for a preface: God bless it tons!

I. The doctrine of the text itself is this, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; and I shall try to bring out that truth, first, by saying that THIS IS SEEN IN THE WHOLE WORK OF GRACE, from beginning to end. I would direct your attention to the context. The safest way to preach upon a text, is to follow out the idea which the inspired writer was endeavoring to convey. Paul has, in this place, been speaking of the abounding result for evil of one sin in the case of Adam, the federal head of the race. That one sin of Adam's abounded terribly. Look at the multitudinous generations of our race which have gone down to death. Who slew all these? Sin is the wolf which has devoured the flocks of men. Sin has poisoned the streams of manhood at their fountain-head, and everywhere they run with poisoned waters. Concerning this, Paul says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

First, then, sin abounded in its effect upon the whole human race: one sin overthrew all humanity; one fatal fault, the breach of a plain, and easy law, made sinners of us all. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Simple as was the command which Adam broke, it involved obedience or disobedience to the sovereignty of God. All the trees of the garden were generously given to happy Adam in Paradise: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." There was but one tree reserved for God by the prohibition, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou

eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam had no need to touch that fruit, there were all the other trees for him. Nothing was denied him which was really for his good; he was only forbidden that which would ruin him. We all look back to that Paraisaical state and wish we could have been put in some such a position as he: yet he dared to trespass on God's reserves, and thus to set himself up above his Maker. He judged it wise to do what God forbade: he ran the risk of death in the foolish hope of rising into a still higher state.

See the consequences of that sin on all sides, the world is full of them. Yet, saith Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and he gives us this as a proof of it: "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification" ( Rom 5:16). The Lord Jesus came into the world, not alone to put away Adam's sin, but all the sins which have followed upon it. The second Adam has repaired the desperate ruin of the first, and much more. By his death upon the cross, our Divine Substitute has put away those myriads of sins, which have been committed by men since the first offense in Eden. Think of this! Take the whole aggregate of believers, and let each one disburden his conscience of its load of sin. What a mountain! Pile it up! Pile it up! It rises huge as high Olympus! Age after age believers come and lay their enormous loads in this place. "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all." What Alps! What Himalayas of sin! If there were only mine and yours, my brother, what mountains of division would our sins make! But the great Christ, the free gift of God to us, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, took all those countless sins away. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"! Here is infinite grace to pardon immeasurable sin! Truly the "one man's offense" abounded horribly; but the "one man's obedience," the obedience of the Son of God, hath superabounded. As the arch of heaven far exceedeth in its span the whole round globe of the earth, so doth grace much more abound over human sin.

Follow me further, when I notice, secondly, that sin abounded in its ruinous effects. It utterly destroyed humanity. In the third chapter of the Romans you see how, in every part of his nature, man is depraved by sin.

Think of the havoc which the tyrant, sin, has made of our natural estate and heritage. Eden is withered-its very site is forgotten. Our restfulness among the trees of the field, freely yielding their fruit, is gone, and God hath said," In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The field we till has lost its spontaneous yield of corn: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Our life has lost its glory and immortality; for "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Every woman in her pangs of travail, every man in his weariness of labor, and all of us together in the griefs of death, see what sin has done for us as to our mortal bodies. Alas, it has gone deeper: it has ruined our souls. Sin has unmanned man. The crown and glory of his manhood it has thrown to the ground. All our faculties are out of gear; all our tendencies are perverted. Beloved, let us rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ has come to redeem us from the curse of sin, and he will undo the evil of evil. Even this poor world he will deliver from the bondage of corruption; and he will create new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The groans and painful travail of the whole creation shall result in a full deliverance, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and somewhat more. As for ourselves, we are lifted up to a position far higher than that which we should have occupied had the race continued in its innocence. The Lord Jesus Christ found us in a horrible pit and in the miry clay, and he not only lifted us up out of it, but he set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings. Raised from hell, we are lifted not to the bowers of Eden, but to the throne of God. Redeemed human nature has greater capacities than unfallen human nature. To Adam the Lord did not say, "Thou art a son of God, joint heir with the Only Begotten"; but he has said that to each believer redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Beloved, such a thing as fellowship with Christ in his sufferings could not have been known to Adam in Paradise. He could not have known what it is to be dead, and to have his life hid with Christ in God. Blessed be his name, our Lord Jesus Christ can say, "I restored that which I took not away"! He restored more than ever was taken away from us; for he hath made us to be partakers of the divine nature, and in his own person he hath placed us at God's right hand in the heavenly places. Inasmuch as the dominion of the Lord Jesus is more glorious than that of unfallen Adam, manhood is now more great and glorious than before the Fall. Grace has so much more abounded, that in Jesus we have gained more than in Adam we lost. Our Paradise



Regained is far more glorious than our Paradise Lost.

Again, sin abounded to the dishonor of God. I was trying the other day to put myself into the position of Satan at the gates of Eden, that I might understand his diabolical policy. He had become the archenemy of God, and when he saw this newly-made world, and perceived two perfectly pure and happy creatures, placed in it, he looked on with envy, and plotted mischief. He heard the Creator say, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and he hoped here to find an opportunity for an assault upon God. If he could induce those new-made creatures to eat of the forbidden fruit, he would place their Maker upon the horns of a dilemma: either he must destroy the creatures which he had made, or else he must be untrue. The Lord had said, "Ye shall surely die," and he must thus undo his own work, and destroy a creature which he had made in his own image, after his own likeness. Satan, probably, perceived that man was an extraordinary being, with a wonderful mystery of glory hanging about his destiny; and, if he could make him sin, he would cause God to destroy him, and so far defeat the eternal purpose. On the other hand, if the Lord did not execute the sentence, then he would not be truthful, and throughout all his great universe it would be reported that the Lord's word had been broken. Either he had changed his mind, or he had spoken in jest, or he had been proven to have threatened too severe a penalty. In either case, the evil spirit hoped to triumph. It was a deep, far-reaching scheme to dim the splendor of the King of kings.

Beloved, did it not seem as if sin had abounded beyond measure, when first the woman and then the man had been deceived, and had done despite to God? Behold how grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, did much more abound! God is more honored in the redemption of man than if there had never been a Fall. The Lord has displayed the majesty of his justice, and the glory of his grace, in the great sacrifice of his dear Son, in such a manner that angels, and principalities, and powers will wonder throughout all ages. More of God is to be seen in the great work of redeeming love than could have been reflected in the creation of myriads of worlds, had each one of them been replete with marvels of divine skill, and goodness, and power. In Jesus crucified Jehovah is glorified as never before. Where sin abounded to the apparent dishonor of God, grace doth

much more abound to the infinite glory of his ever-blessed name.

Again, sin abounded by degrading human character. What a wretched being man is, as a sinner against God! Unchecked by law, and allowed to do as he pleases, what will not man become? See how Paul describes men in these progressive times-in these enlightened centuries: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Human nature was not at all slandered by Whitefield when he said that, "left to himself, man is half beast and half devil." I do not mean merely men in savage countries, I am thinking of men in London. Only the other day a certain newspaper gave us plenty of proof of the sin of this city: I will say no more-could brutes or demons be worse? Read human history, Assyrian, Roman, Greek, Saracenic, Spanish, English; and if you are a lover of holiness, you will be sick of man. Has any other creature, except the fallen angels, ever become so cruel, so mean, so false? Behold what villains, what tyrants, what monsters sin has made!

But now look on the other side, and see what the grace of God has done. Under the moulding hand of the Holy Spirit a gracious man becomes the noblest work of God. Man, born again and rescued from the Fall, is now capable of virtues, to which he never could have reached before he sinned. An unfallen being could not hate sin with the intensity of abhorrence which is found in the renewed heart. We now know by personal experience the horror of sin, and there is now within us an instinctive shuddering at it. An unfallen being could not exhibit patience, for it could not suffer, and patience has its perfect work to do. When I have read the stories of the martyrs in the first ages of the Christian church, and during the Marian persecution in England, I have adored the Lord, who could enable poor feeble men and women thus to prove their love to their God and Savior. What great things they suffered out of love to God; and how grandly did they thus honor him! O God, what a noble being thy grace has made man to be! I have felt great reverence for

sanctified humanity, when I have seen how men could sing God's praises in the fires. What noble deeds men have been capable of, when the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts! I do not think angels, or archangels, have ever been able to exhibit so admirable an all-round character as the grace of God hath wrought in once fallen men whom he has, by his grace, inspired with the divine life. In human character, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." I believe God looks out of heaven to-day, and sees in many of his poor, hidden people such beauties of virtue, such charms of holiness, that he himself is delighted with them. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." These are such true jewels that the Lord has a high estimate of them, and sets them apart for himself: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Again, dear friends, sin abounded to the causing of great sorrow. It brought with it a long train of woes. The children of sin are many, and each one causeth lamentation. We cannot attempt to fathom the dark abysses of sorrow which have opened in this world since the advent of sin. Is it not a place of 'tears-yea, a field of blood? Yet by a wonderful alchemy, through the existence of sin, grace has produced a new joy, yea, more than one new joy. The calm, deep joy of repentance must have been unknown to perfect innocence. This right orient pearl is not found in the rivers of Eden. Yea, and that joy which is in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent is a new thing, whose' birth is since the Fall. God himself knows a joy which he could not have known had there been no sin. Behold, with tearful wonder, the great Father as he receives his returning prodigal, and cries to all about him, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." O brethren, how could almighty love have been victorious in grace had there been no sin to battle with? Heaven is the more heaven for us, since there we shall sing of robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. God hath greater joy in man, and man hath greater joy in God, because grace abounded over sin. We are getting into deep waters now! How true our text is!

Once more, sin abounded to hinder the reign of Christ. I believe that Satan's design in leading men into sin at the first, was to prevent the

supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as man and God in one person. I do not lay it down as a doctrine, specifically taught in Scripture, but still it seems to me a probable truth, that Satan foresaw that the gap which was made in heaven by the fall of the angels was to be filled up by human beings, whom God would place near his throne. Satan thought that he saw before him the beings who would take the places of the fallen spirits, and he envied them. He knew that they were made in the image of the Only-Begotten, the Christ of God, and he hated him because he saw united in his person God whom he abhorred, and man whom he envied. Satan shot at the second Adam through the breast of the first Adam. He meant to overthrow the Coming One; but, fool that he was, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, is now exalted higher than ever we could conceive him to have been, had there been no sin to bear, no redemption to work out. Jesus, wounded and slain, has about him higher splendor than before. O King of kings and Lord of lords, Man of Sorrows, we sing hallelujahs unto thee! All our hearts beat true to thee! We love thee beyond all else! Thou art he whom we will praise for ever and ever! Jesus sits on no precarious throne in the empire of love. We would each one maintain his right with the last pulse of our hearts. King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded to the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of God. II. I find time always flies fastest when our subject is most precious. I have a second head, which deserves, a lengthened consideration; but we must be content with mere hints. This great fact, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, crops up everywhere. **THIS IS TO BE SEEN IN SPECIAL CASES.** The first special case is the introduction of the law. When the law of Ten Commands was given, through man's sin, it ministered to the abounding of the offense; but it also ministered to the aboundings of grace. It is true there were ten commands; but there was more than tenfold grace. With the law there came forward a High Priest. The world had never seen a High Priest before, arrayed in jewelled breastplate, and garments of glory and beauty. There was the law; but at the same time there was the holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High with its altar, its layer, its candlestick, and its table of show-bread. There was, also, the secret shrine where the majesty of God dwelt. God had, by those symbols and types, come to dwell among men. It is true, sin abounded through the law; but, then, sacrifices for sin also abounded.

Heretofore, there had been no morning and evening lambs; there had been no day of atonement; no sprinkling of blood; no benediction from the Lord's High Priest For every sin that the law revealed, a sacrifice was provided. Sins of ignorance, sins of their holy things, sins of all sorts were met by special sacrifices; so that the sins uncovered to the conscience, were also covered by the sacrifice. The story of Israel is another case in point. How often the nation rebelled; but how often did mercy rejoice over judgment! Truly the history of the chosen people shows how sin abounded, and grace did much more abound. Run your eye down history and pause at the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. This is the highest peak of the mountains of sin. They crucified the Lord of glory. Here sin abounded. But do I need to tell you that grace did here much more abound? You can look at the death of Christ till Pilate vanishes, and Caiaphas fades away, and all the clamor of the priests and Jews is hushed, and you see nothing and hear nothing but free grace and dying love. There followed upon the crucifixion of our Lord, the casting away of the Jewish people for a while. Sin abounded when the Lord thus came to his own and his own received him not. Yes; but the casting away of them was the saving of the nations. "We turn to the Gentiles," said the apostle; and that was a blessed turning for you and for me. Was it not? They that were bidden to the feast were not worthy, and the master of the house, being angry, invited other guests. Mark, "being angry"! What did he do when he was angry? Why, he did the most gracious thing of all; he said, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and as many as ye shall find bid to the supper." Sin abounded, for Israel would not enter the feast of love; but grace did much more abound, for the heathen entered the kingdom. The heathen world at that time was sunk in the blackest darkness, and sin abounded. You have only to study ancient history and you will fetch a heavy sigh to think that men could be so vile. A poor and unlettered people were chosen of God to receive the gospel of Jesus, and they went about telling of an atoning Savior, in their own simple way, until the Roman empire was entirely changed. Light and peace and truth came into the world, and drove away slavery and tyranny and bestial lust. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. What wonderful characters were produced in the terrible reign of Diocletian! What consecration to God was seen in the confessors! What fearlessness in common Christians! What' invincible loyalty to Christ in the martyrs! Out

of barbarians the Lord made saints, and the degraded rose to holiness sublime. If I were to ask you, now, to give the best illustrations of grace abounding in individuals, I think your impulse would be to choose men in whom sin once abounded. What characters do we preach of most, when we would magnify the grace of God? We talk of David, and Manasseh, and swearing Peter, and the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus, and the woman that was a sinner. If we want to show where grace abounded, we naturally turn our eyes to the place where sin abounded. Is it not so? Therefore, I need not give you any more cases-it is proven that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. III. Lastly; and this is what I want to hold you to, dear friends, at this time: THIS HOLDS TRUE TO EACH ONE OF US. Let me take the case of the open sinner. What have you been? Have you grossly sinned? Have you defiled your body with unhallowed passions? Have you been dishonest to your fellow-men? Does some scarlet sin stain your conscience, even as you sit in the pew? Have you grown hardened in sin by long perseverance in it? Are you conscious that you have frequently, wilfully, and resolutely sinned? Are you getting old, and have you been soaking these seventy years in the crimson dye of sin till you are saturated through and through with its color? Have you even been an implacable opponent of the gospel? Have you persecuted the saints of God? Have you tried by argument to batter down the gospel, or by ridicule to put it to reproach? Then hear this text: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; and as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, till this world shall end. The grace of God, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, will triumph over the greatness of thy wickedness. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Throw down your weapons of rebellion; surrender at discretion; kiss the pierced hand of Jesus which is now held out to you, and this very moment you shall be forgiven, and you shall go your way a pardoned man, to begin a new life, and to bear witness that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Perhaps this does not touch you, my friend. Listen to my next word which is addressed to the instructed sinner. You are a person whose religious education has made you aware of the guilt of sin; you have read your Bible, and you have heard truthful preaching; and although you have never been a gross open sinner, yet you know that your life teems with sins of omission and commission. You know that you have sinned against light and knowledge. You have done

despite to a tender conscience very often; and therefore you rightly judge that you are even a greater sinner than the more openly profane. Be it so; I take you at that. Do not run back from it. Let it be so; for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Oh, that you may be as much instructed in the remedy, as you are instructed in the disease! Oh, that you may have as clear a view of the righteousness of Christ, as you have of your own unrighteousness! Christ's work is a divine work, broad enough to cover all your iniquity, and to conquer all your sin. Believe this! Give glory to God by believing it; and according to your faith, so be it unto you. I address another, who does not answer either of these two descriptions exactly; but he has lately begun to seek mercy, and the more he prays the more he is tempted. Horrible suggestions rush into his mind; damnable thoughts beset and bewilder him. Ah, my friend, I know what this means: the nearer you are to mercy, the nearer you seem to get to hell-gate! When you most solemnly mean to do good you feel another law in your members bringing you into captivity. You grow worse where you hoped you would have grown better. Very well, then; grip my text firmly as for your life: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." If a whole legion of devils should be let loose upon you, Christ will glorify himself by mastering them all. If now you cannot repent, nor pray, nor do anything, remember that text, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Look over the heads of all these doubts, and devils, and inabilities, and see Jesus lifted on the cross, like the brazen serpent upon the pole; and look thou to him, and the fiery serpents shall flee away from thee, and thou shalt live. Believe this text to be true, for true it is: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "Ah!" saith another, "my case is still worse, sir; I am of a despondent turn of mind; I always look upon the black side of everything, and now if I read a promise I am sure it is not for me. If I see a threatening in God's Word, I am sure it is for me. I have no hope. I do not seem as if I should ever have any. I am in a dungeon into which no light can enter: it is dark, dark, dark, and worse darkness is coming. While you are trying to comfort me, I put the comfort away." I know you. You are like the poor creature in the Psalm, of whom we read- "His soul abhorreth all manner of meat." Even the gospel itself he cannot relish. Yes; I know you; you are writing bitter things against yourself: this morning you have been newly dipping your pen in gail; but your writing is that of a poor bewildered creature; it is not

to be taken notice of. I see you writing, in text hand, great black words of condemnation; but there is nothing in them all. Verily, verily I say unto thee, thine handwriting shall be blotted out, and the curse, causeless, shall not come. Thus saith the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, for the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed you, and where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound." Broken in pieces, all asunder, ground between the millstones, reduced to nothing, yet believe this revelation of God, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Notice that "much more"- "much more abound." If thou canst grip it, and know it to be of a certainty the great principle upon which God acts, that grace shall outstrip sin, then there is hope of thee; nay, more than hope, there is salvation for thee on the spot. If thou believest in Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, thou art forgiven. Oh, my hearers, do not despise this grace! Come, and partake of it. Does any one say, as Paul foresaw that some would say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound"? Ah, then, such an infamous inference is the mark of the reprobate, and your damnation is just. He that turns God's mercy into a reason for sin, has within him something worse than a heart of stone: surely his conscience is seared with a hot iron. Beloved, I hope better things of you, for I trust that on the contrary, the sound of the silver bells of infinite love, free pardon, abounding grace, will make you hasten to the hospital of mercy, that you may receive healing for your sinfulness, strength for you feebleness, and joy for your sorrow. Lord, grant that in this house, in every case wherein sin has abounded, grace may yet more abound, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **Grace Reviving Israel**

I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his



roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. - Hosea 14:5-7

In reading this passage, does it ever fail to charm you? How full of beauty, and how full of poetry it is! Every word is a figure. Fair flowers that adorn, and corn that enricheth the fields; the olive tree, and the vine; the scent of the wine of Lebanon, and all rich things are here gathered and clustered together, to set forth the beauty of Israel under the reviving influences of God's favor. And as this one portion of Sacred Writ is full of poetry, the like holds good of all the Word Of God. There is no book so poetic in its character as the Book of Inspiration. We had rather for poetry's sake, lose all the books that have ever been written by all the poets that ever lived, than lose the sacred Scriptures; yea, if a collection could be made of all the gems of all the noted books; could they all be bound into one volume, there could not be found so many beauties as lie here, some of them hidden, and others of them manifest, in this most blessed volume of Revelation. Altogether apart from the sublimity of the matters treated, and the glory of the doctrines, the style itself is enough to make the book precious to every reader. It is a wondrous book; it is the book of God: yea, as Herbert says, "The god of books." It is a book full of stars; every page blazes with light, from almost every sentence there beams forth some beautiful metaphor, some glorious figure.

In expounding the words of the text, we shall observe, first, the promise of grace made to Israel, notwithstanding, Israel's sin: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Secondly, the influences of divine grace sweetly set forth in divers metaphors; and thirdly, the effect of divine grace upon those around: "they that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

I. Here is A PROMISE OF GRACE MADE TO THE CHRISTIAN: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." I need not remind you that the Christian, (under the similitude of Israel, as I shall presently show you,) is here compared to a plant, a plant which cannot be watered by any water that is to be found on earth, a plant which needs heavenly watering, even the dew

from above. Hypocrites may be watered by natural religion. Formalists may get their supply from the wells and springs of earth; but the Christian is a plant which can only be supported by dew from heaven. He feels that though the river of Egypt might be turned to his roots, he could not grow; though all the water in its floods, and though the ocean itself might be brought to irrigate him, yet he could get no genial moisture, no true growing power, from all that could be had on earth. He needs to have his dew from heaven. "Well," says God to Israel, "thou art of thyself dewless, and sapless, and motionless, and thou hast no moisture. Thou canst not obtain any of thine own, nor can mortals give it thee; but do thou stand still where I have planted thee, and I will water thee every moment. I, the Lord will keep thee, I will be as the dew unto thee." That Eastern figure, dew—for it is essentially Eastern, and not so well to be understood in this country—has in it several beauties.

You will notice, first of all, that grace, like the dew, often comes down imperceptibly into man's heart. When did the dew tell us that it was about to fall? Who ever heard the footsteps of the dew coming down upon the meadow grass? Who ever knew when it was descending? We see it when it has fallen; but who saw it come? And so with Christianity: it is very often imperceptible in its operations. True it is sometimes like the rattling hail, pelting on the windows: the sinner knows when it comes by stormy convictions, and by troubled feelings within, but quite as often the work of grace in man's heart is like the "still small voice," which few hear, and of which even the man himself is partially unconscious, not as to its operation perhaps, but as to its nature, feeling that there is a something in his heart, though not positively sure that it really comes from God. Christian! despise not spiritual things, because thou hearest not a sound therewith. Much that God doeth, he doeth in silence. There is a plant which bursts with the sound of a trumpet; but full many a flower called beautiful, openeth in silence, and no man heareth the sound thereof. There be some Christians who seem bound to make a noise in the world, they were made for that purpose; but there be far more who have to blush unseen whose glory it is not to "waste their sweetness," though to perfume "the desert air," and to make it sing and blossom like the garden of the Lord. Beloved, you may perhaps fancy that you have not grace, because it has not come upon you in terrible excitements and in awful

convictions. I beseech you, do not distrust the power of grace, because it has stolen imperceptibly into your hearts. Mark the promise: "I will be as the dew unto Israel,"

Again, if the dew is sometimes imperceptible, it is always sufficient. If God waters the earth with dew, foolish would be the man who should go afterwards, to water after his Maker. And God's grace, when it comes upon man's heart, is all-sufficient. What he giveth unto Israel, his own chosen people, is always enough for them. They sometimes think they want something more; they never really do, and what else they want, or think they want, it is better for them still to want. God is sufficient.

And the dew, too, when it is required, is constant. God may, if he pleases, withhold the dew, that he may make a nation fear before him, but he usually sendeth the dew in its appointed time, and each morning beholdeth the pearly drops shed forth from the hand of God; and do, Christian, God will be thy dew. As thou wantest grace; so shalt thou find it.

"All needful grace will God bestow,  
And crown that grace with glory too;  
He gives us all things. and withholds  
No real good from upright souls."

But it is superfluous for me to tell you what is the meaning of this figure. You all know it ten times better than I do, or at least you ought, for I am sure this text has been preached from times enough, and you are always hearing the metaphor used. Like many of God's metaphors it is so simple, so glorious, it arrests our attention at first sight—"I will be as the dew unto Israel." Instead of explaining, therefore, allow me to question you concerning it. Are you, my dear friends, of the number here mentioned who belong to Israel? You ask me what is meant by Israel. I reply, that historically Israel means God's elect, his chosen ones: "Israel have I loved, but Esau have I hated." But as you cannot tell that you are God's elect, except by signs and marks, I must tell you another meaning of Israel. Israel means a man of prayer. The name of "Israel" was given to Jacob, because he "wrestled with the angel, and prevailed." Are you a man of prayer? Come now, answer the question, each one of you for

yourselves. Are you men of prayer, and women of prayer? Alas! some of you may use a form of prayer, but it hath no life in it. You ask, do I object to forms of prayer? I answer, no. I believe that sometimes forms of prayer, moulded according to the mind of the Spirit, are offered up with the vital breath of the same Spirit of God. Far be it from me to say, that because you use a form of prayer, therefore you do not pray at all; this however I remind you, your form of prayer is merely a vehicle, that moveth not except as it is drawn. Of itself it is like a steam engine, motionless till the furnace is heated; or rather, it is like the carriage which is drawn by the steam engine, being linked thereto with chains. A form of prayer is a heavy material thing, which prayer has to drag after it. It is no help to prayer, but rather a burden to it. There may be prayer with the huge cumbrous thing called the form attached but the form is distinct in every sense from the power. The prayer is the spirit, the life, the desire, the wish, the agonizing panting with God to obtain the blessing I ask you not whether you use a form of prayer, or whether you utter extempore prayers; for you may speak extemporaneously in prayer, and talk as much nonsense, ay, and a great deal more than you would if you used a prescribed form; you may avoid formality, and become frivolous. It is not uttering spontaneous words that is prayer any more than repeating a litany. But I ask you, do you pray? If you are prayerless, then you have no right to call yourselves God's elect. God's people are a praying people. They are an Israel, a wrestling race; and unto them the promise is made—"I will be unto them as the dew unto Israel."

Yet one more hint: Israel may represent those who have chosen a better portion, who have given up the mess of pottage, who have sold that to "the men whose portion is in this life," and are looking to the recompense in another world. Art thou, my hearer, one of those who are content with a mess of pottage? Is it enough for thee if thy dish be filled with dainty meat, thy wine-cup full, thine income steady, and thy back clothed with goodly raiment; and dost thou then care nothing for the things to come? Is thy whole soul set on the things of earth? Then I warn thee. Though thou mayest talk about being elect, thou art none of God's elect unless thou hast set thine affections on things above and not on things on the earth. If thou art trying to make the best of things in this world, rejecting or even slighting that one object which ought to be three only one, to

make the best of the next world, and dost not leave this in God's hand for him to take care of, thou art none of his. Unless thou hast renounced the pottage, and taken Christ to be thine all and heaven thy portion, thou hast no well-founded hope, and thou hast no right to take this promise to thyself—"I will be as the dew unto Israel." But thou who abhorrest the world, thou who spendest thy time in prayer, thou mayest take this to thyself; and in thy most barren and dry moments, thou mayest urge this at the mercy-throne—"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

II. THE INFLUENCE OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE SOUL ARE HERE SET FORTH IN METAPHOR—"I will be as the dew unto Israel." What is the effect? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

The very first effect of grace in the heart is, that it makes us grow upward. We shall "grow as the lily." This refers to the daffodil lily, which on a sudden, in a night, will spring up. There may have been no lilies at all in a field, but after a shower of rain the lilies may be seen springing up everywhere and the ground will appear perfectly covered with their yellow hue. Mark, that is what grace does in a man's soul. Wherever grace comes, its first operation is to make us grow up. It is a remarkable fact, that young Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians. They grow upward in their flaming love, mighty zeal, ardent hopes and longing expectations. Sometimes indeed our old friends step in and say, "Ah! young man, you are growing a great deal too fast; you are springing too rapidly upward; you will have a bitter frost to nip you a little presently." Very well, that is true enough; but that frost will come quite soon enough, without any of your frosty breath going before it. Let the young grow when they can do not give them a piercing nip with your freezy fingers. Let them thrive while they can. You may tell us we shall hurt our constitutions, and by-and-bye we shall not be so zealous; nevertheless, let us alone till our constitutions are hurt, suffer us to be zealous while we can. You know very well, with all your prudence, you would give a king's ransom if you could to-morrow have your juvenile ardor over again; and yet you quarrel with us because we grow upward. Why it is the effect of grace to grow upwards. The very first thing that grace does for us is to make us grow upward in love. Oh! what sweet love that is that we have in

the early morning of life! There is not a prayer-meeting, but we are there; there is not a lecture, but oh how sweet it is to us; there is scarce a good deed to be done, but we must be engaged in it; we are so earnest, we are growing so fast. "They shall grow as the lily;" that is the promise. So when you see the promise fulfilled, my dear aged friends, do not be peevish or rebuke the young people, because they grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord's house.

There is a second effect. After they have been growing upward, they have to grow downward. While "he shall grow as the lily," he shall "cast forth his roots as Lebanon" likewise. God will not have his people all flower and foliage, he wants them also to take deep root and throw out strong fibres. After a few years, when we have been growing up in ardent piety, it usually happens that some doubt crosses the mind, or some affliction comes, which, if it does not chill our ardor, yet sometimes checks our energy, and we do not grow so fast as we should. Well, what is the effect? Are we really hurt or injured thereby? I trow not. Growing down is quite as good as growing up. I will not say it is better. The most blessed growth in grace is to be growing up and growing down—to be rooted in humility, And yet growing up in zeal; but usually the two do not come together. Sometimes we grow up, and at other times we grow down. We are such poor mortals, we cannot attend to two things at once. So sure as ever we take to shooting up, the devil comes and tries to prevent us growing down; and if we are growing down, he generally keeps us from growing up. Well, if we cannot do two things at once, what a mercy it is that we can do one at a time, by God's grace! After having grown up. the Christian grows down; "he casts forth his roots as Lebanon;" that is, he gets less in his own esteem. He was nothing once, but he now begins to be less than nothing. He thought humbly of himself before; but now he thinks worse of himself than ever he did. If you ask him now what is his character, although he said he was "a poor sinner and nothing at all" before; now he will tell you, that he thinks he is the poorest of sinners, for he has not grown one atom the richer all the time he has served his Lord. He is still poor in spirit, and perhaps poorer than ever he was. Blessed is it to grow downward!

And let me remind you, my dear friends, that growing downward is a very

excellent thing to promote stability. Perhaps that is the exact meaning of the passage. When we are first brought to God, we are like the lily, wafted about by the wind, afterwards we grow downwards, and become firm. I am fully convinced that the prevailing lack of this age is not so much in respect to growing upwards as growing downwards. Whenever I look abroad on the aggregate assemblies of religious people, I am obliged to hold a large number of my hearers in supreme contempt. Are you not one day crowding to hear me preach what I think the truth, and another day cramming a place where a man is preaching the very opposite to what I hold to be true? The fact is, some of you have no idea of what fundamental truth in theology is. The popular cry is for liberality of sentiment, and if a man happens to say a hard word against anything he thinks essentially wrong, he is accounted a bigot directly. Many of you shrink from the imputation of bigotry, as if it were more awful than heresy in regard to the faith. You would as soon be called a common informer as be called a bigot. I beseech you, do not be appalled at a taunt. Do not be a bigot, but do not be ashamed of being called one. A man ought to have stable principles, and not be ever shifting about from one set of opinions to another. He ought not to be hearing a Calvinistic minister in the Morning, and saying, that is good, and then going in the evening to hear an Arminian minister, and saying, that is good. We are often told by some ministers in their drawing rooms, that God will not ask in the day of judgment what a man believed, for if his life has been correct, it will not much matter what doctrines he held. I am at a loss for the authority on which they base such laxness. I wonder who told them that was the truth. I have read my Bible through, and I have never found a text that could absolve my judgment from its allegiance to my Maker. I hold, that to believe wrongly is equally as great a sin in the sight of heaven as to act wrongly. Error is a crime before God, and though there is liberty of conscience, so far as man and man are concerned, there is no liberty of conscience with God. You are not free to believe truth, or to believe error just as you like. You are bound to believe what God says is truth, and on your soul's peril be it, that you believe two things that are contrary, or confound the positive and the negative, where faith is the evidence of justification, and unbelief the seal of a sinner's doom. Methinks God will say to you at last, "Man, I gave thee brains; I endowed thee with reason; how couldst thou suppose thyself less responsible for

the use of thy brains than for the use of thy tongue?" One man says, "Yes;" another says "No," and because it is the fashion to call out "Liberality, liberality, liberality," thou dost assent to both, and joining the crowd thou art sincere in neither. Thou oughtest rather to say, "I believe that what I hold is true, and if I did not, I should not avow it, and believing it to be true, I cannot hold that the opposite is true, nor can I be continually going to hear one doctrine at one time and another at another; my conscience demands that I distinguish between things that differ."

My dear friends, do try to grow down; strive to get a good hold of the rocky doctrines of free grace; do not give them up; keep fast hold of them. When you believe a thing upon genuine conviction, do not shrink from the avowal, because an ill name is applied to it; say rather,

"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to my heart."

Well, what next? After Christian has become confirmed in his doctrine, and has received the truth in the love of it, what next? Why the next thing is, he makes a profession. "His branches shall spread." He has been a lily straight up, with no branches at all; but now his roots have struck deep into the ground, like the cedars of Lebanon; and the next thing he does is to send forth branches. He says, "I am a Christian; I cannot keep it a secret, I must let somebody know I am a child of God." He goes to a prayer-meeting, and he is asked to pray. There is one branch spread. He goes to join a church; there is another branch. He sits down to the Lord's supper: there is another branch. And so the little lily, which was at first but a tiny plant, now grows into a tree, and his branches spread. That is a blessed effect of grace, believe me, when it leads you to come forth from your obscurity, and let the world know what you are. I have no patience with some of you who talk about being secret Christians. I should think a man a deserter if he were to say, "Well, I am a soldier, but I do not like anybody to know it." I should think that he did not belong to one of our good regiments surely, or he would not be ashamed of his colors. But there are many now-a-days that you scarce know whether they are



Christians. Shall I tell you why? The awful fact is, that they are not Christians. "No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel." You know what the consequence would be if he did,—it would burn a hole through so sure as it was a candle; and no man can have grace in his heart, and keep it a secret. I am sure it must come out; it is one of the things that cannot be concealed. You shall not tell me you can walk into worldly company, and never let it be known that you are a Christian; that you can live for months in a house, and keep it dark that a Christian is living there. If that is the case, I tell you the angels do not know it; for it is not a fact. He that is a child of God will be discovered; his conduct will be different from the rest of men. "Thy speech betrayeth thee," said the maid to Peter. And our speech will betray us, if we are disciples. I beseech you, let me stir you up, my young friends, to make a more open profession of your faith. The Savior has done much for you; do not be ashamed of him, I implore you, but begin to make a profession of Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Having joined the church and made a profession, what is the next effect of grace for the believer then? Why it is to make him beautiful as "the olive-tree." The most beautiful thing in the world is a Christian. Shall I tell you what kind of beauty he has? His beauty is the beauty of an olive tree; and that consists, first, in its fruitfulness. The most beautiful olive tree a man can grow is the one that bears the most; and the most beautiful Christian in the Church is the one that abounds most in good works. Besides, the olive is an evergreen, and so is the Christian. He has an olive-green beauty. 'He has a beauty which does not fade away, as it does from other trees, but lives for ever. Ah! my friends, we sometimes put one of our members before others because of his wealth, and at times we show a little partiality to another because of his eloquence, and to another because of his talents, but I take it that God ranks us all according to our fruitfulness. The most beautiful tree in a garden is the one that bears the most fruit: and there is a promise given to a Christian that after his branches have spread, his beauty shall be as the olive tree; that is, he shall grow and be laden with fruit.

The olive tree, I have told you before, is evergreen; and so is the beauty of the Christian. Alas for the beautiful Christians we have in some of our places of worship on Sunday! Glorious Christians! Oh! if they could be

packed up and sent to heaven just as they are, or provided their appearances were true indications of their state, what a blessed thing it would be! But alas, alas! on the Monday they have not the same sort of dress they had on Sunday, and therefore they have not the same kind of actions. Oh! dear friends, there is so much more Sunday religion in these days! Now, I like a Monday religion, and a Tuesday religion, and a Wednesday religion, and a Thursday religion, and a Friday religion, and a Saturday religion. I do not think the religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the pen, is to be relied upon. I think it is the religion of a draper's shop, the religion of a corn exchange, religion in a house, religion in the street, and the religion of a fireside, that proves us to be God's children. But how would some of you come off if you were weighed in these balances? Fine fellows, with your feathers on, on Sunday; but poor creatures when you are in your undress, in your religious dishabille on Monday! Ye are not well arrayed then; but ah! if ye were Christians, ye would be always well arrayed: yea, you would be always beautiful as the olive tree.

Again, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." Now, I take it, the smell means the report which will go out concerning a man. As you walk up Lebanon, it is said that the flowers of the aromatic herbs there cast up a most delicious perfume. You need not touch a flower—you can smell it at a distance. And so with the true Christian. Without seeking for it, he will obtain a blessed name among his brethren, and some name also amongst the world. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree."

Once more, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." Did you ever know a flower at all concerned about its odour, or about what people would think of it? Did you ever hear a rose have a law-suit with a thorn, because the thorn said the rose did not smell sweetly? No certainly not. The rose went silently on, casting up its perfume, and left Mr. Thorn alone. Now, at times, with all ministers and with all Christians, there will be all manner of reports and hard sayings; but I have found a great gain by letting the fellows alone. When they are tired, they will have done, I dare say; and I am sure they will not much hurt us. If there be anything amiss in us, we are much obliged to them, and we will try and mend it; but if they have lied about us it is a satisfaction to us, as far as we are concerned, to know that they are liars, and we pray God that they may not have a portion in

"the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Beloved, you never need be very much concerned what men shall say of your character; only take care that in the midst of reproach you are without guile or guilt. Live, live, live,—that is the way to beat all slanderers and all calumniators. Keep straight on with what you think is right, and in due time your light shall burst forth as the morning, and your brightness as the sun in his strength. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Wherever the Christian goes he will cast a perfume about him; and when he is gone he will leave some savor behind which will be remembered.

III. Thus far we have spoken concerning the benefits of grace to the Christian himself: more briefly I will now address you CONCERNING THE BENEFITS OF GRACE TO OTHERS.

The text says, "they that dwell under his shadow shall return." I am sure, my dear friends, if you have Christian principle in your heart, you will not like a selfish religion. Though you will hold it to be a duty continually to examine yourself; and to see that you also are sound in the faith, you will not confine your religion to yourself. You may perhaps take the maxim that Christianity should begin at home, but you will never think of improving on it by thinking that it ought to end there. I like an expansive religion. I should not like to attend a chapel where all the preaching was meant for me—where all I heard comforted me. I should not like to go where there was not a scrap for me, but all for my brethren; nor where there was not something for the poor sinner. I could not afford to attend a place where I should always hear that which was exclusively for the saint, or exclusively for the sinner. If a man left half his congregation without a word, I should doubt whether he would give me the right one. But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to heaven, it is enough—they are in the covenant. They are the dear people of God—generally dear at any price; a peculiar people—awfully peculiar they are, certainly: they are so different from other people,—there is no doubt about that. They say it is equal whether God ordains man's life or man's death. They would sit still to hear men damned, and I do believe they would sing a song over hell itself and hail its jubilee. They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning sleight of hand, they have taken away the marrow from the bones of

godliness, and wrapped themselves entirely up in self. But true Christianity will be expansive and care for others.

Come, then, ye men of generous hearts, ye of glowing charity, here is a promise for you—you have some who dwell under your shadow. Are you a ministers your people sit under your shadow on the Sabbath. Are you a father? your children come and dwell under your shadow. Are you a master? your workmen dwell under your shadow; you have often prayed for their salvation; you have often yearned for the conversion of their souls. Mother! you have often pleaded for the deliverance of a daughter from her sin. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return." If you want to do good to your neighbors, and to bring them to Christ, put your own heart much upon the Savior. The more of Christ a man has, the more useful will he be in his day. If you were to look at all the ministers that have been useful, you will not find they were distinguished by great talent so much as by great grace. God can bless a poor unsophisticated countryman to the salvation of hundreds if he has grace; and a man ever so learned may preach in vain, with great periods and stupendous sentences, if he has none. Do you, then, seek to prove that promise—"I will be as the dew unto Israel," and so doing, you will get this other promise fulfilled—"They that dwell under your shadow shall return, shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

I have no time to dwell upon these points—"they shall revive as the corn," or "they shall return;" but I must just make a remark upon that sweet thought—"they shall grow as the vine." We will transplant the Eastern metaphor into Western soil. Vines, with us, grow up by the side of walls, they could not grow up themselves if there were not some prop against which they could lean for support. Now, I have often thought this is an explanation of that text—"Train up a child in the way he should go." Do you try all you can by God's grace to train up your child like you would a vine; and here is the promise. "It shall grow as the vine." Oh! I have thought, what a pretty sight it is to see an aged Christian, who, in his youth, was a Sabbath-school teacher, still a member of the Church; and there are nine or ten young men in the Church, perhaps, and they walk up and down the chapel, and go and talk to him, and comfort him. Do you

not see how that is? Why, when the young man was a strong oak, he let those pieces of ivy grow around him; and those young Christians entwined and grew around him like the vine, and now he has become an old man the wind would come and blow the oak down, but the ivy that is twisted around it shields him from the blast and keeps him upright. So with aged Christians, when they have served their God well in their day and generation they shall have comforts from others who have grown around them like the vine, and shall be sheltered by them in their old age. May those of us who are young always seek to cheer the aged! Let us never despise them; let us try as much as we can to grow around them, that we may tower upwards by their means and that they may be comforted by our adherence. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."

Lastly, "The scent thereof shall be as Lebanon." The Christian man shall not allow others to grow up by him, but by a godly conversation, he shall spread the sweetness of perfume wherever he goes. I know some dear saints of the Lord who, if they come to my house for five minutes, leave a refreshing savor behind them for five weeks. They come and talk to me of the things of the kingdom, and I have not forgotten their sweet influence on my spirit for a long time after they have gone. It is said of the wine of Lebanon, that if you pour some into a glass the flavour of it will remain for a long time after the wine is gone. And you know of old wine casks, that it is long before the taste of the wine departs out of them. So with the old Christian; he has got a savoury conversation, he talks of the things of the kingdom, and leaves a perfume behind him which lasts for weeks afterwards and you say, "Oh how I wish that man of God would come to my house again; what a sweet savor there was about him!" This is not the case with every one. Many of you, when you go and see your friends, sit and tittle tattle all the afternoon, and on the Lord's day you break the Sabbath as much as if you had sought diversion in the park, although you cry out so much against those who go there. How many there are who utterly waste their time by unprofitable chat in their own houses! Let me solemnly warn you concerning this—"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another"—not about one another. When you meet together, there is too little talk about Christ Jesus, the glory of his kingdom, and the greatness of his power. Ministers come in for their share of fulsome

praise or offensive scandal, but brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Beloved, if you are true Christians—that is the point—you will leave a scent behind you in your conversation; and when you are dead, there will still be a sweet savor left. Ah! there was good old wine in this pulpit once; there was good old wine in this house of God once, and I can see the stains of it here now. Yea, there is the perfume of holy Whitfield in this place to-night; I am sure there is. I can fancy his shade looking down this evening upon this hallowed spot. I am sure he rejoices to see the multitude keeping holyday here; and there is to me, somehow, a kind of solemn awe throughout this place. I wonder how I dared to come here, to stand where he once stood, "whose shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose." Oh! dear friends, it is something to leave a scent behind you as long as he has done. You may all do it in a measure. In one of Whitfield's sermons, (I like to read them continually, for I can find none like them), he speaks of some young man who said, "I will not live in my old father's house, for there is not a chair or a table there but smells of his piety." That is what you should endeavor to do, to make your house so smell of piety, that a wicked man cannot stop in it; to make it so holy, that without obtrusively telling your sentiments, it should make ungodly men uncomfortable in it; you should so live, that your name in your private circles, if not elsewhere, may be mentioned with honor, and it may be said of you, "Ah! he was one who reflected his Master's image, and who sought to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things."

I may have spoken to you in what you may think an odd style to-night, but I have spoken earnestly, right on I never pretend to preach to you eloquently, but I have only thrown out thought; I wish you to remember, and God grant that you may find them to your profit.

But I am well aware that I am preaching to a great many who know nothing about the things of which I have been speaking. What shall I say to them? Oh! my dear hearers, I should like to strike beneath the floor of this pulpit, and get Whitfield to rise up and preach to you for five minutes. How he would plead with you! how he would stretch forth his hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and how he would cry out in his usual impassioned manner "Come, sinners, come; God help you to come to Jesus Christ!" and then he would go on to tell you how the heart of

Christ is big enough to take big sinners in, and how the blackest and the filthiest—the devil's castaways even, are welcome to Christ. And I think I see him pressing the poor convinced sinners into the fold. I think I see him doing as the angels did with Lot, taking them by the shoulders, and saying, "Run, run, for your life; look not behind you, stay not in all the plain!" I cannot do it as he could; but, nevertheless, if these lips had the language which the heart would speak, I would plead with you for Jesus' sake, that you would be reconciled to God. I have, I trust, some here who are crying for a Savior; they feel they want him; God has brought them to this states they feel their need of him. Sinner! if thou wantest Christ, Christ wants thee; if thou hast a desire after Christ, Christ has a desire after thee. What sayest thou, poor soul, wilt thou take Christ just as he is? Come! bundle out all thy righteousness. come! pack up all thy goodness and cast it out of doors. Take Jesus, Jesus only, to be thy salvation; and I tell thee, though thou wert black as night, and filthy as a demon, while thou art yet in the land of the living, if thou dost now take Christ as thy Savior, that Christ will be enough for thee, enough to clothe thee, enough to purge thee, enough to perfect thee, and enough to land thee safe in heaven. But if you are self-righteous, I have no gospel for you except this,

"Not the righteous, not the righteous,  
Sinners, Jesus, came to save."

Sinners, of all sorts and sizes! sinners black, sinners blacker, sinners blackest! sinners filthy, sinners filthier, sinners filthiest! sinners bad, sinners worse, sinners worst! all ye who can take to yourselves the name of sinners! all of you who can subscribe to that title! I, in God's name, preach to you that "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and if by faith and prayer you are enabled to come to him this night, there is not a sinner who feels his need of a Savior who may not this night have that Savior. God has given him first, and he will not deny him second. He who is freely proclaimed in revelation, is freely commended to you in ministration.

"True relief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings you nigh;  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Oh! save souls! O God! save souls! Amen! Amen!

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## **A Gracious Dismissal**

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. - Luke 7:50

The main part of my subject will be—that gracious dismissal, "Go in peace." To her who had been so lately blest, the word "Go" sounded mournfully; for she would fain have remained through life with her pardoning Lord; but the added words "in peace" turned the wormwood into honey—there was now peace for her who had been so long hunted and harried by her sins. Rising from the feet she had washed with tears, she went forth to keep her future footsteps such as those of a believing, and therefore saved, woman ought to be.

We like a motto to begin the year with, and it has been useful to some spirits to choose a motto with which to enter on a new course of life. We climb the hill of enterprise, or dare the wave of trial, with an inspiring word upon our lip. To certain young men a word has come in life's early morning, wet with the dew of heaven and that word of their day-dawn has kept with them. The echoes of that life-evoking word have followed them long after it was spoken; amid strange scenes it has come to them like a voice from the unseen. It has whispered to them within the curtains of their dying bed: it has murmured consolation amid Jordan's swelling waves. That first word of joy, and peace from Jesus with which they began the new life came to them over again just as they were melting away into the invisible land; so they began the service of the Redeemer, and so he declared that their work was finished. Perhaps that love-note



will be their welcome at the very gates of heaven.

Our Lord, in the instance before us, sent a penitent away from the chill atmosphere of self-righteous cavilling, and thus relieved her of a controversy for which she was not fitted; but I see more than that in this benediction. It looks to me as if our divine Master, when he found this poor sinner so full of love to him that she washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, having by a parable explained to the Pharisee the reason for the greatness of her love, then said to her, "Go in peace"—meaning that word not only to be cheering for the necessary purpose of the moment, but to go with her, and to attend her all the rest of her life, until, when she came into the dark valley, she should fear no evil, for she would still hear that sweet voice saying, "Go in peace." What music to have heard! What music still to hear!

Now, I would to God that the word which I shall speak at this time might be honoured of the Lord to serve that sacred purpose to some here present. May it be a life-word to certain of you! May it be to others of us who have long known the Saviour a revival of our rest, and may we get such a draught of peace from Jesus that we may never thirst again! The lips of our divine Lord are a well-spring of delight; each word is a chalice brimmed with sweetness. Imbibing this, we shall go our way henceforth even to our journey's end, after the manner of the hymn which we sang just now:—

"Calm in the hour of buoyant health,  
Calm in my hour of pain;  
Calm in my poverty or wealth,  
Calm in my loss or gain;

"Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,  
Soft resting on thy breast;  
Soothe me with holy hymn and psalm,  
And bid my spirit rest."

Oh, that our life may be as a sea of glass! May the sacred circle of our fellowship be within the golden line of the peace of God! Thou who didst bid us come to thee and rest, now bid us "go in peace."

I am going to say a little in my opening upon a delightful assurance which constituted the reason why the woman went in peace: "Thy faith hath saved thee"; or, as in the forty-eighth verse, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Upon the strength of the assurance that she was saved, she might safely go in peace. When we have talked a little upon that subject, we will then come to a considerate precept: the Saviour directed her, in the moment of trial, to "go in peace." There was an assurance for her comfort, and a precept for her guidance.

I. First, then, consider A DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. The ground upon which the penitent woman might go in peace was that she had been saved. The Saviour assured her: "Thy faith hath saved thee."

She was not saved otherwise than we are saved; but she received the common salvation by like precious faith. The way of salvation to her was faith in Christ: there is the same way for us, but she had what some of you, no doubt, would greatly like to have: she had an assurance that she was saved, from the Lord's own mouth. I think I hear some saying, "I should go in peace, I am sure, if the Lord Jesus would but appear to me, and speak and say with his own lips, 'Thy faith hath saved thee'." It is natural that you should think so; it must have been rapture to receive a benediction from the mouth of our King, our Saviour. Yet, dear friends, we must not hang our confidence upon a mere circumstance. For a mere circumstance it is, whether Christ shall literally stand before you in the flesh, and say, "Thy faith hath saved thee," or whether he shall say it to you by the infallible record of his own Word. It does not make much difference as to my faith in what my father says to me, whether I meet the venerable man in the morning in my garden, and there hear his voice, or whether I get a letter by post in his handwriting, and he says to me upon that paper just what he would have said if I had met him face to face. I do not require him always to come up the hill to my house to tell me everything that he has to say: I should think myself an idiot if I did. If I were to say, "My dear father, you have assured me of your love by letter; but somehow, I cannot credit it unless you come and look me in the face, and take my hand, and assure me of your good will," surely, he would say to me, "My dear son, what ails you? You must be out of your mind. I never knew you to be so childish before: my handwriting has always been

enough. I can hardly think you mean it when you say that you cannot credit me unless I stand manifest before your eyes, and with your ears you hear me speak." Now, what I would not do to my earthly father, I certainly would not do to my heavenly Saviour. I am perfectly satisfied myself to believe what he writes to me; and if it be so written in his Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if he had actually come from heaven, and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. Is not this the reasoning of common-sense? Do you not at once agree with me?

"Well," you say, "we go with you there, dear sir; but, then he spoke that word to her personally. We should never have any more doubts, but should go in peace, if he said that word of assurance to us. You see, it is not merely that Jesus himself spoke, and said, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' but he looked that way; he turned towards her, and she knew that he referred to her. There was no mistaking to whom the assurance was given. There were other people in the room, but he did not say it to Simon; he did not say it to Peter; he did not say it to James and John. She knew by the look of him that he meant it for her, and for her alone, for she was the only person to go, and consequently the only one to 'go in peace.' Our Lord put it in the singular number, and said. 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' I want it to come home just so to me." Yes, but I think that this is a little unreasonable, too; is it not? Because if my father (to carry on my figure) were to speak to me, and to my brothers and to my sisters, and were to say, "Dear children, I have loving thoughts concerning you, and I have laid up in store for your needs," I do not think that I should say to him by-and-by, "Now, father, do you know that I did not believe you, or derive any pleasure from what you said, because you spoke to others beside myself? I did not think your statement of love could be true, because you included my brothers and my sisters. You did not use the singular, but you put it in the plural; and you spoke to all my brothers and sisters, as well as to myself; and therefore I felt that I could not take any comfort out of your tender assurances." I should be a most unreasonable kind of body if I were to talk in that way; and my father would begin to think that his son was qualifying for a lunatic asylum. If he did not attribute it to unkindness of heart, he certainly would ascribe it to imbecility of head. Why, surely, surely, if my father says the same to

each one of his children as he says to me, his words are all the more likely to be true, instead of being less worthy of belief; and therefore I derive comfort from his promises of love being put in the plural rather than in the singular. Surely, it should not be less easy to believe that God would deal graciously with me in company with thousands of others than that he should pursue a solitary plan with me as the lone object of his love. Is it not so?

"Ah, yes!" says one, "but you have not hit on it yet. I want to know that I am one that is in that plural, and I want to know that I really am one of those to whom Jesus speaks in his Word." My anxious friend, you may know it; and you may know it most certainly. It is written, "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." It need never be a question whether you believe in him or not; if you trust him, that is the gist of the matter. You can readily ascertain whether you do really trust him, or do not trust him. If you do trust him, you are his, and every promise of his covenant is made to you. You have faith, and when the Lord lays it down as a general statement that faith saves—the statement is applicable to all the world, in every place, and in all time, until the present age shall end, and men shall have passed into the fixed state of retribution, where no gospel faith is preached. "Thy faith hath saved thee": if thou hast faith at all—if thou believest that Jesus is the Christ—thou art born of God. If thou canst say to the Lord Jesus,

"All my trust on thee is stayed,  
All my help from thee I bring,"

that is faith, and Jesus testifies, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now, because the infallible Witness says this of all who have faith, I do not think you ought to doubt it. It is true you do not hear his voice, because he says it rather by the written Word than by word of mouth; but surely this does not affect your faith. We believe a true man whether he writes or speaks: indeed, if there be any choice, we prefer that which he has deliberately put upon paper; for this remains when the sound of the voice is clean gone. It is most profitable for us that we should read our Lord's declaration over and over again, and put it in all sorts of shapes, and see how it remains evermore faithful and true. It is more assuring to you to find it in the volume of the Book than it would be if the Saviour met you

tonight, and said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee." The record excels the voice. "No," say you, "I cannot see that." Well now, Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and nothing could shake Peter's conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly glory; and yet, for all that, Peter says, concerning the inspired Word, "We have a more sure Word of testimony." He felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the abidingly inspired Word of God. You ought to feel the same. If I were conscious tonight that, at some period of my life, I had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to me, the very spot of ground on which it occurred would be exceedingly dear and sacred to my spirit; but I am certain that when I grew depressed, when darkness rushed over my soul, as it does sometimes, I should be sure to say to myself, "You never saw anything of the kind. It was a delusion, a figment of imagination, a delirium, and nothing more." But, beloved, when I get to this Book, and see before me the sacred lines, I know that I am not deluded. There it stands, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I am sure about that, and I am sure that I believe, and therefore I am sure that I am saved. I like to put my finger right down on the passage, and then say, "Lord, I know thou canst not lie. I have never had a question about this being thy Book. Whatever other doubts have plagued me, this has not. Thou hast so spoken it home to my soul, that I am as assured that this is thy Book as I am assured of my own existence; and, hence, thou has done better for the removal of my doubts, and for the assurance of my soul's eternal salvation, by putting thy promise in the Book, than if thou hadst thyself personally appeared to me, and spoken with thine own voice." O my hearer, the written Word is most sure! If thou believest, thou art saved as surely as thou art alive. If thou believest, heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall stand fast for thee. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." He has eternal life in present possession. Our Lord has put it thus: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." There are no "ifs" or "buts" about these words of promise. Salvation is put as a present thing, and as an abiding thing, but in every case as a certain thing; and why should we be worried and worn about the matter? It is so,

and let us take the comfort of the fact. We must either throw away this Book by beginning to talk about "degrees of inspiration" and all that foul rubbish, or else we are logically bound to be sure of our hope, and to rejoice in it. I warrant thee, O my hearer, that as long as thou standest fast by the belief that this is a sure Word of testimony, thou wilt know that thou art saved! If this Book be true, every believer in Jesus is as safe as Jesus himself. To say, "I believe, but I am afraid I am not saved," is to say, only in a roundabout way, that you do not believe at all; for, if you believe, then you believe that God speaks the truth; and this is the testimony, that "God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in his Son." This is the testimony of the great Father, and the testimony of the eternal Spirit; and we must not dare to doubt it. You may doubt whether you believe or not; but given that you do really and unfeignedly put your trust in the Lord Jesus, then, as effect follows cause, it is certain that the cause of faith will be followed by its sure effect—salvation. "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." Do not worry any longer: go in peace. Have done with questioning; end debate; go in peace. Go about your business, for the work of salvation is done. You are a saved soul: go and rejoice in finished salvation, and ask no more questions. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" said God to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Wherefore do you question and doubt any longer? Go forward to enjoy what God has prepared for you; and as you are saved and justified in Christ, now seek sanctification, and all the other blessings of the covenant of grace which lie before you in Christ Jesus your Lord. The promise is sure; be sure that it is so, and in perfect rest of soul enjoy the good which God provides you.

I think I have thus brought out as clearly as I can that delightful assurance which is the ground of the command, "Go in peace."

II. We come, secondly, to hearken to A CONSIDERATE PRECEPT. Our Lord, with wise tenderness, dismissed the beloved object of his pardoning love, and bade her "Go in peace." May the Holy Spirit bless this to us!

This precept divides itself into two parts. There is, first, "Go," and then there is "Go in peace."

There is "go." Now, in "go" there are two things: to go from and to go to.

Where was she to go from? First, she was to go from these quibblers. Simon and the Pharisees are as full of objections as a swarm of bees is full of stings. They say in their hearts one to another, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" They have even dared to question the character of the perfect One, and have hinted a suspicion of his purity for allowing such a woman to come so near him, and to wash his feet with her tears. Therefore the Saviour says to her, "Go." This was not a happy place for a child-like love to linger in. Her soul would have been among lions. Jesus seems to say, "Do not stay to be tormented by these cavillers. Thy faith hath saved thee; go. You have gained a great blessing; go home with it. Let these people argue with each other; you have a rich prize, take it out of the reach of these pirates."

Oftentimes, I believe that the child of God would find it to be his greatest wisdom, whenever he is in company that begins to assail his Lord, or to denounce his faith, just to go about his business, and let the scoffers have their scoffing to themselves. Some of us have thought it our miserable duty to read certain books that have been brought out against the truth, that we might be able to answer them; but it is a perilous calling. The Lord have mercy upon us when we have to go down into these sewers; for the process is not healthy!

"Oh," says a man, "but you must prove all things!" Yes, so I will; but if one should set a joint of meat on his table, and it smelt rather high, I would cut a slice and if I put one bit of it in my mouth, and found it far gone, I should not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness. Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book through; and they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes! You say to yourself, "No, sir, no, no, no! this is good meat—for dogs. Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me, and I do not intend to poison myself with it." The Saviour does not tell the woman, "Stop, now, and hear what Simon has got to say. Dear good woman, you have been washing my feet with tears and here is a highly intelligent gentleman, a Pharisee, who has a very learned prelection to deliver; give him a fair hearing. You have to prove all things; therefore, stop and hear him. And here are more gentlemen who object to my pardoning your

sins; and their objections are fetched from deep veins of thought. Listen to them, and then I will meet their questions, and quiet your mind." No; the Saviour says, "Go, go, go in peace. You have peace: do not stop till you lose it. You have your comfort and joy: refuse to be robbed of them." Why, if you were in a room, and you saw a certain number of gentlemen of a suspicious character, and you had your watch with you, you would not feel it necessary to stop and see whether they were able to extract your watch from you, but you would say to yourself, "No; I am best out of this company." We are safest out of the society of those whose great object it is to rob us of our faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go home. Leave them. Go in peace."

I think that he meant, besides going away from the men, "Go away from the publicity into which you have unwillingly stepped." If our Saviour had been like some excellent people of the present day, he would have said, "Stand before all these men, and tell your experience. I shall require you to be at half-a-dozen meetings this week, and you must speak at every one of them." A splendid woman, was she not, who washed the Saviour's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head? She might have exhibited her eyes and her hair, and told their gracious story. Who can tell but several would have been impressed by the narrative? The Saviour said to the woman—so excitable, for she was all that, as well as grateful—"Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." As much as to say, "There are certain of your own sex that you can speak to. You will find some poor fallen woman to whom you can quietly tell of my pardoning grace. But yours is a case in which the very beauty of your character will lie in the quietude of your future life. 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' That is enough for thee. Thou hast come upon the stage of action by that splendid act of thy love; but do not acquire the habit of winning publicity. Do not aspire to display thyself in a bold and heroic attitude, but go in peace." He almost seems to say, "Subside now into thy family. Take thy place with the rest of thy sisters. Adorn by thy future purity my doctrine, and let all men see what a change has been wrought in thee; for, mayhap, that very weakness of thine, which made thee what thou wast as a sinner, may put thee in danger even as a saint. Therefore I do not ask thee to tarry here, and join my disciples, and follow me publicly through the streets, but thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."



I think that the Master taught a great deal of wisdom here, which some of those who are leaders in the church of God would do well to copy. Yea, I think that I shall go a little further, and say, that I think the Saviour there and then dismissed her from that high ministry which, for once in her life, she had carried out. She washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was the action of a love which had risen to a passion. It was an action such as shall be told for a memorial of her everywhere; and we may well imitate her penitence, and her heroic courage, as well as her love to Christ. But, at the same time, we cannot always be doing heroic actions: life is mainly made up of common deeds. It would not be possible to be always washing feet with tears, nor to be always unbraiding tresses to use them as a towel. The difficulty with some people is that they are always wanting to practice the sublime. Alas! they often fail by just one step, and become ridiculous. They are always straining after effect; and, hearing of what has been done once, by one choice person, they must do it themselves, and they must keep on doing it. O my sister! there may come a time when you will have to speak for Christ, and speak openly before many; but tomorrow you had better go home, and see to the children, and make home happy for your husband. You will glorify Christ by darning stockings, and mending the socks of the little ones, quite as surely as by washing his feet with tears. You make a great mistake if you have not a piety which will take you into domestic life—which will help you to make the common drudgery of life a divine service. We want men that can serve God with the axe and plane, or behind a counter, or by driving a quill. These are the men we want; but there are many that crave to vault at once into a conspicuous place, and perform an astounding deed. Having done it once, they become unsettled all the rest of their lives; and do not seem as if they ever could take to plainly keeping the ten commandments, and walking in the steps of Jesus. I wish that those who must flash and blaze would hear the Lord Jesus say to them, "Go in peace." I mean any of you who really did distinguish yourselves on one occasion, and deserved much praise from your Christian friends. I fear lest you should pine for unusual and even undesirable forms of service and become useless in the ordinary course of life. Now, do not be spoiled for life by having been allowed in one unusual deed, but hear the Master say, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace. Serve me in the daily avocations of life, and bring glory to my name at

home. Go from the strain of publicity to the gentler pressures of family duty."

Do you not think that he even meant that she was now to cease from that singular fellowship with him that she had enjoyed? She had been very close to him; but she was, perhaps, never to be quite so near to him again. In spirit she should be; but certainly not physically. It happens that those who take to the contemplative life—and there is no life higher than that—are apt to think that they must forget the practical life. But it must not be so. We must do that which the Master bids us do, as well as sit at his feet. I am tempted to tell a story which most of you must know concerning the famous man of God, who, in his cell, thought he saw the Lord Jesus, and under that persuasion he worshipped with rapt delight. But just then the bell at the convent-gate rang, and it was his turn to stand at the door, and deal out bread to the hungry. There was a little battle in his mind as to which he should do—tarry with his Lord, or go to hand out bread to the poor mendicants. At last, he felt that he must do his duty even at the cost of the highest spiritual bliss. He went and distributed the bread, and when he came back, to his great delight, the vision was still there, and a voice said to him, "If thou hadst stayed, I would have gone; but as thou hast gone, I have therefore stayed still to commune with thee." The path of duty must be followed, and no spiritual enjoyment can excuse us from it. Never offer one duty to God stained with the blood of another. Balance your duties, and let not one press out another. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Do not think that thou needest to be all day long at thy Bible, or all the evening at thy prayer. There is a time for everything. Let every holy work have its place, that thy life may be a fair mosaic of brilliant colours, all set according to the divine pattern, to make up a perfect character. "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace, and do the next thing, and the next, without weariness."

That leads me to speak of what she was to go to. It seems to me that the Saviour said, "Now go home. You have been a fallen woman: home is the place for you. Go home to your mother and father, or other relatives. Seek a home. Be domesticated. Attend to your own work. Whatever your place is, go to it. Leaving daily duty was the source of your temptation; return to walks of usefulness, and habits of order, and this will be your safety.

You will be less likely to be led away if you have to work to occupy head, and heart, and hands."

Did he not mean, "Go now to your ordinary life-trial"? Do you think yourself a very peculiar person—a sort of saint, that has to float in the air, or live upon roses? Do not fancy such a thing. I have heard of the Chinese, that they sell shoes with which you can walk on the clouds; and I believe that some people must have bought a pair of these remarkable articles; for their lives are spent in cloudland, walking as in a dream, upon high stilts of fond imaginations. Do not think great things of yourself. You are but a commonplace man or woman. Do such duty as your fellow-Christians do, and do not think yourself a superior person. The worst people in the world to work with are superior people. Those are of no importance who think they are of great importance. Poor creature! it is not the grace of God which turns your brain, but your own silly conceit.

Go forth to your further service: "Go in peace. There are some to whom you can tell of my love. Oh, how you will tell it! You that have washed my feet with your tears, go and shower those tears over fallen ones like yourself. Go, use those eyes, that you may look my love right into their hearts as you are speaking to them. Go all your life in peace, and do for me all that I shall put in your way to do for me." That is what I think our Lord meant. Brethren, do not think of sitting here to enjoy yourselves; but go off, and glorify your Redeemer's name. Go!

But then here is the point of it: he said "Go in peace." O my brethren, I desire that all of us who love the Lord may go henceforth all the rest of our life journey in peace. May pardoning love put us at peace concerning all our sins! O pardoned one, thou lovest much, for thou hast had much forgiven; let thy thoughts all run to love, and none to fear. Fret not about the past—the dark, dishonorable past. The hand that was pierced has blotted it all out. The great Lord has frankly forgiven thee all thy debt. Let not that disturb thee any longer. Go in peace. What a rest it is to be rid of the burden of sin, and to know of a certainty, from the teaching of God's own word, that your sins are forgiven you! This is peace which passeth all understanding.

Our Lord meant, next, "Go in peace" in reference to all the criticisms of

all these people who have looked at you. Do not mind them. Do not trouble about them. What have they to do with you? It is enough for a servant if his master accepts him: he need not mind what others have to say about his service. Thy faith hath saved thee. Forget all the unkind things they have said, and do not trouble thy heart about the cruel speeches they may yet make. Go in peace, and be under no alarm as to upbraiding tongues.

And then I think he meant, "Go in peace about what thou hast done." I know the need of a word like that. I have preached the gospel: I have thrown my whole soul into it; and after it is all over, I have felt bound to chide myself that I did not do much better as to style, or spirit, or length, or some other matter. Oh, but if the Master accepts it, one may go in peace about it! This woman had done a very extraordinary thing in washing Christ's feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head; and when she got away, she might have said to herself, "I wonder that I was so bold. Was I not immodestly conspicuous? How could I have done it? How must I have looked when I was bathing his feet? For me, too—such a sinner as I am—for me to have done it to the blessed and holy One! I fear he must have felt vexed at my rudeness!" Have you not sometimes done a brave thing for Christ, and then afterwards felt just like that? "I was a bold minx," say you, "after all, to push myself so forward." The good young man, who has just preached for the first time, says, "Well, I got through it this time, but I will never attempt it again, for I am sure that I am not fit for such holy work." So the Master says to this woman, "Go in peace. I have accepted thee and thy loving service. Do not trouble about what thou hast done. It is all sweet to me, and has a rich perfume of thy great love. Never fret about what you have done. You have done the right thing. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace." I want us to have just that kind of peace—peace about what we have done for our Lord, even as we have peace about sin forgiven, and peace about human criticisms.

"Go in peace." Oh, to possess, from this time forth, a holy quiet! We are so apt to grow fretful. I know some good brethren who have a swollen vein of suspicion about them, that bleeds every now and then, and pains them greatly, and alarms other people. I know some sisters: they are very

good, but unreasonably fearful. They say that they are "nervous." Perhaps that is the fact; and so I will say no more. But, oh, that we could get them cured of this disease of the nerves! I would they could be quieted! I admire the members of the Society of Friends for this virtue beyond almost any other which they exhibit: they seem to be so steady, self-contained, and equable. They are a little slow, perhaps; but then they are very sure, and firm, and steadfast, and calm. We are some of us too much in a hurry to go fast. If we were a little slower, we should be quicker. If we left our affairs more entirely with God, our peace might be like a river.

Yes, I would to God, dear friends, that we might feel henceforth a constant joy. Why not? Nothing ought to trouble us, for we know that all things work together for good. If we live by faith, nothing can trouble us; for between here and heaven we shall keep company with thee, thou Blessed One! And if the way thou takest be rough, the fact of thy being with us shall make it smooth to us. We will travel merrily with this as our march-music—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Still, to come back to where I began, I dare say that the good woman thought that she would like to speak a word for the Lord. When they said that he could not forgive sin, would not she have liked to say, "But he did forgive my sin, and he changed my nature. How dare you speak thus?" But the Saviour said, "Go." She was not called to contend. Thank God every child of God is not called to fight with the adversary: those of us who are men of war from our youth up take no pleasure in strife. We wish that, like this holy woman, we could be exempt from this warfare. She might well rejoice in her escape from the sacred conscription. Many a cuff and blow she thus avoided; and as her Captain sent her off the field, she might go home right happily.

She might have lost the blessed frame of mind in which she then was, and this would have been a real injury to her. She was sweetly wrapped up in love, and there her Lord would have her abide. He seems to say, "You are too precious to be battered and bruised in battle. Go—go in peace. Dear soul, you are so full of love to me that I do not want you to be worried with fighting, and contending, and controverting. Go in peace." She would have done no good, I dare say, if she had ventured into a fray for which she was so unfitted. If she had spoken, she would have said

something which the cruel Pharisees would have turned into a jest. So he said to her, "Go in peace." Why should her feebleness give them an occasion for unholy triumph? All true hearts are not fit for fight. Besides, she had her Lord to be her Advocate, and there was no need for her to speak. Therefore he said, "I can manage them without your presence. Go in peace." When we may believingly leave a difficulty with our Lord, it is faith's duty to go home quietly. No doubt, by going in peace, she would be doing greater service than she would by using her tongue upon these ungodly men. A quiet, happy life is often the noblest witness that we can bear for Christ. Therefore I say to everyone who loves the Lord, there are times when he will say to us, "Do not enter into any of this conflict, and turmoil, and muddle. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

The last word I have to say is this. There are many poor souls who talk about coming to Christ, who are not yet saved; and they are always hearing about faith, and thinking of it, and yet they never do, in very truth, believe. Now, do not hear nor debate any more about faith, but believe. Trust Jesus Christ, and think no more about your own trusting. Thou shalt think of it as a thing done, I mean, but not as a thing to be done. God help thee now to believe in Jesus, and so pass over the bridge of belief to the golden shore of Jesus himself!

Well, but I notice some say that they believe, but it is not believing, because if it were believing, they would "go in peace." A person comes to the bank with a cheque. He believes it to be honestly his, and the signature to be correct. He puts it down on the counter, and the clerk puts out the money. But see! The man does not take it! He stands and loafs about; and the clerk looks at him, and wonders what he is at. At last, when the person has been there long enough to wear the good man's patience out, the clerk says, "Did you bring that cheque to have the money?" "Yes, I handed it in." "Well, then, why do you not take the money, and go about your business?" If he is a sensible man, he delays no longer; nay, he would not have delayed so long. He takes the money, and departs in peace. Now, dear soul, if thou hast a promise from God—"He that believeth is not condemned," or "he that believeth hath everlasting life"—dost thou believe? Then take the blessing, and go about thy business. Do not keep on saying, "Perhaps it is so," and "Perhaps it is not

so." Do you believe that God speaks the truth? If so, then take the promised blessing and enjoy it; for thou art a saved man. "But I have been going to a place of worship for years, and I have been believing in a sort of a way; but I have never dared to say that I was saved." Then you are acting the part of an unbeliever. If you do not know that you are saved, how dare you go to sleep tonight? How should a man dare to eat his meals, and go about his business, and yet say, "I do not know whether I am saved or not?" Thou mayest know it, and thou oughtest to know it. If you believe, you are saved: if you doubt that fact, you are rather an unbeliever than a believer. Take up your money, and go home. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Trust Jesus! Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace.

The Lord help you truly to believe, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## Gratitude For Deliverance From The Grave

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. - Psalm 118:17-18

In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the fifth year of a life often threatened by grievous sickness. [Will the reader kindly note the remarks at the end of this sermon, before he reads the discourse? - C.H.S.]

How very differently we view things at different times and in differing states of mind! Faith takes a bright and cheerful view of matters, and speaks very confidently, "I shall not die, but live." When we are slack as to our trust in God, and give way to misgivings and doubts and fears, we sing in the minor key, and say, "I shall die. I shall never live through this trouble. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; and that day is hastening on. Hope is failing me. Bad times are at the door. I shall not live through this crisis." Thus our tongues show the condition of our inner man. We talk according to our frames and feelings, and would make others think that things are as we see them with our jaundiced eyes. Is it not a pity that we give a tongue to our unbelief? Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! Dog did I call him? He is a wolf; or should I call him hound of hell? His voice is as that of Apollyon: it is full of blasphemy against God. Unbelieving utterances will do no good to yourself, and will do harm to those who listen to your babblings. It would be wise to say, "If I should speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." Let us be dumb with silence when we cannot speak to the Glory of God. But, oh, it is a blessed thing, when faith is in our spirit reigning and powerful, to let it have ample opportunity to proclaim the honours of his name! To give his heart a tongue, is wise in man when his heart itself is wise. The more talk we get from the mouth of faith, the better: her lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh. A silent faith, if there be such a thing, robs others of benedictions;



and at the same time it does worse, for it robs God of his glory. When we have a joyous faith in full operation, let us be communicative, and let us openly and boldly say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." I would follow my own advice, and crave a patient hearing of you.

You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death—Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake; Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. In this full assurance he went bravely to meet his enemies at the Diet of Worms, and indeed, went courageously whenever duty called him. He felt that God had raised him up to declare the glorious doctrine of justification by faith, and all the other truths of what he believed to be the gospel of God; and therefore no faggots could burn him, and no sword could kill him till that work was done. Thus he bravely wrote out his belief, and set it where many eyes would see it, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." It was no idle boast; but a calm and true conclusion from his faith in God and fellowship with him. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the like brave thoughts and speeches! We cannot show our courage unless we have difficulties and troubles. A man cannot become a veteran soldier if he never goes to battle. No man can get his sea legs if he lives always on land. Rejoice, therefore, in your tribulations, because they give you opportunities of exhibiting a believing confidence, and thereby glorifying the name of the Most High. But take heed that you have faith, true faith in God; and do not become a puppet of impressions, much less a slave of the judgments of others. To have David's faith, you must be as David. No man may take up a confidence of his own making: it must be a real work of the Spirit, and growth of grace within, grasping with living tendrils the promise of the living God.

I will read the passage from the psalm over again, and we will then consider it by God's help. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over to death."

First, here is the believer's view of his afflictions. "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Secondly, here is the believer's comfort under those afflictions. "He hath not given me over to death. I shall not die, but live." And, thirdly, here is the believer's conduct after his afflictions and after his deliverance from them— "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I. At the outset, here is THE BELIEVER'S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS. "The Lord hath chastened me sore."

On the surface of the works we see the good man's clear observation that his afflictions come from God. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, "Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall." There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes; but that enemy's assaults were being overruled by the Lord, and were made to work for his good; so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, "The Lord hath chastened me sore. My enemy struck at me and he might make me fall; but in very truth my gracious God was using him to chasten me that I might not fall. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause wrought my education and establishment."

It is well to have grace enough to see that tribulation comes from God: he fills the bitter cup as well as the sweet goblet. Troubles do not spring out of the dust, neither doth affliction grow up from the ground, like hemlock from the furrows of the field; but the Lord himself kindles the fiery furnace, and sits as a refiner at the door. Let us not dwell too much upon the part played by the devil, as though he were a power co-ordinate with God. He is a fallen creature, and his very existence depends upon the will and permission of the Most High. His power is borrowed, and can only be used as the infinite omnipotence of God permits. His wickedness is his own, but his existence is not self-derived. Blame the devil, and blame all of his servants as much as you will; but still believe in the mysterious but consoling truth that, in the truest sense, the Lord sends trials upon his saints. "Explain that statement," say you. Oh, no; I am not called upon to explain it, but to believe it. A great many things, when they are said to be explained by modern thinkers, are merely explained away, and I have not

yet begun to learn that wretched art. Remember how Peter told the Jews that he, whom God by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge decreed to die, even his son Jesus Christ, nevertheless taken by them with wicked hands, when they had crucified and slain him. The death of Christ was pre-determined in the counsel of God, and yet it was none the less an atrocious crime on the part of ungodly men. The omnipotence and providence of God are to be believed; but man's responsibility is not therefore to be questioned. Our afflictions may come distinctly from man, as the result of persecution or malice; and yet they may come with even greater certainty from the Lord, and may be the needful outcome of his special love to us.

For this reason we may wisely moderate our anger against second causes. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick; if he were more intelligent, he would snap at the person using the stick; and, if that intelligence were governed by the spirit of obedience, he would yield to the blow, and learn a lesson from it. Thus, when Shimei reviled David, and Abishai, the son of Zeruah, said unto king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head;" David meekly replied, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hath thou done so?" A sight of God's hand in a trial is the end of rebellion against it in the case of every good man. He says, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." We may lie at his feet, and cry, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" but, if the reason does not appear, we must bow in reverent submission, and say with one of old, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Job saw the Lord in his many tribulations, and therefore praised him, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord that taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely there is nothing better for a man of God than to perceive that his smarts and sorrows come from his Father's hand, for then he will say, "The will of the Lord be done." This is the great point in the believer's view of his afflictions: "He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole."

Next, the believer perceives that his trials come out as a chastening. "The Lord hath chastened me sore." When a child is chastised, two things are

clear: first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him, so that he needs to be corrected or instructed; and, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit, and acts in loving wisdom towards him. This is certainly true if his father is an eminently kind and yet prudent parent. Children do not think that there can be any need for chastening them; but when years have matured their judgment, they will know better. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous;" if it did seem joyous, it would not be chastening. The "need be" is not only that we have manifold trials, but that we be in heaviness through them. In the smart of the sorrow lies the blessing of the chastisement. God chastens us in the purest love, because he sees that there is an absolute necessity for it: "for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Our fathers, according to the flesh, too often corrected us according to their own pleasure, and yet we gave them reverence; but the Father of our spirits corrects us only of necessity—a necessity to which he is too wise to close his eye. Shall we not, therefore, pay greater reverence to him, and bow before him, and live? When Hezekiah was recovered of his sickness, he wrote, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." I find not that men live by carnal pleasure, nor that the life of the spirit is ever found in the wine-vat or in the oil-press; but I do find that life and health often come to saints through briny tears, through the bruising of the flesh, and the oppression of the spirit. So have I found it, and I bear my willing witness that sickness has brought me health, loss has conferred gain, and I doubt not that one day death will bring me fuller life.

Be wise then, dear child of God, and look upon your present affliction as a chastening. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." There is not a more profitable instrument in all God's house than the rod. No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan's rod; but that is nothing to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah's rod. Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her travail pangs, joy comes to the house because the man-child is born; and sorrow is to us also, full often, the moment of the birth of our graces. A chastened spirit is a gracious spirit; and how shall we obtain it except we are chastened? Like our Lord Jesus, we learn obedience by the things

which we suffer. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without sorrow, and he never will have while the world stands. Let us, therefore, bless God for all his dealings, and in a filial spirit confess, "Thou, Lord, hast chastened me."

Consider the psalmist's view of his affliction a little more carefully. He noted that his trials were sore: he says, "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Perhaps we are willing to own in general that our trouble is of the Lord; but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the tenderest part of our character, and has cut us to the quick. Are we to believe that this also is, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are. If it be not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from divine permission, where are we? How can a trial be met which is independent of divine rule, and outside of the sacred zone of providential government? It is hopeful when we find that all our ills lie within the ring-fence of omnipotent overruling. It is one comfort that we see a wall of fire round about us, a circle so complete that even the devil, malicious as he is, cannot break through it, to do more than the Lord allows. The camels are gone, the sheep, the oxen, the servants, all are destroyed: all this is most trying; but still it is true—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But, see, another messenger comes, and cries, "There came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead." Might not Job, then, have said, "This is a blow which I cannot bear; for it is evidently from the prince of the power of the air"? No, but even after that, he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When his wife said, "Curse God, and die," he still blessed God, and held his integrity. He told her that she spoke as one of the foolish women speaketh, and then he wisely added, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." May we stand fast in patience as he did, even when our troubles overflow!

It is folly to imagine, as we have sometimes done, that we could bear anything except that which we are called upon to endure. We are like the young man who says that he wants a situation. What can you do? He can

do anything. That man you never engage, because you know that he can do nothing. So it is with us. If we say, "I could bear anything but this," we prove our universal impatience. If we had the choice of our crosses, the one we should choose would turn out to be more inconvenient than that which God appoints for us; and yet we will have it that our present cross is unsuitable and specially galling. I would say to any who are of that mind, "If your burden does not fit your shoulder, bear it till it does." Time will reconcile you to the yoke if grace abides with you. It is not for us to choose our affliction; that remains with him who chooses our inheritance for us. Read well this word, "The Lord hath hastened me sore," and see the Lord's hand in the soreness of your trial. Even while the wound is raw, and the smart is fresh; be conscious that the Lord is near.

Yet there is in the verse a "but", for the psalmist perceives that his trial is limited; "but he hath not given me over to death." Certain of the buts in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have. Before us is a "but" which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to the abyss. There is a limit to the force, the sharpness, the duration and the number of our trials.

"If God appoints the number ten,  
They ne'er can be eleven."

Whenever the Lord mixes a potion for his people, he weighs each ingredient, measures the bitters, grain by grain, and allows not even a particle in excess to mingle in the draught. Like a careful dispenser, he will not pour out a drop too little or too much.

"To his church, his joy, and treasure,  
Every trial works for good:  
They are dealt in weight and measure,  
Yet how little understood;  
Not in anger,  
But from his dear covenant love."

Our Father's anger at our sin will never blaze into wrath against us, though in mercy he will smite our sins. Remember, then, this gracious boundary. "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me

over unto death." We have never yet experienced a trouble which might not have been worse. One affliction kills another: the wind never blows east and west at the same time. When the Lord smites you abound, so do consolations abound through Christ Jesus. The whole band of troubles never comes forth at once. Everything painful is graded and proportioned to the man and his strength, and the object for which it is sent. With the trial the Lord makes the way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Faith can see an end and limit where nature's dim eye sees endless confusion. Where carnal sense—

"Sees every day new straits attend,  
And wonders where the scene will end,"

faith looks over the intervening space, and comforts herself with that which is yet to come. Faith sings pleasant songs when she foots it over weary roads.

"The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,  
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

The Lord keep your faith alive, my brethren and sisters, and then whatever trials surge around you, you will sit on the Rock of ages, above the waves, and joyfully sing praises unto your divine Deliverer! Oh, how sweet to say, as I now do, "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death"!

II. This brings me secondly, to consider THE BELIEVER'S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS. The believer's comfort under his afflictions is this—"I shall not die, but live."

Occasionally this comes in the form of a presentiment. I do not think that I am superstitious: I fancy that I am pretty clear of that vice; yet I have had presentiments concerning things to come or not to come; and, moreover, I have met with so many Christian men who, in the time of trouble have received singular warnings, or sweet assurances of coming deliverance, that I am bound to believe that the Lord does sometimes whisper to the heart of his children, and assure them in trial that they shall not be crushed, and in sickness that they shall not die. How do you

understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been speaking against the monks, and various abuses of the church. He was the first man known to history that preached the gospel in England during the Popish ages—we know him as the Morning Star of the Reformation. He was a man so great that, if he had possessed a printing-press, we might never have needed a Luther; for he had an even clearer light than that great Reformer. He lacked the means of spreading his doctrine, which the art of printing supplied. He did much: he prepared everything to Luther's hand: and Luther was but the proclaimer of Wycliffe's doctrine. Wycliffe was ill—very ill, and the friars came round him, like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity; but they were right glad that their enemy was going to die. So they said to him, "Do you not repent? Before we can give you viaticum—the last oiling before you die—would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars, and his Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past, and give you the last sacrament in peace." Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him sit up; and then he cried with all his strength, "I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord, and to expose the wickedness of the friars." He did not die, either: death himself could not have killed him then; for he had more work to do, and the Lord made him immortal until it was done. How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy brag; but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do, and he felt that he could not die until it was accomplished. Now, do not be making up presentiments about all sorts of things because I have said that sometimes the Lord grants them to his saints. This would be a mischievous piece of absurdity. I remember a young woman, who lived not far from here, who had a presentiment that she would die. I do not think that there was really much the matter with her; but she refused to eat, and was likely to be starved. I went to see her, and she told me that she had a presentiment that she should die, and therefore she should not waste food by eating it. She spoke to me very solemnly about this presentiment, and I replied, "I believe there may be such things." Yes: she was sure I was on her side! Then I went on to say, I once had a presentiment that I was a donkey, and it turned out true in my case; and now I had much the same presentiment about her. This surprised her, and I asked her friends to bring her food. She said she



would not eat it; and then I told her that if she was resolved on suicide, I would mention it at church-meeting that evening, and put her out of the church, since would could not have suicides in our membership. She could not bear to be put out of the church, and began to eat, and it turned out that my presentiment about her was correct; she had been foolish, and she had the good sense to see that it was so. I felt bound to tell you this story, lest you should fancy that I would support you in sentimental nonsense. While there are so many stupid people in the world, we have no need to give cautions where the wise do not need them. Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sore sick; and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

This, however, I only mention by the way. When a believer is in trouble he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God. The Lord scourges his sons, but he does not slay them. The believer says, "My Father may make me smart with the blow of a cruel one; but he will do me no real harm, nor allow anyone else to injure me. He will not lay upon me more than is right, nor above what I am able to bear. He will stay his hand when he sees that I have no strength left. Moreover, I know that even when he brings me very low, still underneath me are the everlasting arms. If the Lord kill, it is to make alive: if he wound, it is that he may heal. I am sure of that." O believer, never let anything drive you away from this confidence, for it has sure truth for its foundation! The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth forever. It is not killing, but curing, that God means when he takes the sharp lancet in his hand. The nauseous medicine, which makes the heart sick, works the cure of a worse sickness. "His compassions fail not." He may often put his hand into the bitter box, but he has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has he forsaken us, but with great mercies will he return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord's fatherly compassion.

Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin, and his security from punishment. Please to notice the very distinct difference between chastisement and punishment. I do

not say between the meaning of the words, but between the two things which just now I would indicate by those terms. Here is a boy who has committed a theft. He is brought before the magistrate that he may be punished. Punitive justice will be executed upon him by imprisonment or by a birch rod. Another boy has also stolen—stolen from his father, and he is brought before his father, not to be punished as a law-breaker, but to be chastised. There is a great difference between the punishment awarded by justice and the chastisement appointed by love. They may be alike in painfulness, but how different in meaning! The father does not give to the child what he would deserve if it were a punishment according to the law, but what he thinks will cure him of wrong-doing by making him feel that his sin brings sorrow. The magistrate, although he desires the good of the offender, has mainly to consider the law in its bearings upon the whole mass of the population, and he punishes as a matter of justice that which wrongs the commonwealth; but the parent acts on other principles. "The Lord hath chastened me sore," and in that he has acted a fatherly part; "but he hath not given me over unto death" which would have been my lot if he had dealt with me as a judge. My heart trembles at his sword, and cries, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." The sentence of justice has been fulfilled upon our Lord, and our comfort is that now there is nothing punitive in all our troubles. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;" nor will he do so, for he has already laid our sins upon Christ, and Christ has vindicated the law by bearing its penalty, so that nothing more in the way of penalty is demanded by the moral government of God. That which we receive from the rod of the Lord bears the blessed aspect of chastening from a father's hand; and this is a gladsome fact, which makes even the sharpest smart to be profitable. "Surely the bitterness of death is past," when, in the case of the believer, even death has ceased to be the penalty of sin, and is changed into a sweet falling asleep upon the bosom of the Well-Beloved, to wake up in his likeness. Every other affliction is changed in the same fashion. Our wasps have become bees: their sting is not the prominent thought, but the honey which they lay up in store. "All things work together for good to them that love God," and chastisement is chief among those "all things." What a well of comforting thought is here!

Furthermore, it is a great blessing to a child of God to feel a full assurance that he has eternal life in Christ Jesus. "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." Notice the words, "Given me over." It is the most awful thing out of hell to be given over by God. I fear that there are some such persons. Does not the psalmist refer to such when he says, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish"? While God's own people are chastened every morning, and plagued all the day long, the ungodly prosper in the world, and increase in riches. Of his chosen the Lord says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But those who are not the Lord's are left unchastened, because the Lord hath said of them, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols." They are allowed their transient mirth; let them make the most they can of it, for their end will be desolation.

Unbroken prosperity and undisturbed health may be the signs of being "given over unto death"; and they are in such cases where sin is committed without pangs of conscience, or apprehensions of judgment. Such freedom from fear may be maintained even in death: "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." All goes quietly with them; "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." But "in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments." To be given over unto death is often followed by callousness, presumption, and bravado; but it is a dreadful doom, the direst sentence from the throne of judgment as to this life. But you, dear child of God, have this comfort, he has not given you over, he is thinking upon you. By scourging you, he is proving that he has not given you over. Men do not prune the vine they mean to uproot; nor thresh out the weeds which they mean to burn. He who is chastened is not given over unto destruction. Years ago, I was taken very ill, in Marseilles, while attempting to come home to England. As I lay in my bed, it seemed as if the cruel mistral wind was driving through my bones, and breaking them with agony. I ordered a fire to be kindled; but when I saw the man begin to light it with a bundle of little branches, I cried out to him, "Pray let me look at that." I found that he was using the dry prunings of the vine, and the tears were in my eyes as I remembered the words—"Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Comfort followed, for I

thought, "I am not unfeeling, like those dried-up shoots; but I am the bleeding vine, which is sharply cut with the pruning-knife; I feel the keen blade in every part of me." Then could I say, "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over." What joy lies in this, "He hath not given me over"! As long as the father chastens his boy, he has hope of him; if he ceased to do so altogether, we might fear that he thought him too bad to be reclaimed. Be glad, then, dear child of God, that since the Lord chastens you sore, he has not erased your name from his heart, and his hands, nor yielded you up to your enemy's power.

Another meaning may be found in this text, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." We are comforted by reliance upon God's power for success in our life-work. The critics said—and I must quote this because this sermon is very much a personal one—the critics said, when the lad commenced his preaching, that it was a nine days' wonder, and would soon come to an end. When the people joined the church in great numbers, they were "a parcel of boys and girls." Many of those "boys and girls" are here to-night, faithful to God unto this hour. Then there came upon us a heavy, heavy stroke—a sore chastening, which those of us who were present would never forget if we live for a century; and we seemed to be made the reproach of all men, through an accident which we could not have foreseen or prevented. But still the testimony for God in this place, by the same voice, has not ceased, nor lost its power. Still the people throng to hear the gospel after these thirty years and more, and still the doctrines of grace are to the front, notwithstanding all opposition. In the darkest hour of my ministry I might have declared, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." If you have been set on fire by a divine truth, the world cannot put an extinguisher upon you. That candle which God has lighted, the devils in hell cannot blow out. If you are commissioned of God to do a work, give your whole heart to it, trust in the Lord, and you will not fail. I bear my joyful witness to the power of God to work mightily by the most insignificant of instruments.

"The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

Once more, though we may die, we are sustained by the expectation of immortality. When we gather up our feet in our last bed, we may utter this text in a full and sweet sense, "I shall not die, but live." When Wycliffe died as to his body, the real Wycliffe did not die. Some of his books were carried to Bohemia, and John Huss learned the gospel from them, and began to preach. They burnt John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; but Huss foretold, as he died, that another would arise after him, whom they should not be able to put down; and in due time he more than lived again in Luther. Is Luther dead? Is Calvin dead to-day? That last man the moderns have tried to bury in a dunghill of misrepresentation; but he lives, and will live, and the truths that he taught will survive all the calumniators that have sought to poison it. Die! Often the death of a man is a kind of new birth to him; when he himself is gone physically, he spiritually survives, and from his grave there shoots up a tree of life whose leaves heal nations. O worker for God, death cannot touch thy sacred mission! Be thou content to die if the truth shall live better because thou diest. Be thou content to die, because death may be to thee enlargement of thine influence. Good men die as dies seed-corn which thereby abideth not alone. When saints are apparently laid in the earth, they quit the earth, and rise and mount to heaven-gate, and enter into immortality. No, when the sepulchre receives this mortal frame, we shall not die, but live. Then shall we come to our true stature and beauty, and put on our royal robes, our glorious Sabbath-dress.

III. So I finish with just two or three words on THE BELIVER'S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Here is declaration. If we had no troubles, we should all have the less to declare. A person who has had no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Such persons despise the afflicted, and suspect the character of the choicest of men, for lack of power to understand them. What does the man know about the sea who has only walked on the beach? Get with an old sailor, who has been a dozen times around the world, and often wrecked, and he will interest you. So the much-tried Christian has great wonders to declare, and these are chiefly the works of the Lord; for "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do

business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble, and how he delivers out of it, and they declare his works openly: they cannot help doing so. They are so interested themselves in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic over it; and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out.

If you read the chapter further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer adoration. They are so charmed with what God has done for them, that they laud and magnify the name of the Lord, saying, "I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." The saints of God, when they are rescued from their sorrows, are sure to sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour."

This done, they make a further dedication of themselves to their delivering God. As the psalm puts it, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." It was very dark! It was very, very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We were frozen with fear. We thought we were as dead men, laid out for burial; when suddenly the Lord's face shown in upon us, and all darkness was gone, and we leaped into joyful security, crying "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticisms—they were impossible. We said, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." In the fourth watch of the night, in the prison where the cold stone shut us in, where the darkness had never known a candle, there a light shone round about us, and an angel smote us on the side, and bade us put on our sandals, and gird ourselves, and follow him. We obeyed the word, and our chains fell off; and when we came to the iron gate which had always been our horror, it opened of its own accord, and we went out into the streets of the city, and we scarcely felt that it could be true, but thought we saw a vision. But when we had considered the thing, and found it was even ourselves, and ourselves set in a large place at perfect liberty, then we said, " Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." God hath showed us light, and we will live to him for ever and for ever. Oh, you, tried believers, who have, nevertheless, not been given over unto

death, who can say to-night, "I shall not die, but live," present yourselves anew unto your delivering Lord as living sacrifices through Jesus Christ your Lord! Amen.

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## **The Great Assize**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. - 2 Corinthians 5:10

This morning we preached concerning the resurrection of the dead, and it seems consistent with order to carry forward our thoughts this evening, to that which follows immediately after the resurrection, namely: THE GENERAL JUDGMENT; for the dead rise on purpose that they may be judged in their bodies. The Resurrection is the immediate prelude to the Judgment. There is no need that I try to prove to you from Scripture that there will be a general judgment, for the Word of God abounds with proof-passages. You have them in the Old Testament. You find David anticipating that great assize in the Psalms (especially in such as the forty-ninth and fiftieth, the ninety-sixth Psalm, and the three that follow it), FOR MOST ASSUREDLY THE LORD COMETH: HE COMETH TO JUDGE THE EARTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Very solemnly and very tenderly does Solomon in the Ecclesiastes warn the young man, that, let him rejoice as he may and cheer his heart in the days of his youth, for all these things God will bring him into judgment; for God will judge every secret thing. Daniel in the night visions beholds the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, and drawing near to the Ancient of Days; then he sits upon the throne of judgment AND THE NATIONS ARE GATHERED BEFORE HIM. It was no new doctrine to the Jews; it was

received and accepted by them as a most certain fact that there would be a day in which God would judge the earth in righteousness. The New Testament is very express. The twenty-fifth of Matthew, which we read to you just now, contains language, which could not possibly be more clear and definite, from the lips of the Saviour himself. He is the faithful witness, and cannot lie. You are told that before him will be gathered ALL NATIONS, and he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Other passages there are in abundance, as, for instance, the one that is now before us, which is plain enough. Another we might quote is in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, from the seventh to the tenth verse. Let Us read it, " And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." The book of the Revelation is very graphic in its depicting that last general judgment. Turn to the twentieth chapter, at the eleventh and twelfth verses. The seer of Patmos says, " And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Time would fail me to refer you to all the Scriptures. It is asserted over and over again by the Holy Spirit, whose Word is truth, that **THERE WILL BE A JUDGMENT OF THE QUICK AND OF THE DEAD.**

Beside that direct testimony, it should be remembered there is a convincing argument that so it must needs be, from the very fact that God is just as the Ruler over men. In all human governments there must be an assize held. Government cannot be conducted without its days of session and of trial, and, inasmuch as there is evidently sin and evil in this world, it might fairly be anticipated that there would be a time when God will go on circuit, and when he will call the prisoners before him, and the guilty



shall receive their condemnation. Judge for yourselves: is this present state the conclusion of all things? If so, what evidence would you adduce of the divine justice, in the teeth of the fact that the best of men are often in this world the poorest and the most afflicted, while the worst of men acquire wealth, practice oppression, and receive homage from the crowd? Who are they that ride in the high places of the earth? Are they not those, great transgressors, who "wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind"? Where are the servants of God? They are in obscurity and suffering full often. Do they not sit like Job among the ashes, subjects of little pity, objects of much upbraiding? And where are the enemies of God? Do not many of them wear purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day? If there be no hereafter, then Dives has the best of it; and the selfish man who fears not God, is after all, the wisest of men and more to be commended than his fellows. But it cannot be so. Our common sense revolts against the thought. There must be another state in which these anomalies will all be rectified. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable," says the apostle. The best of men were driven to the worst of straits in those persecuting times for being God's servants. How say ye then, "Finis coronat opus," the end crowns the work? That cannot be the final issue of life, or justice itself were frustrated. There must be a restitution for those who suffer unjustly: there must be a punishment for the wicked and the oppressor.

Not only may this be affirmed from a general sense of justice, but there is in the conscience of most men, if not of all, an assent to this fact. As an old Puritan says, "God holds a petty session in every man's conscience, which is the earnest of the assize which he will hold by and by; for almost all men judge themselves, and their conscience knows this to be wrong and that to be right. I say 'almost all,' for there seems to be in this generation a race of men who have so stultified their conscience that the spark appears to have gone out, and they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. The lie they seem to approve, but the truth they do not recognize. But let conscience alone and do not stultify her, and you shall find her bearing witness that there is a Judge of all the earth who must do right." Now this is peculiarly the case when conscience is allowed full play. Men who are busy about their work or entertained with their

pleasures, often keep their consciences quiet. As John Bunyan puts it, they shut up Mr Conscience; they blind his windows; they barricade his doors; and as for the great bell on the top of the house, which the old gentleman was wont to ring, they cut the rope of it, so that he cannot get at it, for they do not wish him to disturb the town of Man-soul. But when death comes, it often happens that Mr. Conscience escapes from his prison-house, and then, I warrant you, he will make such a din that there is not a sleeping head in all Man-soul. He will cry out and avenge himself for his constrained silence, and make the man know that there is a something within him not quite dead, which cries out still for justice, and that sin cannot go unchastised. There must be a judgment, then. Scripture asserts it, that would be enough: but by way of collateral evidence the natural order of things requires it; and conscience attests it.

Now we come to consider what our text says about the Judgment. I pray you, brethren, if I should speak coldly tonight on this momentous truth, or fail to excite your attention and stir your deepest emotions, forgive me, and may God forgive me, for I shall have good reason to ask God's forgiveness, seeing that if ever a topic should arouse the preacher to a zeal for the honor of his Lord and for the welfare of his fellow creatures, and so make him doubly in earnest, it is this. But, then, permit me to say, that, if ever there was a theme quite independent of the speaker, which on its own account alone should command your thoughtfulness, it is that which I now bring before you. I feel no need of oratory or of speech well selected: the bare mention of the fact that such a judgment is impending, and will ere long occur, might well hold you in breathless silence, still the very throbbings of your pulse, and choke the utterance of my lips. The certainty of it, the reality of it, the terrors that accompany it, the impossibility of escaping from it, all appeal to us now and demand our vigilance.

I. Ask ye now, who is it, or who ARE THEY THAT WILL HAVE APPEAR BEFORE THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT? The answer is plain; it admits of no exemption: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." This is very decisive, if there were no other text. We must all appear; that is to say, every one of the human race. We must all appear. And that the godly will not be exempted from this appearance is very

clear, for the apostle here is speaking to Christians. He says, "We walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident. We labour" and so on; and then he puts it, "We must all appear." So that, beyond all others, it is certain that all Christians must appear there. The text is quite conclusive upon that point. And if we had not that text, we have the passage in Matthew, which we have read, in which the sheep are summoned there as certainly as are the goats; and the passage in the Revelation, where all the dead are judged according to the things which are written in the books. They are all there. And if the objection should be raised, "We thought that the sins of the righteous being pardoned, and for ever blotted out, they could never come into judgment," we have only to remind you, beloved, that if they are so pardoned and blotted out, as they undoubtedly are, the righteous have no reason to fear coming into judgment. They are the persons who covet the judgment, and will be able to stand there to receive a public acquittal from the mouth of the great Judge. Who, among us, wishes, as it were, to be smuggled into heaven unlawfully? Who desires to have it said by the damned in hell, "You were never tried, or else you might have been condemned as we were." No, brethren, we have a hope that we can stand the trial. The way of righteousness by Christ Jesus enables us to submit ourselves to the most tremendous tests which even that burning day can bring forth. We are not afraid to be put into the balances. We even desire that day when our faith in Jesus Christ is strong and firm; for we say, "who is he that condemneth?" We can challenge the day of judgment. Who is he that shall lay anything to our charge in that day, or at any other, since Christ hath died and hath risen again? It is needful that the righteous should be there that there may not be any partiality in the matter whatever; that the thing may be all clear and straight, and that the rewards of the righteous may be seen to be, though of grace, yet without any violation of the most rigorous justice. Dear brethren, what a day it will be for the righteous! For some of them were—perhaps some here present are—lying under some very terrible accusation of which they are perfectly guiltless. All will be cleared up then, and that will be one great blessing of that day. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. Men call the righteous, fools; then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They hounded them to death, as not being fit to live. In early ages they laid to the Christians charges of the most terrible character, which I

should count it shame to mention. But then they will all be clear; and those of whom the world was not worthy, who were driven and hunted about find made to dwell in the caves of the earth, they shall come forth as worthy ones, and the world shall know her true aristocracy, earth shall own her true nobility. The men whose names she cast out as evil, all then be held in great repute, for they shall stand out clear and transparent without spot or blemish. It is well that there should be a trial for the righteous, for the clearing of them, the vindication of them, and that it should be public, defying the evil and criticism of all mankind.

"We must all appear." What a vast assembly, what a prodigious gathering, that of the entire human race! It struck me as I was meditating upon this subject, what would be the thoughts of Father Adam, as he stood there with Mother Eve and looked upon his offspring. It will be the first time in which he has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children met together. What a sight will he then behold—far stretching, covering all the globe which they inhabit, enough not only to people all earth's plains, but crown her hill-tops, and cover even the ways of the sea, so numberless must the human race have been, if all the generations that have ever lived, or shall ever live, shall at once rise from the dead. Oh, what a sight will that be! Is it too marvelous for our imagination to picture? Yet it is quite certain that the assemblage will be mustered, and the spectacle will be beheld. Every one from before the Flood, from the days of the Patriarchs, from the times of David, from the Babylonian kingdom, all the legions of Assyria, all the hosts of Persia, all the phalanx of the Greeks, all the vast armies and legions of Rome, the barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, the free, men of every color and of every tongue—they shall all stand in that great day before the Judgment Seat of Christ. There come the kings—no greater than the men they call their slaves. There come the princes—but they have doffed their coronets, for they must stand like common flesh and blood. Here come the judges, to be judged themselves, and the advocates and barristers, needing an advocate on their own account. Here come those that thought themselves too good, and kept the street to themselves. There are the Pharisees, hustled by the Publicans on either side and sunk down to the natural level with them. Mark the peasants rising from the soil; see the teeming myriads from outside the great cities streaming in, countless hosts such as no Alexander or

Napoleon ever beheld! See how the servant is as great as his master! "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," are now proclaimed. No kings, no princes, no nobles, can shelter themselves behind their order, assert a privilege or claim an immunity. Alike on one common level they stand together, to be tried before the last tremendous tribunal. There shall come the wicked of every sort. Proud Pharaoh shall be there; Senacherib, the haughty; Herod, that would have slain the young child; Judas, that betrayed his master; Demas, that sold him for gold; and Pilate, who would fain have washed his hands in innocency. There shall come the long list of infallibles, the whole line of popes, to receive their damnation at the Almighty's hands, and the priests that trod upon the necks of nations, and the tyrants that used the priests as their tools—they shall come to receive the thunderbolts of God which they so richly deserve. Oh, what a scene will it be! These little companies, which look to us so large when they are gathered together beneath this roof, how do they shrink into the drop of a bucket as compared with the ocean of life that shall swell around the throne at the last great Judgment day. They shall all be there.

Now, the most important thought connected with this to me, is that I shall be there; to you young men, that you will be there; to you, ye aged of every sort, that you, in propria personae—each one shall be there. Are you rich? Your dainty dress shall be put off. Are you poor? Your rags shall not exempt you from attendance at that court. None shall say—I am too obscure." You must come up from that hiding place. None shall say, "I am too public." You must come down from that pedestal. Everyone must be there. Note the word "We", "We must all appear."

And still further, note the word, "appear." " We must all appear." No disguise will be possible. Ye cannot come there dressed in masquerade of profession or attired in robes of state, but we must appear; we must be seen through, must be displayed, must be revealed; off will come your garments, and your spirit will be judged of God, not after appearance, but according to the inward heart. Oh, what a day that will be when every man shall see himself, and every man shall see his, fellow, and the eyes of angels and the eyes of devils, and the eyes of God upon the throne, shall see us through and through. Let these thoughts dwell upon your minds, while you take this for the answer to our first enquiry, "Who is to be

judged?"

II. Our second question is, Who will be the judge? "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That Christ should be appointed judge of all mankind is most proper and fitting. Our British law ordains that a man shall be tried by his peers, and there is justice in the statute. Now the Lord God will judge men, but at the same time it will be in the person of Jesus Christ the man. Men shall be judged by a man. He that was once judged by men shall judge men. Jesus knows what man should be; he has been under the law himself in deep humility, who is ordained to administer the law in high authority. He can hold the scales of justice evenly, for he has stood in man's place and borne and braved man's temptations; he therefore is the most fit judge that could be selected. I have sometimes heard and read sermons in which the preacher said that a Christian ought to rejoice that his judge is his friend. There may be no impropriety intended, still it seems to me rather a questionable suggestion. I should not like to put it use that way myself; because any judge that was partial to his friends when he sat on the judgment seat would deserve to come off the seat immediately. As a judge I expect no favoritism from Christ. I expect when he sits there he will deal out even-handed justice to all. I cannot see how it is right for any minister to hold it forth that we should find encouragement in the judge being our friend. Friend or no friend, we shall go in for a fair trial every one of us, and Christ will not be a respecter of persons. Of him whom God has appointed to judge the world, it shall not be said when the assize is over that he winked at the crimes of some and extenuated them, while he searched out the faults of others and convicted them. He will be fair and upright throughout. He is our friend, I grant you, and he will be our friend and Saviour for ever; but, as a judge, we must keep to the thought, and believe and maintain it that he will be impartial to all the sons of men. You will have a fair trial, man. He that will judge you will not take sides against you. We have sometimes thought that men have been shielded from the punishment they deserved, because they were of a certain clerical profession, or because they occupied a certain official position. A poor labourer who kills his wife shall be hanged, but when another man of superior station does the like deed of violence, and stains his hands with the blood of her whom he had vowed to love and cherish,

the capital sentence shall not be executed upon him. Everywhere we see in the world that with the best intentions justice somehow or other does squint a little. Even in this country there is just the slightest possible turning of the scale, and God grant that may be cured ere long. I do not think it is intentional; and I hope the nation will not long have to complain about it. There ought to be the same justice for the poorest beggar that crawls into a casual ward, as for his Lordship that owns the broadest acres in all England. Before the law, at least, all men ought to stand equal. So shall it be with the Judge of all the earth. Fiat justia, ruat coelum. Christ will by all means hold the scales even. Thou shalt have a fair trial and a full trial, too. There shall be no concealment of anything in thy favour, and no, keeping back of anything against thee. No witnesses shall be borne across the sea to keep them out of the way. They shall all be there, and all testimony shall be there, and all that is wanted to condemn or to acquit shall be produced in full court at that trial, and hence it will be a final trial. From that court there will be no appeal. If Christ, saith "Cursed!" cursed must they be for ever. If Christ saith "Blessed!", blessed shall they be for aye. Well, this is what we have to expect then, to stand before the throne of the man Christ Jesus the Son of God, and there to be judged.

III. Now the third point is, WHAT WILL BE RULE OF JUDGEMENT? The text says that "every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Then it would appear that our actions will be taken in evidence at the last. Not our profession, not our boastings, but our actions will be taken in evidence at the last, and every man shall receive according to what he hath done in the body. That implies that everything done by us in this body will be known. It is all recorded; it will be all brought to light. Hence, in that day every secret sin will be published. What was done in the chamber, what was hidden by the darkness, shall be published as upon the housetop—every secret thing. With great care you have concealed it, most dexterously you have covered it up; but it shall be brought out to your own astonishment to form a part of your judgment. There, hypocritical actions as well as secret sins will be laid bare. The Pharisee who devoured the widow's house and made a long prayer, will find that widow's house brought against him, and the long prayer too; for the long prayer will

then be understood as having been a long lie against God from beginning to end. Oh, how fine we can make some things look With the aid of paint and varnish and gilt; but at the last day off will come the varnish and veneer, and the true metal, the real substance, will then be seen.

When it is said that everything that is done in the body will be brought up as evidence against us or for us, remember this includes every omission as well as every commission; for that which is not done that ought to have been done is as greatly sinful as the doing of that which ought not to be done. Did not you notice when we were reading the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, how those on the left hand were condemned, not for what they did, but for what they did not do: "I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." Where would some of you stand, according to this rule, who have lived in neglect of holiness, and neglect of faith, and neglect of repentance, before God all your days? Bethink yourselves, I pray you.

Recollect, too, that all our words will be brought up. For every idle word that man shall speak he will have to give an account. And all our thoughts, too, for these lie at the bottom of our actions and give the true colour to them good or bad. Our motives, our heart sins, especially, our hatred of Christ, our neglect of the gospel, our unbelief—all of these shall be read aloud and published unreservedly. "Well," saith one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! indeed, who then can be saved? Let me tell you who will be. There will come forward those who have believed in Jesus, and albeit they have many sins to which they might well plead guilty, they will be able to say, "Great God, thou didst provide for us a substitute, and thou didst say that if we would accept him he should be a substitute for us and take our sins upon himself, and we did accept him and our sins were laid upon him, and we have now no sins; they have been transferred from us to the great Saviour, substitute and sacrifice." And in that day there will be none who can put in a demurrer to that plea: it will hold good; for God has said, "Whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus shall never be condemned." Then will the actions of the righteous, the gracious actions, be brought forth to prove that they had faith. For that faith which never evidences itself by good works is a dead faith and a faith that will never save a soul. Now, if the dying thief were brought up, he would say, "My



sins were laid on Jesus." "Ay, but how about your good works? Thou must have some evidence of thy faith," Satan might reply. Then would the recording angel say, "The dying thief said to his fellow thief who was dying with him, 'Wherefore art thou railing? In his last moments he did what he could; he rebuked the thief that was dying with him and made a good confession of his Lord. There was the evidence of the sincerity of his faith.'" Dear hearer, will there lie any evidence of the sincerity of your faith? If your faith has no evidence before the Lord, what will you do? Suppose you thought you had a faith and went on drinking. Suppose you did as I know some have done here, go straight from this place into the public house? Or suppose you joined the Christian church and remained a drunkard? Ay, and women have done that also as well as men. Suppose you professed to have faith in Christ and yet cheated in your weights and measures and common dealings? Do you think that God will never requite these things at your hands? Oh, sirs, if ye be no better than other men in your conduct, ye are no better than other men in your character, and ye will stand no better than other men in the judgment day. If your actions are not superior to theirs, you may profess what you will about your faith, but you are deceived, and, as deceivers, you will be discovered at the last great day. If grace does not make us differ from other men, it is not the grace which God gives his elect. We are not perfect, but all God's saints keep their eyes on the great standard of perfection, and, with strong desire, aim to walk worthy of their high calling of God and to bring forth works which prove that they love God; and if we have not these signs following faith, or if they are not put in as evidence for us, at the last great day we shall not be able to prove our faith. It will be proof positive that you hated God; for a man must hate God indeed who will spurn his counsels, give no heed to his reproof, scorn his grace, and dare the vengeance of him who points out the way of escape and the path that leadeth to life. He that will not be saved by God's mercy proves that he hates the God of mercy. If God gives his own Son to die and men will not trust in his Son, will not have him as their Saviour, that one sin, if they had no other, would at once prove that they were enemies of God and black at heart. But if thy faith be in Jesus, if thou lovest Jesus, if thy heart goes out to Jesus, if thy life be influenced by Jesus, if thou makest him thy example as well as thy Saviour, there will be evidence—thou canst not see it, but there will be evidence—in thy favour. For notice those gracious

things, when the evidence was brought, and Christ said, "I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink," they said, "O Lord, we never knew this." Should any man stand up here and say, "I have plenty of evidence to prove my faith," I should reply, "Hold your tongue, sir! Hold your tongue! I am afraid you have no faith at all, or you would not be talking about your evidence." But if you are saying, "Oh, I am afraid I have not the evidence that will stand me in good stead at the last," yet if all the while you have been feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and doing all you can for Christ, I would tell you not to be afraid. The master will find witnesses to say, "That man relieved me when I was in poverty. He knew I was one of Christ's and he came and helped me." And another will come and say (perhaps it will be an angel), "I saw him when he was alone in his chamber and heard him pray for his enemies." And the Lord will say, "I read his heart when I saw how he put up with rebuke, and slander, and persecution, and would not make any answer for my sake. He did it all as evidence that my grace was in his heart." You will not have to fetch up the witnesses: the judge will call them, for he knows all about your case; and as he calls up the witness, will be surprised to find how even the ungodly will be obliged to consent to the just salvation of the righteous. Oh, how the secret deeds and the true heart-sincerity of the righteous, when thus unveiled, will make devils bite their tongues in wrath to think that there was so much of grace given to the sons of men, with which to defeat persecution, to overcome temptation, and to follow on in obedience to the Lord. Oh yes, the deeds, the deeds, the deeds of men—not their prating, not their profession, not their talk, but their deeds (though nobody shall be saved by the merits of his deeds)—their deeds shall be the evidence of their grace, or their deeds shall be the evidence of their unbelief; and so, by their works shall they stand before the Lord, or by their world shall they be condemned as evidence and nothing more.

IV. Now the last point is this: What is the object of this judgment? Will sentence of acquittal and condemnation be given, and then the whole thing be over? Far from it. The judgment is with a view to the thereafter—"That every man may receive the things done in his body." The Lord will grant unto his people an abundant reward for all that they have done. Not that they deserve any reward, but that God first gave them grace to

do good works, then took their good works as evidence of a renewed heart, and then gave them a reward for what they had done. Oh, what a bliss it will be to hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant,"—and to find that you have worked for Christ when nobody knew it, to find that Christ took stock of it all,—to you that served the Lord under misrepresentation, to find that the Lord Jesus cleared the chaff away from the wheat, and knew that you were one of his precious ones. For him, then, to say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord," oh, what a bliss will it be to you.

But to the ungodly how terrible. They are to receive the things that they have done; that is to say, the punishment due,—not every man alike, but the greater sinner the greater doom; to the man who sinned against light a greater damnation than to the man who had not the same light,—Sodom and Gomorrah their place, Tyre and Sidon their place, and then to Capernaum and Bethsaida their place of more intolerable torment, because they had the Gospel and rejected it—so the Lord himself tells us. And the punishment will not only be meted out in proportion to the transgression, but it will be a development of the evil actions done in the evil consequences to be endured, as every man shall eat the fruit of his own ways. Sin, after the natural order, ripens into sorrow. This is not a blind fate, but it is the operation of a divine law, wise and invariable. Oh, how dreadful it will be for the malicious man to have for ever to gnaw his own envious heart, to find his malice come home to him, as birds come home to roost, to hoot for ever in his own soul; for the lustful man to feel lust burning in every vein, which he can never gratify;—for the drunkard to have a thirst, which not even a drop of water can allay;—for the glutton who has fared sumptuously every day, to be in hunger perpetually; and the soul that has been wrathful to be for ever wrathful, with the fire of wrath for ever burning like a volcano in his soul; and the rebel against God for ever a rebel, cursing God whom he cannot touch, and finding his curses come back upon himself.

There is no punishment worse than for a man who is sinfully disposed to gratify his lusts, to satiate his bad propensities, and to multiply and fatten his vices. Only let men grow into what they would be, and then see what they would be like! Take away the policemen in some parts of London,

and give the people plenty of money, and let their do just as they like. Last Saturday, it might be, there were half-a-dozen broken heads, and wives and children were in one general skirmish. Keep those people together: let their vigor continue unimpaired by age or decay, while they keep on developing their characters. Why, they would be worse than a herd of tigers! Let them give way to their rage and anger, with nothing to check their passions; let miserly, greedy people for ever go on with their greed. It makes them miserable here, but let these things be indulged in for ever, and what worse hell do you want? Oh, sin is hell and holiness is heaven. Men will receive the things done in their body. If God has made them to love him, they shall go on to love him; if God has made them trust him, they shall go on to trust in him; if God has made them to be like Christ, they shall go on to be like Christ, and they shall receive the things done in their body as a reward; but if a man has lived in sin, "he that is filthy shall be filthy still"; he that has been unbelieving shall be unbelieving still. This, then, shall be the worm that never dieth, and the fire which never shall be quenched, to which shall be added the wrath of God forever and ever. Oh, that we may have grace every one of us to flee to Christ! There is our only safety. Simple faith in Jesus is the basis for the character which will evidence at last that you are chosen of God. A simple belief in the merit of the Lord Jesus, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, is the rock foundation upon which shall he built up, by the same divine hands, the character which shall evidence that the kingdom was prepared for us from before the foundations of the world. God work in us such a character, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Great Change**

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. - Hosea 14:8

This passage is IS in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea's prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." These lovers were the idol gods, and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them." So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols; yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" What a change the grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, "No," for "Yes," and "Yes," for "No." It is a radical change; that which we hated, we come to love; and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, "I will," and "I shall," the grace of God makes us change our note and we say "I will not; by God's grace, I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do any more with idols?"

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, "Have you, my friend, ever experienced this great and total change?" Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord's people. "Ye must be born again," and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is not there. It is the quickening of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was wrought upon the person of our Lord Jesus when, after lying in the

grave dead, he was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you meet to enter heaven. You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus. He that sitteth on the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and he must make you new, or else, into the new kingdom where there is a new heaven and a new earth, you can never come; nay, you cannot even see that kingdom, for our Lord's words are as true to-day as when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let that searching thought remain with you, and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was wrought upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, the character of this change: "Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?" Then, secondly, let us note the cause of this change; and, thirdly, the effect of this change.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE.

Ephraim had been besotted with her idolatry. The Israelites were never contented with idols of one sort; they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites, and to any other ites, to borrow idols. They introduced fresh idols from distant countries, they were never satisfied with the number of their images; yet now, when God has effectually wrought upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Notice, that this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one. Ephraim did not say, "I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not." She did not say, "I should like to set up graven images, but I must not." On the contrary, she herself said, "What have I to do any more with idols?" I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, "So you do not attend the theatre; what a denial it must be to you!" It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these vain things of the world? "Oh, but the drunkard's cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to abjure it!" On the contrary, it is

loathsome to us; we have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup. What have we to do any more with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, "Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!" If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as far as the work of God's Spirit has been wrought upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved, and he has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings,  
—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
It has no charms for me;  
Once I admired its trifles too,  
But grace has set me free.

"Its pleasures now no longer please,  
No more content afford;  
Far from my heart be joys like these,  
Now I have seen the Lord.

"As by the light of opening day  
The stars are all conceal'd;  
So earthly pleasures fade away,  
When Jesus is reveal'd."

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have done with those things, and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once for all!" I asked a convert, this last week, perhaps to a dozen I have put the same question, "My dear brother, are you perfect?" "No, sir," each one has said, "I am not." Then when I have enquired, "Would you not like to be perfect?" the answer in every case has been, "Yes, indeed I would; it would be heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!" So we sing, with Cowper—

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee."

Let the idols go; smash them all up, break them in pieces like potter's vessels. If there be a lust, if there be a passion, if there be a joy, if there be a desire, that is not according to the mind of God, away with it. We cannot endure the evil thing, and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Observe also, that this change is the work of God's effectual grace. Notice the wording of the text: "Ephraim shall say." It is God who says, Ephraim shall say." Perhaps you ask me, "Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart, and of her own free will?" Yes, that is so; but the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man's will, is the Master of that will. There used to be great wars and fightings among Christian people about free will and free grace; and when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of truth that was spoken on both sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that, if there be any good thing, it is all of the grace of God, I know that it is so; but when another declares that man is a free agent, and that, if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it, and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is, and why should we not believe both? Ephraim cheerfully says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" and yet at the back of that, is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Ghost bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God, so that they are fulfilled. For God to work his will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests, is but ordinary omnipotence; but for God to leave men absolutely and responsible agents, and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for him to accomplish his eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, omnipotent omnipotence, this is almighty power carried to a climax. It is just so with the grace of God; we spontaneously quit our sin, but it is because almighty grace is working within us to will and to do of



God's own good pleasure. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" because God in his effectual grace has weaned her from her idols.

Notice next, dear friends, that this change is always a very personal one. Ephraim says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" She does not say, "What have the nations to do with idols?" That would be a wise question; but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much; we say, with Mr. Bunyan, "Those are generals, man, come to particulars." Believe all truth with the general company of those who hold it; but mind that you come to particulars, and say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Do not ask, "What has my mother to do with idols? What has my brother to do with idols? What has my neighbour to do with idols?" but, "What have I to do with idols?" If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to who I am speaking to feel, "God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, wilful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil; I must loathe it and leave it. 'As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.' 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?'" Abhor selfishness and egotism; but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion. You were born alone, and you will die alone, and you have need to be born again individually and personally; and it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can for yourself say, as we did in our singing,—

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:  
He drew me, and I follow'd on,  
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear;  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"What have I to do any more with idols?" The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty; it must be the result of divine grace; and it

must be personal.

And then, dear friends, it must also be a truly repentant change: "What have I to do any more with idols?" There is in that question a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols already. Let the time past suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh. Brother, if thou art resolved to serve God, through his grace, yet ere thou beginnest that service, remember how thou hast in the past served the devil. Quit not thy old way without many a tear of regret, and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever thou mayest do in the future, thou canst not undo the past. Thy wasted time, thy injured faculties, thy angered God, thy friends about thee influenced for evil by thy example, thou canst not blot out all these; therefore, at least stay thou a while, and shed penitent tears over the graves of thy dead sins, and ask thy God to help thee to feel that thou hast had enough of thy evil ways, and sin, and neglect. Say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O self, O world, I have served you all too long; and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to thee!"

This change must also be, dear friends, life-long. Notice two words in our text, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Where the grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of falling from grace afterwards. That is a human conversion which can ever come to an end; but if God converts you, you can never be unconverted. As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to undo it as first did it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian; and unless a stronger than he shall come in, and undo his work, you shall never go back to your old idols again.

"Where God begins his gracious work,  
That work he will complete,  
For round the objects of his love,  
All power and mercy meet.

"Man may repent him of his work,  
And fail in his intent;  
God is above the power of change,

He never can repent.

"Each object of his love is sure  
To reach the heavenly goal:  
For neither sin nor Satan can  
Destroy the blood-wash'd soul."

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance, I would not have it as a gift, and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to heaven, and just take a ticket to the next station; then they get out and take a new ticket, and rush back to the train; and so they keep on. "But," said the man, "when I started I took a ticket all the way through." That is the way to travel to heaven; when you start, get a ticket all the way through. Listen to these words of Christ: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Listen also to the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." O my brothers, God does not play at saving men; first doing the work, and then undoing it. If he saves you, you are saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is the gospel which we are sent to preach to you; so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, "What have I any more to do with idols?"

Perhaps someone asks, "Ay, but do not some professors go back, and do you say that, if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?" Certainly we say nothing of the kind; we say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will not live in sin, but if the work of grace be wrought in them, they will be kept from sin; or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored; weeping and sighing, they shall be brought back again to the good way. We never

said that men could live in sin, and yet go to heaven. That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter; but he who is truly saved is saved once for all, and he can say, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quitted them. He will burn his boats behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quitted once for all. This is a salvation worth having; wherefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be a partaker of it.

Yet once more, notice that this is a very thorough change: "What have I to do any more with idols?" O you who have done with idols, remember that you have also done with the idol temples, you have done with the false priests, you have done with the so-called "sacred thread" and other idolatrous tokens; you have done with everything appertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunkards have done for ever with the public-house and the drunkard's cup. You who once were lascivious, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were aforetime dishonest, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of the trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true believer cry, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Begone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do any more with idols? He quits them once for all, by God's good grace.

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so that I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, **THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT CHANGE.**

The first cause of this change is the grace received. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Then our text naturally follows, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may

exhort you to forsake it; but if, by God's grace, you receive Christ as your Saviour, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence. What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat; and when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh, and the devil. These things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul, and we receive freely of his grace, then we do not need telling, and urging, and driving but we at once say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Another cause of this great change lies in our perception of the beauties of the Lord. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies to know who is speaking. There are often dialogues, and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter that it was the Lord who said, "I have heard him, and observed him;" but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet; and then see whether this is not the, meaning of the passage:—

"I have heard him, and observed him,  
Seen his beauty rich and rare,  
Seen his majesty and glory,  
And his grace beyond compare.

"What have I to do with idols,  
When such visions fill my eye?  
How be occupied with shadows  
When the substance passes by?"

Does the text mean, then, "I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God, and I have observed him; I have heard Christ speak, and I have observed the excellence of his character"? This much I know,—whether that be the teaching of this passage, or not,—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ. O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who

are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard him speak of late, or else he would be made of God unto you wisdom, and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Saviour's bosom, you have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, or you would never be enamoured of this poor, foul, unsavoury world. "I have heard him, and observed him: what have I to do any more with idols?" "I have heard him say, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' I have observed him go up to the cross, and lay down his life for me; 'what have I to do any more with idols?'" When thou, as the bride of Christ, lovest thy first Husband as thou shouldst love him, then thy wanderings will be at an end. When all thy heart goes after the Well-beloved, and he enraptures thee with manifestations of his love and of his grace, then wilt thou say, "What have I to do with idols,—I so favoured, I so enriched with divine blessings, I who am on the road to heaven, I who am so soon to see the face of him I love,—what have I to do with idols?"

That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is wrought in us by the grace of God, and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.

But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is the sense of answered prayer: Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" And God says of Ephraim, "I have heard him." I recollect, even as a child, God hearing my prayer; I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been concerning a mere trifle, but to me as a child it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself, and God heard that prayer, and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know him,—afterwards, when I came to cry to him intelligently, I had this prayer answered, and that petition granted, and many a time since then,—I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say,—many a time since then he has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter; there is

many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week, I have had a love-token from him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears. I asked, and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh, and he had said, "Yes, there, take all you need." Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is answering my prayers, my heart says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knees to men? If I have but to go to God, and wait upon him, and he will give me the desires of my heart, what have I to do with the fretting, and fuming, and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ, and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God. If God, the Jehovah of hosts, be no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why then you will have to do with idols; but if your God is the God that heareth prayer, and if you live in his presence, and you speak to him, and he speaks to you, if you keep up perpetual intercourse with him, so that God can say to you, "I have heard him, and observed him," then I am sure that you will also say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear heart, if you will only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking, you shall receive peace, and pardon, and joy, and rest; and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

"Oh!" says one, "my dear sir, I have been trying to overcome sin, and I cannot." I know you cannot; but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God, and getting the answer, then you will be able to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" You want to wash yourself first, and then to come to the fountain. That will not do; you must come, black as you are, and wash, and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually, and then to come to God to enrich you. No; you must come to him poor, come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the

boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he will give you all you need, and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols, for God has heard me, and he doth observe my soul?"

You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is wrought. I had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I do pray that this change may be wrought in every one of you. Do not wait to have the change wrought, and then come to God, but come to God for it. If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it; but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it. If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to him for more; but if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing, and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, and need, and spiritual beggary and loathsomeness. Come to him just as you are, for he still says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." May his sweet Spirit graciously attract every one of you till you shall be drawn to him, and so drawn from your idols, and to him shall be glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

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## **Great Difference**

Where is the God of judgment? - Malachi 2:17

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. - Malachi 3:18

You were not here, I am thankful to say, [last Sabbath evening](#), for it was your duty and privilege to stay away to give others an opportunity of hearing; but my subject then was our heavenly Father, who maketh his



sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Then I set forth the universal benevolence of God and the way in which he stays the operations of justice to give space for forbearance and longsuffering. Now this fact, this gracious fact, which ought to lead man to repentance, has through the perversity of human nature been used for quite another purpose. Men have said, "He blesses the evil as well as the good. The sun shines on all alike; the rain indiscriminately enriches the field of the churl and the pasture of the generous heart; where is the God of judgment? Is there such a God? Is it not one and the same whether we fear him or disregard him?"

Side by side with this has run another circumstance perhaps even more readily misunderstood. God is in this life preparing his people for a better world and part of that process is effected by trial and affliction, so that it frequently happens that the godly are in adversity while the wicked are in prosperity. Having no such designs toward them as toward his people, the Lord permits the wicked to enjoy themselves while they may; so that oftentimes they are as bullocks fattened in rich pastures, but they forget that they are fattened for the slaughter; while the righteous are brought very low, are often in poverty, frequently in sickness, and not seldom in despondency of spirit, but all to prepare them for the glory land. From the trials of the godly, which are all sent in wisdom and in love, shortsighted man has inferred that God has no regard to human character and even treats those worst who serve him best. In Malachi's days the blaspheming crew even said that God takes sides with the wicked, and they wearied God by saying- "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them." Then again they uttered the old rude but plain-spoken question, "Where is God of judgment?"

Truly brethren, in looking with these poor eyes upon the affairs around us they do appear to be a great tangle and snarl, a mixed medley of strange accidents. We see the true princes of the earth walking in the dust and beggars riding upon horses. We mourn as we see servants of God and heirs of heaven lying, like Lazarus, sick at the gate of the ungodly miser, while the vicious libertine is rioting in luxury and drinking full bowls of pleasure. Until we perceive the clue, providence is a labyrinth into whose

center we can never penetrate. But there is a clue which opens all its secrets. There is a God of judgment, not sitting in heaven in blind indifference, but looking down upon the sons of men and working out purposes of righteousness at all times.

At this time I purpose to speak upon the fact that God doth put a difference between the righteous and the wicked, and makes no mistake between Egypt and Israel. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and in his dealings, which we cannot always understand, he nevertheless hath not confounded his people with the world, nor doth the rod of the wicked rest upon the lot of the righteous. He hath a right hand of acceptance for them that fear him, he hath a left hand of punishment for those that fear him not. This distinction is not so apparent yet as it shall be, but we shall now trace the gradual widening of the division between the two classes, and show that still there is a God of judgment, and that by-and-by even the blindest eye shall be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SIGNS OF SEPARATION between the righteous and the wicked. The first sign is seen in the evident difference of character. "They that feared the Lord" are spoken of. That is to say, there are still some on the face of the earth who believe that there is a God, who believe in the revelation which he has given, who accept the atonement which he has provided, and who delight to be obedient to the will which he has declared. How came they to fear the Lord? The answer is, it is a gift of his grace and a work of his Spirit wherever it is found. It makes a distinction very deep, and very vital, and consequently very lasting, for it shall continue throughout eternity. Let us bless God that in the worst times he still hath a remnant according to the election of grace, and when blasphemers grow bold in sin and say "Where is the God of judgment?" there are at least a few hidden ones who nevertheless look up and behold the Lord exalted above the rage of his foes. There `will always be a band who bow the knee and worship the Most High, because their hearts stand in awe of him. God is beginning to separate his chosen from the world, when he gives them an inward sense of his presence, and a consequent holy fear and sacred awe of him. The dividing work begins here, in the bent and current of the heart.

This difference in real character soon shows itself in a remarkable change of thought and meditation. According to the passage before us, those who are said to "fear the Lord," are also described as those who "thought upon his name." Their thoughts are not always towards the transient things of this world, but they are much engaged with the eternal God and his truth: they are not always grovelling after the creature, but soaring towards the Creator. The Hebrew word has the idea of "counting": they reckon the Lord as the chief consideration when they count up their arguments for action. Others do not take him into the reckoning, they act as if there were no God at all: but the righteous make much of him, and account him to be the greatest factor in all their calculations; they fall back upon God in trouble, and joy most of all in him when they are glad. They reckon not without the Lord of hosts; they say "The best of all is, God is with us." And concerning any action, if it be contrary to his mind, they reject it; if it be according to his will they think upon him, and they delight to carry it out. This makes a great difference in their course of life, and also in their happiness. Dear hearers, I trust there are many among you who can truly say that your meditation of God has been very sweet, you have been glad in the Lord. This, then, is working out a distinction between you and the wicked who forget God. You fear the Lord, and you take delight in meditating upon him in secret, but this the worldling cannot understand.

This makes a distinction between you and the careless, which does not long exist without operating in a further direction: you grow weary of their frivolous conversation, and they cannot endure your serious observations, and so two parties are formed, as of old there were two lines—the sons of God and the children of Cain. You will soon see Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob living over again if you watch the thoughtless worldling and the pious Christian, and mark how much they differ. Hence there grows out of this difference of thought and feeling a separation as to society. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," which shows that they often met, and that they delighted in one another's company. Each man felt himself feeble in the midst of the ungodly, and therefore he sought out a brother that he might be strengthened by association. Each man felt himself to be like a sheep in the midst of wolves, but knowing the nature of sheep to be gregarious, each one sought to his fellow, that they might make up a flock, hoping that, as a

flock, they might gather round the Good Shepherd. Yes, and in the ungodliest times there are not only gracious people here and there, but these chosen souls by some means or other make mutual discoveries, and come together and so form the visible church of the living God. In Rome in the days of the Caesars, when to be a Christian meant to be condemned to die without mercy, if believers could not meet in their houses they would meet in the abodes of the dead, in the Catacombs: but they must meet. It is the nature of God's children that they do not like going to heaven alone, but prefer to go up to the temple in bands and companies, and the more the merrier, as the proverb hath it, for they delight to go with the multitude that keep holy day, and they rejoice to fly in flocks like doves to their windows. There is a divine sweetness in Christian communion, and every true saint delights in it. The essence of our religion is love, and he that loveth not the brethren loveth not God, and lacks an essential point of the Christian character. By the exercise of holy brotherhood the Lord continues to call out his own people, and thus to create a manifest separation. Likeness of character and thought produce a mutual attractiveness, and so a corporate body is formed, and the solitary secret ones become manifest in the mass. The chosen stones are quarried, and are builded into the similitude of a palace; what if I say that they come together bone to his bone to fashion the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This distinct association leads on to a peculiar occupation: for "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." They heard others speak against the Lord, and they resolved to speak too. Of others the Lord complained, "your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord," and these men felt that it would be a shame if they were silent. They did not cast their pearls before swine, yet they wore their pearls where those who were not swine, but saints, could see them. In society where truth would be appreciated they were not backward to declare it: "they spake often one to another." It was a time of noise and tumult, it was a time of speaking very bitterly against the Lord: therefore when they met together they spake for the Lord, and each one opened his mouth, that the Lord might not lack for witnesses. I take it that the expression means that they renewed and repeated their testimony. "They spake often one to another." They said, "Ah, we can answer what the ungodly are saying, our

experience testifies that they speak not aright. It is not a vain thing to serve God. How do you find it, brother?" Then the brother would say, "I find it exceedingly comforting and cheering to my soul. They have said, What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances? but I have found it exceeding profitable, for in keeping his commandments there is great reward." Then a third would say, "It has enriched our souls to walk according to the mind of God, and in the blessed ordinances of his house our souls have been fed and exceedingly nourished." A fourth would add, "The ungodly say it is in vain that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts: do you find it so, brother?" The reply would be, "No, my mournful days have often been most profitable, like the days of shower and cloud, which have most to do with the harvest." "Besides," said another, "we do not walk mournfully before the Lord as a rule, for we rejoice before him, yea, in his name we do exceedingly rejoice." Thus, you see, by their testimony the one to the other they supported each other's minds against the popular infidelities of the time; they set their thoughtful experience against the vicious falsehoods of unbelieving men, and so they both honored God and benefited each other.

When they "spake often one to another" I have no doubt they expressed their affection one for the other. They said, "Let us not marvel if the world hate us: did not our Master say, It hated me before it hated you"? Did he not tell us to beware of man; did he not remind us that our worst enemies should be those of our own household. "Yea, brethren," they would say one to another, "let us love one another, for love is of God." The elders would speak like John the divine and say, "Little children, love one another," and the younger ones would respond by acts and words of loving respect to the older saints. Their mutual expressions of love would increase love. As when we lay live coals together they burn the better, so loving intercommunications increase the heat of affection till it glows like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement flame.

No doubt, for we know by what we see, this speaking one to another assisted each other's faith. One might be weak, but they were not all weak at once; one and another would be strong just then. We all have our ups and downs, but the mercy is that when one is sinking another is rising. It will frequently happen that if the sun does not shine on my side of the

hedge it is shining on yours, and you can tell me that the sun is not snuffed out, but that it will shine on me too by-and-by. Commerce makes nations rich, and Christian intercourse makes believers grow in grace. Speaking often one to another with the view of helping the weak hands and, confirming the feeble knees, is a means of great blessing to the souls of Christians. When they met, one would tell what he knew which his brother might not know, and a third would say, "I can confirm that statement and add something more," and so the first speaker would learn as well as teach. Then a fourth brother would say, "But there is yet another truth which stands in relation to that which you have stated, do not overlook it." Thus by communion in experience, and each one expressing what the Lord had written upon his heart, the whole would be edified in righteousness.

Now, beloved, it is in proportion as the children of God speak often one to another in this way that the church is brought out into a visible condition. A silent church might grope through the world unobserved, but a speaking church, speaking often within itself, is of necessity soon heard beyond the doors of the house in which it dwells. Soon does the sound of gospel music steal over hill and dale. "Their sound hath gone forth throughout all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." The speaking together of assembled saints at Pentecost led to the gift of tongues, and then they spoke so that every man in his own language heard the wonderful works of the Lord. An increase of private communion among the saints would lead to a fuller public communication to the outside, and the world would receive a blessing.

Thus I have shown you that the Lord thus gradually begins to separate a people to himself. The fear of the Lord in the heart, and the thought of God in the mind lead to association in persons of similar mould: hence arises the church. Then the interchange of expression between the godly makes them zealous, and this leads to public testimony, and the people of God are revealed. You will say, that this does not prove that God is dealing differently with them from other men. "Where is the God of judgment?" is the question, and how is it to be answered? My reply is, but in all this the Lord is putting a difference. To work his fear in the heart is an act of sovereign grace, but to enable the soul to find deep enjoyment in

meditating upon divine things, is a reward as well as a gift of grace, and a reward more valuable than if he gave the God-fearing man wealth and fame. Christian society is also no small token of the divine favor, and is another reward of the God-fearing. I do not know how you find it, but I can truly assert that my choicest delights are with the people of God. What a deal some of us owe to Christian fellowship! People whom we should never have known and never have thought of speaking to are now our choicest friends, and have been and are incalculably helpful to us. Christian love has enlarged our family circle wonderfully. We have come to be intertwined the one with the other, and the separate threads have ceased to be such, for they have become a threefold cord which cannot be broken, and this is no small gift of divine grace. Moreover, the communications which have arisen out of this society, in which we have edified one another, have they not been very precious to us? Can you not say you had rather dwell for a day in the courts of the Lord than reign in the tents of wickedness for ages? Is it not so that when we are able to rejoice together, and tell out our experience we find a pleasure which makes the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad? Best of all, it is in the midst of these communications, where holy society yields us gracious fellowship, that God himself is found. This is the grand distinction in God's relation to the universe at this present time, that he is with his people, and they know it; while he is far from the wicked. The Lord hearkened and heard of old, and he hearkens and hears still; and the Lord answers out of his holy place the prayers of his children, and sends tokens of acceptance to those who praise and magnify his name. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." Oh come, let us exult before him, for he is not far away, nor has he hidden his face from us, but he dwelleth between the cherubim and shineth forth among his saints in the person of his dear Son, and manifests himself to us as he doth not to the world. Even now Israel in Egypt is not Egypt, for God is pitying the sighs and cries of his people. Israel in the Arabian desert is not Arabian, for, lo, the fiery cloudy pillar, like an uplifted standard, gathers around it a separated people. Lo, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Even now the faithful in going out from the world and being separate find the promise fulfilled: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is the first answer to the question, "Where is the God of

judgment?" The separation is already beginning; there are signs of it now.

II. Secondly, THERE ARE PREPARATIONS FOR A FINAL SEPARATION, and these are at this moment proceeding. What these preparations are we learn from the sixteenth verse- " The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." There is a day coming in which he will separate the two sorts of men the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. The great net is now dragging the sea- bottom: the day comes when the net shall be hauled in, and drawn to shore. What a medley it contains of good and bad fish, of creeping things, and weeds, and shells, and stones: this mass must be parted. Then will come the putting of the good into vessels and the casting of the bad away. When that is done it will be executed with great solemnity and care. There will be great discrimination used in the dividing of the righteous from the wicked, and as at a trial everything proceeds upon evidence, the separating work is being prepared for us every day, because the evidence is being collected and recorded. The evidence in favor of the righteous might be forgotten if it were not duly preserved, in order that in the day when the separation shall be consummated there may be no mistake, and nobody may be able to challenge the decision of the great Judge.

Recollect this, dear friends, that evidence is being written down in a book- evidence of fidelity to God in evil times. When others were thinking against God, and speaking against God, there were some who spoke on his behalf, because they feared him, and thought upon his name, and their singular conduct was reported upon and chronicled. God's gracious eye never overlooks one single act of decision for him in the midst of blasphemy and rebuke. If the timid girl in the midst of a Christless family still patiently endures reproach, and holds on to her Master's truth, though she cannot speak eloquently, behold it is written in the book. Though her tears may often be her strongest expressions, they are in the book also, and shall not be forgotten. When the workman in the shop speaks a word against filthy language, a word for the sacredness of the Sabbath, a word for his Lord, it is all written in the book of remembrance. A commission is instituted for the collection of evidence as to those that



fear the Lord, and think upon his name. Are you, dear friends, furnishing evidence, do you think, evidence which will prove that you are truly godly? Do you clearly stand out from among your fellows, and are you manifestly separate, so that even Satan himself at the last great day will not be able to challenge the evidence that will be given, that you did indeed fear the Lord when others reviled him?

This evidence is being taken by the Lord himself. There is much consolation in this, because others might be prejudiced, and give an unfavourable view of what we do, but when the Lord himself bears witness the truth will be manifested. "The Lord hearkened and heard." It is a very strong expression; he not only "hearkened" as one trying to hear, but he did actually hear all that was said. What a witness God will be in favor of his saints! If we really fear him and think upon his name he will set our holy fear, and our godly thought, and our gracious talk in evidence on our behalf. He reads our motives, and these are a deep and vital part of character. Others might err, but he cannot: what he hears is accurately heard and correctly understood. Evidence is being collected, then, by a witness who is truth itself. This evidence is before God's eye at all times. If you notice, "the book of remembrance was written before him," as if while every item was being put down, the book lay open before his gaze. From him the record is no more concealed than the act itself: past deeds of virtue are present to his eye. Every recorded act of grace is especially noticed by the Lord, every separate word of faithfulness and act of true God-fearing life is noted, weighed, estimated, valued, and safely preserved in memory to justify the verdict of the last grand dividing day. Do think of it, then, beloved—all that divine grace is working in you of humble faithfulness to God is being recorded. No annual report will proclaim it, it will never be printed in the magazine, nor advertised through the newspapers so as to bring you renown; but a book of remembrance is written before the Lord himself. There it lies before him whose single approval is more than fame. There, read a page- "Such an one thought upon my name; So-and-so spoke to his brother concerning me, and helped to the mutual edification of the body and to the bearing of powerful testimony for the truth against the assaults of error."

This evidence, moreover, dear friends, is of a spiritual kind; and this is

one reason why it is taken down by God and by no one else, for it is evidence concerning the state of the heart in reference to God, and who is to form that estimate, but the Lord who searches the heart. Who is to know the thoughts of the mind, save God alone? There is an ear that hears thought: though it is not indicated by a sound so loud as the tick of a clock, nor so audible as the chirping of a little bird, yet every thought is vocal to the mind of the Most High, and it is written down in the remembrance book. Certain great actions which every man applauds may never go into that book, because they were done from motives of ostentation but the thought which nobody could have known, and which must otherwise have remained in oblivion, is recorded of the Lord, and shall be published at the last assize. Perhaps it ran thus, "What can I do for Jesus? How can I help his poor people? How can I cheer such and such a languishing spirit? How can I defeat error? How can I win a wandering soul for my Master?" Such thoughts as these are reckoned worthy of record and they are supplying evidence which in his gracious love the Lord is collecting, that the sentence of his great tribunal may be justified to all.

That evidence concerns apparently little things, for it mentions that "they shake one to another." Of course people will gossip when they get together: what is there in talk? Oh, but what sort of gossip was it? that is the question. For a holy theme turns gossip into heavenly fellowship. It is written, they "thought upon his name." Surely it is not much to think. Ah brethren, thinking and speaking are two very powerful forces in the world, and out of them the greatest actions are hatched. Thoughts and words are the seeds of far-reaching deeds, and God takes care of these embryos and germs: men do not even know of them and if they did know would not esteem them, but they are put down in the book of remembrance which lies always open before the Most High.

Now, all this is going on every day and every night as certainly as time's sands drop through the hour-glass. Letter after letter, and stroke by stroke, the story is being written in the book of remembrance, and though men see it not the evidence is being gathered up to be used in that dread solemnity, in which, amidst the pomp of angels, the great Infallible shall separate the blessed of his Father from those who are accursed. Thus

every day the God of judgment is working towards the time when even the most careless shall discern between the righteous and the wicked.

III. This brings us to the third point that IN THAT SEPARATION GREAT PRINCIPLES WILL BE MANIFESTED. I shall only have time to mention them rapidly.

First, the principle of election will be displayed. God will have a people who are more his than other men can be. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day." "All souls are mine," saith God, and his witness is true, but he rejects some souls because of sin, and says, "Ye are not my people." As for his chosen, they are his portion, his peculiar treasure, his regalia, his crown jewels, and they shall be his for ever. Then will special love and peculiar choice be manifest, for in the day of the separation it shall be seen that the Lord knoweth them that are his and while he counteth others to be as mere stones of the field he hath set his heart upon the saints who are the gems of his crown.

But then will come as the next principle the fact of essential value: namely, that the Lord's people are not only his, but they are his jewels. There is something in them which grace has put there, which makes them to be more precious than other men. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor": God's grace makes his children to be purer, holier, heavenlier than the rest of mankind; and they are rightly divided from the impure and worthless mass. They will at the last by evidence be proved to have been jewels among men, and nobody shall be able to question their worth. They shall be confessed by all men to have been precious stones and pebbles, gold and dross.

Then will come up the next principle of open acknowledgment. They were the Lord's, and they shall be owned as such. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day." He himself will declare the fact, for it is written, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," and in that day the Lord Jesus will say, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." Oh, what a joy it will be to be thus openly confessed by Jesus himself! Now, we are unknown if we be God's people, for the world knoweth us not because it knew not our Master himself; for we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God; but when he who is our life shall

appear then shall we also appear with him in glory. "Then shall thy righteousness shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Then shall be carried out the principle that there is nothing hid which shall not be known; and those who were secretly servants of the Lord shall have evidence of that fact read aloud before assembled worlds, and God, the judge of all, shall not be ashamed to declare, "They are mine, they are my peculiar treasure."

But even in their case the principle of mercy will be conspicuous. I want you to notice very specially. "When I make up my jewels they shall be mine, and I will spare them." Sparing applies to those who under another mode of judgment would not escape. Had it been a question of merit as under law, they would have been doomed as well, as others, but the Lord saith, "I will spare them." O God, even though thou hast made thy chosen to be thy treasure, yet thou dost spare them, for the evidence does not prove them meritorious, but shows that they were saved in Christ Jesus, and therefore taught to fear thee. When the apostle had received great kindness from a friend whom he had valued he offered a prayer for him, which you may be sure would be a very earnest and comprehensive one, but it was this: "The Lord have mercy upon him in that day." That is all we can expect, and, blessed be God, it is all we need. The matter of justice is settled by our Great Substitute, and to us mercy comes freely. The brightest saint that ever reflected the image of Christ on earth will have to be saved by mercy from first to last. "I will spare them," saith he, for he might have dealt otherwise with them had he taken them on grounds of law, and judged them apart from the mercy which flows through the atoning sacrifice. True, they were jewels, and they were the Lord's own treasure, but if he had laid up their sins in evidence instead of their marks of grace, if that book of remembrance which is written before him had contained an account of their shortcomings and their transgressions as the basis of judgment, it would have gone otherwise with them, but now he calls to remembrance their godly fear, their sacred thoughts; and their holy conversation, and therefore he spares them.

They will be dealt with on the principle of relationship also. "I will spare them as a man spareth his own that serveth him." You spare your son when you know he is doing his best to serve you. He has made a

blunder, and if he had been a mere hired servant you might have been angry, but you say, "Ah, I know my boy was doing all he could, and he will do better soon, and therefore I cannot be severe. I see that he is imperfect, but I see equally well that he loves me, and acts like a loving son." The word here used signifies pity or compassion, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He will even at the last look upon us with a love which has pity mingled with it, for we shall need it in that day. He will "remember that we are dust," and will accept us, though, cognizant of all the faults there were, and of all the infirmities that there had been: he will accept us still, because we are his own sons in Christ Jesus, and by grace desire to serve him. We do not serve him to become sons, but because we are sons. It is a sweet name for a child of God: a son-servant, one who is a servant to his father, and therefore, because he is his son, serves not for wage, nor of compulsion, but out of love. Such service is mentioned as evidence of sonship, and not as a claim; and we shall be saved through grace, our holy service of sonship being the proof of that grace.

Beloved, on these principles will God make the final division. He will say "You are mine: I chose you. You are my saints, and there is a gracious excellence in you. I acknowledge you as mine, and I am not ashamed to do so, for you bear my nature. I chose you in mercy, and in consequence of my having chosen you, I have made you to be my sons servants, and so I accept your holy conversation as the token of your sincere love to me, and I receive you into my glory to be mine for ever and ever.

IV. And now, lastly, comes the sure truth that **THE SEPARATION ITSELF WILL BE CLEAR TO ALL**. Then shall ye mourn ye sorcerers and adulterers, ye that oppress the hireling and turn aside the stranger from his right, ye false swearers and enemies of God. You now can go on your way and say, "God cares nothing about righteous or wicked, he deals with all alike, or even smites his children worst of all;" but ye shall look another way by- and-by. Compelled to turn your heads in another direction from that of this poor fleeting world, you shall see something that will astound you; for though you wish it not, even you and much more the godly shall then "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

The division will be sharp and decisive. Wherever you read in the Bible you find only two classes; you never read of three; but you find the righteous and the wicked, him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. A certain order of persons puzzle us in making division here below, because we do not know to which party they belong; but when the book of remembrance is finished and shall be opened, there will be no sort of difficulty in knowing them; the two classes shall roll apart like the two portions of the Red Sea when Moses lifted up his rod, and there shall be a space between. On which side, my dear hearer, you that are halting between two opinions,-on which side will you be? There will be no border land, no space for non-committal and neutrality; you will then be among the fearers of God or among those that fear not his name. Who may abide the day of his coming? That coming may be very speedy, for none of us knoweth the day nor the hour when the Son of man shall appear. The separation will be sharp and decisive, there will be no undecided ones left.

And it will obliterate a host of pretensions, for the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud shall be as stubble. The Pharisee who thought he took his place among those that were the jewels of creation, will find that the coming of the Lord will burn up his phylacteries, and his broad hems, and utterly consume all his boasting as to fasting thrice in the week, and taking mint and anise and cummin, for these things were never written in the book, nor worth recording there. What was put there was fearing the Lord, and thinking upon his name, and speaking one to another; but ceremonials and niceties of observance are not thought worth a stroke of the recording pen. There is nothing in the book to act as evidence for the proud, but everything to condemn him; and therefore the day shall burn him up and utterly consume him and his hopes.

That division will be universal, for all they that do wickedly shall be as stubble, not one of them escaping. Though they hid their wickedness and bore a good name, though they concealed their sin even from those who watched them, they entered the church and gained honors in it, as Judas did in the college of the apostles; yet that day shall discover all that do wickedly. Talk how they may, and speak as they please, their outward conduct will be the index of their inner alienation from God, and in the

hour of their judgment the fire shall consume them from off the earth.

Then shall both classes perceive that the distinction involves two very different fates. Once the righteous were in the fire, and according to the third chapter and the third verse, the Lord sat as a refiner and purified them in a furnace like silver, but now the tables are turned, and the proud, and they that do wickedly, are in a more terrible fire. The day shall burn as an oven! The righteous were profited by their fire, for they were good metal, and to part with the dross was no loss, but the wicked are such base metal that they shall utterly fail in the testing fire. The tables will be turned again, for the righteous were under the feet of the wicked, they ridiculed and mocked them, and called them "cants and hypocrites"; but then the ungodly shall be laid low, and the righteous shall tread them as ashes under their feet. The cause of evil will be a worn out thing, it will be burnt up, and there will be nothing left of it upon the earth but memories of its former power, and of the fire by which it perished. That day cometh, and let the mighty ones amongst the sons of men who rebel against God know it: they shall no more be able to resist the terror of his presence than the stubble is able to stand against the blazing fire. When they pine for ever in the place where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched they will know the God of judgment, and see how utterly he consumed them out of the land.

Look at the lot of the righteous. When Christ the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon the earth and gild it with his own light there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and the righteous shall go forth and leap for joy, like cattle which aforetime had been penned in the stall. No works of the ungodly shall be left. As far as this world is concerned they shall be utterly and altogether gone. There shall then be no tavern songs or ale-house ribaldry; there shall be no village profligate around whom shall gather the youth of the hamlet to be led away by his libidinous and blasphemous words: there shall then be no shameless reviler who shall provide a hall where blasphemers may congregate to try which can utter the blackest profanities against the Lord of hosts. There shall be no shrine of virgin, or of saint, or idol, or image, or crucifix. Superstition shall be swept away. There shall be no congregations where pretended preachers of the gospel shall deal out new philosophies and suggest newly invented

septicisms, or which at least they hoped men would accept as new, though they were the old errors of the past picked from off the dunghill upon which they had been thrown by disgusted ages. Sin shall all be gone and not a trace of it shall be left, but here shall dwell righteousness and peace; the meek shall inherit the earth, and the saints shall stand each one in his lot, for the Lord himself shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously. From every hill and every vale shall come up the one song of glory unto the Most High and every heart that beats shall magnify his name, who at last has answered the question, "Where is the God of judgment?" Then, cast into the nethermost hell, in the place appointed for the devil and his angels, the ungodly shall never ask again, "Where is the God of judgment?" and saints triumphant in their Lord, with whom they shall reign for ever in eternity, shall also perceive that he "discerneth between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Beloved hearer, where? O where will you be? Where shall I be?-in that day?

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## **The Great Reservoir**

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. -  
Proverbs 4:23

If I should vainly attempt to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes, out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were wont to march. As was the city, such were her armies, as was her inward strength, such were they who came forth of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart, because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the



citadel and armory of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy, and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil, the whole land must be overrun thereby. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform, by a humble metaphor and a simple figure, which will be easily understood; I shall endeavor to set forth the wise man's doctrine, that our life issues from the heart, and thus I shall labor to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes - the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart, and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, "If a man's life be wrong, it is better to alter the principles upon which his conduct is modeled: we had better adopt another scheme of living; society must be re-modeled, so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues, and less temptation to indulge in vice." It is as if, when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid, some sage counsellor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up, and fresh pipes laid down, so that the water might run through fresh channels; but who does not perceive that it would be all in vain, if the fountain-head were polluted, however good the channels. So in vain the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives; in vain the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness, unless the heart be right, the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground, and fail to effect its design. Others say, "Well, if the life be wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right: you must inform man's judgment, educate him, teach him better, and when his head is well informed, then his life will be improved. Now, understanding is, if I

may use such a figure, the stopcock which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them; and it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on, in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be obviated. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams, until we had first of all purged the cistern whence they flowed. The Arminian divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man's life. He deals with the will. He says, the will must first of all be conquered, and if the will be right, then every thing will be in order. Now, will is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountain-head along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwellings. The learned counsellor proposes that there should be a new steam-engine employed to force the water along the pipes. "If," says he, "we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well." No, sir, if the stream be poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds, and you may have a machine that is made of gold, and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accomplished your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain, and purged the issues of life which flow therefrom. The wise man in our text seems to say, "Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place." It is very necessary the understanding should be right; it is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance; it is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition; "but," says he, "if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and when you have purged it, when you have made its waters pure and limpid, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water; but not till then." Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, "Is my heart right in the sight of God?" For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, our heart is full of rottenness, filth, and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin, if it be real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in thine ear: - "It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell therein. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new

appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labor to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?"

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the stream of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

I. First, keep the heart full. However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to provide us with an abundant supply of water, unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; and let the machinery be never so accurate, let every thing else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people - (you are sure to meet with them in your own society, and your own circle; for I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances) - whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing emptiness. They never accomplish anything; they have no mental force; they have no moral power; what they say, nobody thinks of noticing; what they do is scarcely ever imitated. We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable, that even their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves, and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people, who if they were to espouse a cause, and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck. Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office, without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a doit. If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just the flats, preyed on by the sharpers in the world; they have no manly strength, no

power at all. See these people in religion: it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments, it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of others. Put them in the pulpit: they are the slaves of the deacons, or else they are over-ridden by the church; they never have an opinion of their own, can not come out with a thing; they have not the heart to say, "Such a thing is, and I know it is." These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned, they might almost as well never have been created, except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men's heads: "Such a one," they say, "could not get on; he had a small head; it was clean impossible for him to prosper, his head was small, he could not do anything; he had not enough force." Now, that may be true; but I know what was truer still - he had got a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man's force in the world, other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man: if he be erroneous, then he is powerful for error; if the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious, even though it may be a downright falsehood. Let a man be never so ignorant, still if his heart be full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object, because he has got heart-power, heart-force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object, and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated, and will glory in his defeat. **HEART IS POWER.** It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. Men do not feel what they are at. Now, the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business, is more likely to prosper than anybody else. That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head - the more he knows the better; but, after all, give him a big heart; and when his heart beats, if his heart be full, it will, under God, either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him; or else make them conscious that he is laboring hard to compel them to follow. O! if we had more heart in our Master's service, how much more labor we could endure. You are a Sunday-school teacher, young man, and you are complaining that you can not get on in the Sunday-school. Sir, the service-pipe would give out plenty of water if the

heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. O, strive to love your work more, and then when your heart is full, you will go on well enough. "O," saith the preacher, "I am weary of my work in preaching; I have little success; I find it a hard toil." The answer to that question is, "Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching, and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching; and your heart being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment. O for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question - "But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If thou hast all thy springs in God, thy heart will be full enough. If thou dost go to the foot of Calvary, there will thy heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If thou dost frequent the vale of retirement, and there talk with thy God, it is there that thy heart shall be full of calm resolve. If thou goest out with thy Master to the hill of Olivet, and dost with him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will thy heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If thou dost continually draw thine impulse, thy life, the whole of thy being from the Holy Spirit, without whom thou canst do nothing; and if thou dost live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of thy having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer - he who lives with little prayer - he who seldom reads the Word - he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high - he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God - who spends much time in holy retirement - who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High - whose soul is given up to Christ - who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent - such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a life that will speak from the sepulcher, and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the

Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and thou mayest as well not have lived at all.

2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full, if they did not also keep them pure. I remember to have read a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town, that a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company, large eels having crept down the pipe, and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean; and unless the water comes from a pure spring, and is not impregnated with deleterious substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail of satisfying or of benefiting its customers. Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure; for if the heart be not pure, the life can not be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy; when he speaks he lards his language with oaths; his mind is low and groveling; none but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him, for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life; but still, at the same time he likes filthiness; any low joke, anything that will in some way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires. For the ways of God he has no relish; in God's house he finds no pleasure, in his Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family connections - because of the situation in which he stands - because of his early education, and all that. No, no; the simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other inquiry; the heart is not right; for, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor: - "A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained; and this led him to observe. We have here an emblem of our thoughts, words, and works. Our heart is defiled by sin, and hence a taint of sinfulness cleaves unfortunately to everything we take in hand; and although, from

the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the omniscient, holy, and righteous God." Whence come our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. O how needful that the main-spring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition.

Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. Thou sayest, "How can I do this?" Well, there was of old a stream of Marah, to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink; and when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though their tongues were like torches, and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree on which the Saviour hung, the cross. Take that tree, put it into your heart, and though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature, and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us sanctification. Elijah cast salt into the waters; but we must cast the blood of Jesus there. Once let us know and love Jesus, once let his cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight, the heart will beam its cleansing, and the life will become pure also. Oh! that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the cross in the heart! Christian man! love thy Saviour more; cry to the Holy Spirit that thou mayest have more affection for Jesus; and then, how ever gainful may be thy sin, thou wilt say with the poet,

"Now for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss;  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross."

The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses

the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, "for out of it are the issues of life."

3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention; that is to say, if their water be pure, and the reservoir be full, they need not care to keep it peaceable and quiet, for let it be stirred to a storm, we should receive our water in the same condition as usual. It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm doth not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves. Let us just understand this, first, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember, that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled the whole life must be troubled too. There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison, and had there exhibited, to the wonderment of all who saw him, the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of execution, brought out, and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position he craved permission to speak once more to the Judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, was required to be also present at the execution. After repeatedly refusing, the judge at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus: You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles' Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end). Now, then, sir, he proceeded to say, I have but one last request to make, which is, that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast and then upon your own, and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or



yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with alacrity and joy, to go and be with Christ, in whom I have always believed; what your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself. The judge could make no answer, and commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr."

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, "David's heart smote him." The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt; it is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night, and with a full confession of sin, express your faith in Christ, then you may "dread the grave as little as your bed." Rise in the morning and give your heart to God, and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein, and you may go into the world, and were it full of lions and of tigers you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion's den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the second place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives, and as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men - I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there - men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight - always quarreling, and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way - that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at, and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble, because we should be mortally offended, because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities. I do not know whether that is true of all of us, but it is of some. You can not sit with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against every body and every thing they saw.

They talk about ministers: one man's doctrine is too high, another's is too low; one man they think is a great deal too effeminate and precise, another they say is so vulgar they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people; of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? Whence arises this continual snarling? The heart must again supply the answer, they are morose and sullen in the inward parts, and hence their speech betrayeth them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell in their hearts - "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the eleventh commandment was never written there. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That they forgot. Oh! dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love, and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged, so that you may have enough to send out service-pipes to all God's people throughout the habitable globe; so that whenever you meet a man who is a true-born heir of heaven, he has nothing to do but to turn to the tap, and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep thine heart peaceable, that thy life may be so; for out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again, we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee lake said to the storm "Be still," can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto him. He still sleeps in the vessel with his church. Ask him to awake, lest your piety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto him that he may give your heart peace and happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful; spend ye it where ye may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the water-works company have gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to, and that is, they must take care they do not attempt too much,

or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city, and another main pipe to serve another, and the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams, what would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, man's heart is after all so little, that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow; and my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, Keep your heart undivided. Suppose you see a lake, and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it: why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country; there will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer, and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream. Now, a man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. Ye must not give half your love to Christ, and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the heart to serve the two. Alas! many people try this, and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world, and another part he allowed to drip into the church, and the effect has been this: when he came into the church he was suspected of hypocrisy. "Why," they said, "if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did, and then come and profess so much to-day?" The church looks upon him as a suspicious one: or if he deceive them they feel he is not of much use to them, because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him, and the church will not have him; he wants to go between the two, and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man: he tried it, and it was very awkward work indeed; but I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street, and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them, or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing. Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them, and I would not pretend to be religious; but if Christ be Christ, and if God be God, let us give our whole hearts to him, and not go shares with the world. Many a church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner: His sun is very low indeed - it

has not much light, not much heat, and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows, and this man stands on the world's side of the street, and casts a long shadow right across the road, to the opposite side of the wall just across the pavement. Ay, it is all we get with many of you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine; you are capsized; you join the church; and what we get is just your shadow; there is your substance on the other side of the street, after all. What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its slough behind. They give us their slough, their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was, and then they go themselves hither and thither after their own wanton wills; they give us the outward, and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this, Christian! Thy master gave himself wholly for thee; give thyself unreservedly to him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of thy heart; labor to have but one object, and one aim. And for this purpose give God the keeping of thine heart. Cry out for more of the divine influences of the Holy Spirit, that so when thy soul is preserved and protected by him, it may be directed into one channel, and one only, that thy life may run deep and pure, and clear and peaceful; its only banks being God's will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by: "Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parceled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honor, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts, that shared him among them, now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldest know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew."

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one perhaps. Once upon a time,

when one of our kings came back from a captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water, they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say, that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. Ye have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard's life was not like our poor common lives; he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus: when you talked yourself, you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff; but when he talked to you, there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity, and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctuous as the words of such an one! Oh! I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color, and as pure a taste as the acts of so-and-so. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house, instead of my poor dross," Well, Christian, this should teach thee to keep thine heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make thy heart rich with precept, rich with understanding; and then thy conversation, when it flows from thy mouth, will be like thine heart, rich, unctuous, and savory. Make thy heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from thy hand will be just as rich and generous as thine heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in thine heart, and then out of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christians, to the great mine of riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make thy heart rich unto salvation. So shall thy life and conversation be a boon to thy fellows; and when they see thee, thy face shall be as the angel of God. Thou shalt wash thy feet in butter and thy steps in oil; they that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see thee, and men shall do thee reverence.

But one single sentence, and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts

of stone. Do you feel today that you have a stony heart? Go home, and I pray the Lord hear my desire that thy polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, "Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh;" for a stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, an unpeaceful heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty-stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness, and thou canst neither bless thyself nor others, if thy heart be such. O Lord Jesus! wilt thou be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Wilt thou break the rock in pieces, and put flesh instead of stone, and thou shalt have the glory, world without end!

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## **The Great Revival**

The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. - Isaiah 52:10

When the heroes of old prepared for the fight they put on their armour; but when God prepares for battle he makes bare his arm. Man has to look two ways - to his own defence, as well as to the offence of his enemy; God hath but one direction in which to cast his eye - the overthrow of his foeman, and he disregards all measures of defence, and scorns all armour. He makes bare his arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old, who, when he went to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. "Such things as they," said he, "I need not fear; they have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their scimitar." Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of his dignity, and making bare his arm, that he may do his work in earnest, and accomplish his purpose for the establishment of his church.

Now, leaving the figure, which is a very great one, I would remind you that its meaning is fully carried out, whenever God is pleased to send a great revival of religion. My heart is glad within me this day, for I am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness, by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States. Some hundred years, or more, ago, it pleased the Lord to send one of the most marvellous religious awakenings that was ever known; the whole of the United States seemed shaken from end to end with enthusiasm for hearing the Word of God; and now, after the lapse of a century, the like has occurred again. The monetary pressure has at length departed; but it has left behind it the wreck of many mighty fortunes. Many men, who were once princes, have now become beggars, and in America. more than in England, men have learned the instability of all human things. The minds of men, thus weaned from the earth by terrible and unexpected panic, seem prepared to receive tidings from a better land, and to turn their exertions in a heavenly direction. You will be told by any one - who is conversant with the present state of America, that wherever you go there are the most remarkable signs that religion is progressing with majestic strides. The great revival, as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants; it is the theme of every newspaper; even the secular press remark it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever, fear has taken hold of the hearts of men; a thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once; and it is affirmed by men of good repute, that there are, at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary unconverted person. So marvellous - I had almost said, so miraculous - has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us. Now, as you are aware, I have at all times been peculiarly jealous and suspicious of revivals. Whenever I see a man who is called a revivalist, I always set him down for a cipher. I would scorn the taking of such a title as that to myself. If God pleases to make use of a man for the promoting of a revival, well and good; but for any man to assume the title and office of a revivalist, and go about the country, believing that wherever he goes he is the vessel of mercy appointed to convey a revival of religion, is, I think, an assumption far too

arrogant for any man who has the slightest degree of modesty. And again, there are a large number of revivals, which occur every now and then in our towns, and sometimes in our city, which I believe to be spurious and worthless. I have heard of the people crowding in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening, to hear some noted revivalist, and under his preaching some have screamed, have shrieked, have fallen down on the floor, have rolled themselves in convulsions, and afterwards, when he has set a form for penitents, employing one or two decoy ducks to run out from the rest and make a confession of sin, hundreds have come forward, impressed by that one sermon, and declared that they were, there and then, turned from the error of their ways; and it was only last week I saw a record of a certain place, in our own country, giving an account, that on such a day, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. So-and-so, seventeen persons were thoroughly sanctified, twenty-eight were convinced of sin, and twenty-nine received the blessing of justification. Then comes the next day, so many more; the following day, so many more; and afterwards they are all cast up together, making a grand total of some hundreds, who have been blessed during three services, under the ministry of Mr. So-and-so. All that I call farce! There may be something very good in it; but the outside looks to me to be so rotten, that I should scarcely trust myself to think that the good within comes to any very great amount. When people go to work to calculate so exactly by arithmetic, it always strikes me they have mistaken what they are at. We may easily say that so many were added to the church on a certain occasion, but to take a separate census of the convinced, the justified, and the sanctified, is absurd. You will, therefore, be surprised at finding me speaking of revival; but you will, perhaps, not be quite so surprised when I endeavour to explain what I mean by an earnest and intense desire, which I feel in my heart, that God would be pleased to send throughout this country a revival like that which has just commenced in America, and which, we trust, will long continue there.

I should endeavour to mark, in the first place, the cause of every revival of true religion; secondly, the consequences of such revival; then, thirdly, I shall give a caution or two, that we make not mistakes in this matter, and conceive that to be God's work which is only man's; and then I shall conclude by making an exhortation to all my brethren in the faith of



Christ, to labour and pray for a revival of religion in the midst of our churches.

I. First, then, THE CAUSE: OF A TRUE REVIVAL. The mere worldly man does not understand a revival; he cannot make it out. Why is it, that a sudden fit of godliness, as he would call it, a kind of sacred epidemic, should seize upon a mass of people all at once? What can be the cause of it? It frequently occurs in the absence of all great evangelists; it cannot be traced to any particular means. There have been no special agencies used in order to bring it about - no machinery supplied, no societies established; and yet it has come, just like a heavenly hurricane, sweeping everything before it. It has rushed across the land, and of it men have said, "The wind bloweth, where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." What is then, the cause? Our answer is, If a revival be true and real, it is caused by the Holy Spirit, and by him alone. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, and preached that memorable sermon by which three thousand persons were converted, can we attribute the remarkable success of his ministry to anything else but the ministry of the Holy Spirit? I read the notes of Peter's discourse; it was certainly very simple; it was a plain narration of facts; it was certainly very bold, very cutting, and pointed, and personal, for he did not blush to tell them that they had put to death the Lord of life and glory, and were guilty of his blood; but on the mere surface of the thing, I should be apt to say that I had read many a sermon far more likely to be effective than Peter's; and I believe there have been many preachers who have lived, whose sermons when read would have been far more notable and far more regarded, at least by the critic, than the sermon of Peter. It seems to have been exceedingly simple and suitable, and extremely earnest, but none of these things are so eminently remarkable as to be the cause of such extraordinary success.

What, then, was the reason? And we reply, once more, the same word which the Holy Spirit blesses to the conversion of one, he might, if he pleased, bless to the conversion of a thousand: and I am persuaded that the meanest preacher in Christendom might come into this pulpit this morning, and preach the most simple sermon, in the most uneducated style, and the Holy Spirit, if so he willed it, might bless that sermon to the

conversion of every man, woman, and child, within this place: for his arm is not shortened, his power is not straitened, and as long as he is Omnipotent, it is ours to believe that he can do whatsoever seemeth him good. Do not imagine, when you hear of a sermon being made useful, that it was the sermon itself that did the work. Conceive not, because a certain preacher may have been greatly blessed in the conversion of souls, that there is anything in the preacher. God forbid that any preacher should arrogate such a thing to himself. Any other preacher, blessed in the same manner, would be as useful, and any other sermon, provided it be truthful and earnest, might be as much blessed as that particular sermon which has become notable by reason of the multitudes who by it have been brought to Christ. The Spirit of God, when he pleaseth, blows upon the sons of men. He finds a people hard and careless; he casts a desire into their minds - he sows it broadcast in their spirits - a thought towards the house of the Lord, and straightway, they know not why, they flock in multitudes to hear the Word preached. He casts the seed, the same seed, into the preacher's mind, and he knows not how, but he feels more earnest than he did before. When he goes to his pulpit, he goes to it as to a solemn sacrifice, and there he preaches, believing that great things will be the effect of his ministry. The time of prayer cometh round; Christians are found meeting together in large numbers; they cannot tell what it is that influences them, but they feel they must go up to the house of the Lord to pray. There are earnest prayers lifted up; there are earnest sermons preached, and there are earnest hearers. Then God the Almighty One is pleased to, soften hard hearts, and subdue the stout-hearted, and bring them to know the truth. The only real cause is, his Spirit working in the minds of men.

But while this is the only actual cause, yet there are instrumental causes; and the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus. Why, brethren, we want every now and then a reformation. One reformation will never serve the church; she need's continually to be wound up, and set a-going afresh; for her works run down, and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out, began to be a little modified, until layer after layer was deposited upon them, and at last the old rocky truth was covered up, and there grew upon the superficial

subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors, that looked fair and beautiful, but were in no way whatever related to the truth, except as they were the products of its decay. Then there came bold men who brought the truth out again, and said, "Clear away this rubbish; let the blast light upon these deceitful beauties; we want them not; bring out the old truth once more!" And it came out. But the tendency of the church perpetually is, to be covering up its own naked simplicity, forgetting that the truth is never so beautiful as when it stands in its own unadorned, God-given glory. And now, at this time, we want to have the old truths restored to their places. The subtleties and the refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the school-men, and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system, but have not felt the power of it in their hearts; and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

But added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the church. All in vain the most indefatigable ministry, unless the church waters the seed sown, with her abundant tears. Every revival has been commenced and attended by a large amount of prayer. In the city of New York at the present moment, there is not, I believe, one single hour of the day, wherein Christians are not gathered together for prayer. One church opens its doors from five o'clock till six, for prayer; another church opens from six to seven, and summons its praying men to offer the sacrifice of supplication. Six o'clock is past, and men are gone to their labour. Another class find it then convenient - such as those, perhaps, who go to business at eight or nine-and from seven to eight there is another prayer meeting. From eight to nine there is another, in another part of the city, and what is most marvellous, at high noon, from twelve to one, in the midst of the city of New York, there is held a prayer meeting in a large room, which is crammed to the doors every day, with hundreds standing outside. This prayer meeting is made up of merchants of the city, who can spare a quarter of an hour to go in and say a word of prayer, and then leave again; and then a fresh company come in to fill up the ranks, so that it is supposed that many hundreds assemble in that one place for prayer

during the appointed hour. This is the explanation of the revival. If this were done in London-if we for once would outvie old Rome, who kept her monks in her sanctuaries, always at prayer, both by night and by day, - if we together could keep up one golden chain of prayer, link after link of holy brotherhood being joined together in supplication, then might we expect an abundant outpouring of the Divine Spirit from the Lord our God. The Holy Spirit, as the actual agent - the Word preached, and the prayers of the people, as the instruments - and we have thus explained the cause of a true revival of religion.

II. But now what are THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? Why, the consequences are everything that our hearts could desire for the church's good. When the revival of religion comes into a nation, the minister begins to be warmed. It is said that in America the most sleepy preachers have begun to wake up; they have warmed themselves at the general fire, and men who could not preach without notes, and could not preach with them to any purpose at all, have found it in their hearts to speak right out, and speak with all their might to the people. When there comes a revival, the minister all of a sudden finds that the usual forms and conventionalities of the pulpit are not exactly suitable to the times. He breaks through one hedge; then he finds himself in an awkward position, and he has to break through another. He finds himself perhaps on a Sunday morning, though a Doctor of Divinity, actually telling an anecdote - lowering the dignity of the pulpit by actually using a simile or metaphor - sometimes perhaps accidentally making his people smile, and what is also a great sin in these solid theologians, now and then dropping a tear. He does not exactly know how it is, but the people catch up his words. "I must have something good for them," he says. He just burns that old lot of sermons; or he puts them under the bed, and gets some new ones, or gets none at all, but just gets his text, and begins to cry, "Men and brethren, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The old deacons say, "What is the matter with our minister?" The old ladies, who have heard him for many years, and slept in the front of the gallery so regularly, begin to rouse, and say, "I wonder what has happened to him; how can it be?" Why, he preaches like a man on fire. The tear runs over at his eye; his soul is full of love for souls." They cannot make it out; they have often said he was dull and

dreary and drowsy. How is it all this is changed? Why, it is the revival. The revival has touched the minister; the sun, shining so brightly, has melted some of the snow on the mountain-top, and it is running down in fertilizing streams, to bless the valleys; and the people down below are refreshed by the ministrations of the man of God who has awakened himself up from his sleep, and finds himself, like another Elijah, made strong for forty days of labour. Well, then, directly after that the revival begins to touch the people at large. The congregation was once numbered by the empty seats, rather than by the full ones. But on a sudden - the minister does not understand it - he finds the people coming to hear him. He never was popular, never hoped to be. All at once he wakes up and finds himself famous, so far as a large congregation can make him so. There are the people, and how they listen! They are all awake, all in earnest; they lean their heads forward, they put their hands to their ears. His voice is feeble; they try to help him; they are doing anything so that they may hear the Word of Life. And then the members of the church open their eyes and see the chapel full, and they say, "How has this come about? We ought to pray." A prayer-meeting is summoned. There had been five or six in the vestry: now there are five or six hundred, and they turn into the chapel. And Oh! how they pray! That old stager, who used to pray for twenty minutes, finds it now convenient to confine himself to five; and that good old man, who always used to repeat the same form of prayer when he stood up, and talked about the horse that rushed into the battle, and the oil from vessel to vessel, and all that, leaves all these things at home, and just prays, "O Lord, save sinners, for Jesus Christ's sake." And there are sobs and groans heard in the prayer meetings. It is evident that not one, but all, are praying; the whole mass seems moved to supplication. How is this again? Why, it is just the effect of the revival, for when the revival truly comes, the minister and the congregation and the church will receive good by it.

But it does not end here. The members of the church grow more solemn, more serious. Family duties are better attended to; the home circle is brought under better culture. Those who could not spare time for family prayer, find they can do so now; those who had no opportunity for teaching their children, now dare not go a day without doing it; for they hear that there are children converted in the Sunday school. There are

twice as many in the Sunday school now as there used to be; and, what is wonderful, the little children meet together to pray; their little hearts are touched, and many of them show signs of a work of grace begun; and fathers and mothers think they must try what they can do for their families: if God is blessing little children, why should he not bless theirs?

And then, when you see the members of the church going up to the house of God, you mark with what a steady and sober air they go. Perhaps they talk on the way, but they talk of Jesus; and if they whisper together at the gates of the sanctuary, it is no longer idle gossip; it is no remark about, "how do you like the preacher? What did you think of him? Did you notice So-and-so?" Oh, no! "I pray the Lord that he might bless the word of his servant, that he might send an unction from on high, that the dying flame may be kindled, and that where there is life, it may be promoted and strengthened, and receive fresh vigour." This is their whole conversation.

And then comes the great result. There is an inquirers' meeting held: the good brother who presides over it is astonished; he never saw so many coming in his life before. "Why," says he, "there is a hundred, at least, come to confess what the Lord has done for their souls! Here are fifty come all at once to say that under such a sermon they were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Who hath begotten me these? How hath it come about? How can it be? Is not the Lord a great God that hath wrought such a work as this?" And then the converts who are thus brought into the church, if the revival continues, are very earnest ones. You never saw such a people. The outsiders call them fanatics. It is a blessed fanaticism. Others say, they are nothing but enthusiasts. It is a heavenly enthusiasm. Everything that is done is done with such spirit. If they sing, it is like the crashing thunder; if they pray, it is like the swift, sharp flash of lightning, lighting up the darkness of the cold hearted, and making them for a moment feel that there is something in prayer. When the minister preaches, he preaches like a Boanerges, and when the church is gathered together, it is with a hearty good will. When they give, they give with enlarged liberality; when they visit the sick, they do it with gentleness, meekness, and love. Everything is done with a single eye to God's glory; not of men, but by the power of God. Oh! that we might see such a revival

as this!

But, blessed be God, it does not end here. The revival of the church then touches the rest of society. Men, who do not come forward and profess religion, are more punctual in attending the means of grace. Men that used to swear, give it up; they find it is not suitable for the times. Men that profaned the Sabbath, and that despised God, find it will not do; they give it all up. Times get changed; morality prevails; the lower ranks are affected. They buy a sermon where they used to buy some penny tract of nonsense. The higher orders are also touched; they too are brought to hear the word. Her ladyship, in her carriage, who never would have thought of going to so mean a place as a conventicle, does not now care where she goes so long as she is blessed. She wants to hear the truth; and a drayman pulls his horses up by the side of her ladyship's pair of grays, and they both go in and bend together before the throne of sovereign grace. All classes are affected. Even the senate feels it; the statesman himself is surprised at it, and wonders what all these things mean. Even the monarch on the throne feels she has become the monarch of a people better than she knew before, and that God is doing something in her realms past all her thought - that a great King is swaying a better sceptre and exerting a better influence than even her excellent example. Nor does it even end there. Heaven is filled. One by one the converts die, and heaven gets fuller; the harps of heaven are louder, the songs of angels are inspired with new melody, for they rejoice to see the sons of men prostrate before the throne. The universe is made glad: it is God's own summer; it is the universal spring. The time of the singing of birds is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Oh! that God might send us such a revival of religion as this!

I thank God, that we, as a people, have had great cause to thank him that we had great measure of revival of this kind, but nothing compared with what we desire. I have heard of revivals, where twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, were gathered in; but, tell it to the honour of our God, there is never a month passes, but our baptismal pool is opened, and never a communion Sabbath, but we receive many into the fold of the Lord. As many as three hundred in one year have we added to the church, and still the cry is, "They come! they come!" and were but our new

sanctuary built, I am persuaded, that in six months from its erection, instead of having twelve hundred members, I should be the pastor of at least two thousand. For I believe there are many of you who attend this hall in the morning, who find it quite impossible to crowd into the chapel in the evening, and are only waiting and anxious, that you may tell to me and to the brethren, what God has done for your souls. This I know, the Lord hath been very gracious to us, and to him be the honour of it. But we want more. Our souls are greedy - covetous for God. Oh! that we might be all converted!

"We long to see the churches full,  
That all the chosen race,  
May with one voice, and heart, and tongue,  
Sing his redeeming grace."

And we have to thank God, too, that it has not ended there; for we had last Sabbath evening, Exeter Hall full, Westminster Abbey full, and this place full too; and though we may not altogether agree in sentiment with all that preach, yet God bless them all! So long as Christ is preached, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; and I would to God that every large building in London were crowded too, and that every man who preached the Word were followed by tens of thousands, who would hear the truth. May that day soon come! and there is one heart which will rejoice in such a day more than any of you - a heart that shall always beat the highest when it sees God glorified, though our own honour should decrease.

III. Now we shall have to turn to the third point, which was A CAUTION. When Christmas Evans preached in Wales, during a time of revival, he used to make the people dance; the congregation were so excited under his ministry that they positively danced. Now I do not believe that dancing was the work of the Spirit. Their being stirred in their hearts might be the Holy Spirit's work, but the Holy Spirit does not care to make people dance under sermons; no good comes of it. Now and then among our Methodist friends there is a great break out, and we hear of a young woman in the middle of a sermon getting on the top of a form and turning round and round in ecstasy, till she falls down in a fainting fit, and they cry, "Glory be to God." Now we do not believe that is the work of the Spirit; we believe it is ridiculous nonsense, and nothing more. In the



old revivals in America a hundred years ago, commonly called "the great awakening," there were many strange things, such as continual shrieks and screams, and knockings, and twitchings, under the services. We cannot call that the work of the Spirit. Even the great Whitfield's revival at Cambuslang, one of the greatest and most remarkable revivals that were ever known, was attended by some things that we cannot but regard as superstitious wonders. People were so excited, that they did not know what they did. Now, if in any revival you see any of these strange contortions of the body, always distinguish between things that differ. The Holy Spirit's work is with the mind, not with the body in that way. It is not the will of God that such things should disgrace the proceedings. I believe that such things are the result of Satanic malice. The devil sees that there is a great deal of good doing; "Now," says he, "I'll spoil it all. I'll put my hoof in there, and do a world of mischief. There are souls being converted; I will let them get so excited that they will do ludicrous things, and then it will all be brought into contempt." Now, if you see any of these strange things arising look out. There is that old Apollyon busy, trying to mar the work. Put such vagaries down as soon as you can, for where the Spirit works, he never works against his own precept, and his precept is, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is neither decent nor orderly for people to dance under the sermon, nor howl, nor scream, while the gospel is being preached to them, and therefore it is not 'the Spirit's work at all, but mere human excitement.

And again, remember that you must always distinguish between man and men in the work of revival. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement, and whose conversion will not be genuine. Always expect that, and do not be surprised if you see it. It is but a law of the mind that men should imitate one another, and it seems but reasonable, that when one person is truly converted, there should be a kind of desire to imitate it in another, who yet is not a possessor of true and sovereign grace. Be not discouraged, then, if you should meet with this in the midst of a revival. It is no proof that it is not a true revival; it is only a proof that it is not true in that particular case.

I must say, once more, that if God should send us a great revival of religion, it will be our duty not to relax the bonds of discipline. Some churches, when they increase very largely, are apt to take people into their number by wholesale, without due and proper examination. We ought to be just as strict in the paroxysms of a revival as in the cooler times of a gradual increase, and if the Lord sends his Spirit like a hurricane, it is ours to deal with skill with the sails, lest the hurricane should wreck us by driving us upon some fell rock that may do us serious injury. Take care, ye that are officers in the church, when ye see the people stirred up, that ye exercise still a holy caution, lest the church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved.

IV. With these words of caution, I shall now gather up my strength, and with all my might labour to stir you up to seek of God a great revival of religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Men, brethren and fathers, the Lord God hath sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. Drops precede the April showers. The mercies which he has already bestowed upon us are but the forerunners and the preludes of something greater and better yet to come. He has given us the former, let us seek of him the latter rain, that his grace may be multiplied among us, and his glory may be increased. There are some of you to whom I address myself this morning who stand in the way of any revival of religion. I would affectionately admonish you, and beseech you, not to impede the Lord's own work. There be some of you, perhaps, here present to-day who are not consistent in your living. And yet you are professors of religion; you take the sacramental cup into your hand and drink its sacred wine, but still you live as worldlings live, and are as carnal and as covetous as they. Oh, my brother, you are a serious drawback to the church's increase. God will never bless an unholy people, and in proportion to our unholiness, he will withhold the blessing from us. Tell me of a church that is inconsistent, you shall tell me of a church that is unblest. God will first sweep the house before he will come to dwell in it. He will have his church pure before he will bless it with all the blessings of his grace. Remember that, ye inconsistent ones, and turn unto God, and ask to be rendered holy. There are others of you that are so

cold-hearted, that you stand in the way of all progress. You are a skid upon the wheels of the church. It cannot move for you. If we would be earnest, you put your cold band on everything that is bold and daring. You are not prudent and zealous; if you were so, we would bless God for giving you that prudence, which is a jewel for which we ought ever to thank God, if we have a prudent man among us. But there are some of you to whom I allude, who are prudent, but you are cold. You have no earnestness, you do not labour for Christ, you do not serve him with all your strength. And there are others of you who are imprudent enough to push others on, but never go forward yourselves. O ye Laodiceans, ye that are neither hot nor cold, remember what the Lord hath said of you - "So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And so will he do with you. Take heed, take heed, you are not only hurting yourselves, but you are injuring the church. And then there are others of you who are such sticklers for order, so given to everything that has been, that you do not care for any revival, for fear we should hurt you. You would not have the church repaired, lest we should touch one piece of the venerable moss that coats it. You would not cleanse your own garment, because there is ancient dirt upon it. You think that because a thing is ancient, therefore it must be venerable. You are lovers of the antique. You would not have a road mended, because your grandfather drove his waggon along the rut that is there. "Let it always be there," you say; "Let it always be knee-deep." Did not your grandfather go through it when it was knee deep with mud, and why should not you do the same? It was good enough for him, and it is good enough for you. You always have taken an easy seat in the chapel. You never saw a revival; you do not want to see it. You believe it is all nonsense, and that it is not to be desired. You look back; you find no precedent for it. Doctor So-and-so did not talk about it. Your venerable minister who is dead did not talk so, you say; therefore it is not needed. We need not tell you it is scriptural; that you do not care for. It is not orderly, you say. We need not tell you the thing is right; you care more about the thing being ancient than being good. Ah, you will have to get out of the way now, it isn't any good; you may try to stop us, but we will run over you if you do not get out of the way. With a little warning we shall have to run over your prejudices and incur your anger. But your prejudices must not, cannot, restrain us. The chain may be never so rusty with age, and ever so stamped with authority, the

prisoner is always happy to break it, and however your fetters may shackle us, we will dash them in pieces if they stand in the way of the progress of the kingdom of Christ.

Having thus spoken to those who hinder, I want to speak to you who love Jesus with all your hearts, and want to promote it. Dear friends, I beseech you remember that men are dying around you by thousands. Will you let your eye follow them into the world of shades? Myriads of them die without God, without Christ, without hope. My brother, does not their fearful fate awake your sympathy. You believe, from Scriptural warrant, that those who die without faith go to that place where "their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." Believing this, is not your soul stirred within you in pity for their fate? Look around you to-day. You see a vast host gathered together, professedly for the service of God. You know also how many there are here who fear him not, but are strangers to themselves and strangers to the cross. What! Do you know yourself what a solemn thing it is to be under the curse, and will you not pray and labour for those around you that are under the curse to-day? Remember your Master's cross. He died for sinners; will not you weep for them?

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep;  
And shall your cheek be dry?"

Did he give his whole life for them, and will not you stir up your life to wrestle with God, that his purposes may be accomplished on their behalf? You have unconverted children - do you not want them saved? You have brothers, husbands, wives, fathers, that are this day in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity; do you not want a revival, even if it were only for their sakes? Behold, how much of robbery, of murder, of crime, stains this poor land. Do you not want a revival of religion, if it were merely for quenching the flames of crime? See how God's name every day is blasphemed. Mark how, this day, trades are carried on, as if it were man's day, and not God's. Mark how multitudes are going the downward course, merry on their way to destruction. Do you not feel for them? Are your hearts hard and stolid? Has your soul become steeled? Has it become frozen like an iceberg? O sun of righteousness arise, and melt the icy heart, and make us all feel how fearful it is for immortal souls to perish; for men to be hurried into eternity without God, and without

hope. Oh, will you not now, from this time forth, begin to pray that God may send forth his Word and save them, that his own name may be glorified?

As for you that fear not God, see how much ado we are making about you. Your souls are worth more than you think for. O that ye would believe in Christ, to the salvation of your souls!

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## **A Greater Than Solomon**

Behold a greater than Solomon is here - Luke 11:31

Our first thought is that no mere man would have said this concerning himself unless he had been altogether eaten up with vanity; for Solomon was among the Jews the very ideal of greatness and wisdom. It would be an instance of the utmost self-conceit if any mere man were to say of himself—"A greater than Solomon is here." Any person who was really greater and wiser than Solomon would be the last man to claim such preeminence. A wise man would never think of it; a prudent man would never say it. The Lord Jesus Christ, if we regard Him as a mere man, would have never uttered such an expression, for a more modest, self-forgetting man was never found in all our race. View it on the supposition that the Christ of Nazareth was a mere man, and I say that His whole conduct was totally different from the spirit which would have suggested an utterance like this—"A greater Solomon is here." For men to compare themselves with one another is not wise, and Christ was wise; it is not humble, and Christ was humble. He would not have thus spoken if there had not been cause and reason in His infinitely glorious nature. It was because the divinity within Him must speak out. For God to say that He is greater than all His creatures is no boasting; for what are they in His sight? All worlds are but sparks from the anvil of His omnipotence. Space, time, eternity, all these are as nothing before Him; and for Him to compare or even to contrast Himself with one of His own creatures is supreme condescension, let Him word the comparison how He may. It was the divine within our Lord which made Him say—and not even then with a view to exalt Himself, but with a view to point the moral that He was trying to bring before the people—"A greater than Solomon is here." He did as good as say, "The queen of the south came from a distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but you refuse to hear me. She gave attention to a man, but you will not regard your God. You will not listen to me incarnate Deity who tells you words of infinite, infallible wisdom." Our Lord Jesus is aiming at His hearers' good, and where the motive is so

disinterested there remains no room for criticism. He tells them that He is greater than Solomon, to convince them of the greatness of their crime in refusing to listen to the messages of love with which His lips were loaded. Foreigners came from afar to Solomon; but I, says He, have come to your door, and brought infinite wisdom into your very gates, and yet you refuse me. Therefore the queen of the south shall rise up in judgment against you, for, in rejecting me, you reject a greater than Solomon.

The second thought that comes to one's mind is this: notice the self-consciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He knows who He is, and what He is, and He is not lowly in spirit because He is ignorant of His own greatness. He was meek and lowly in heart—"Servus servorum," as the Latins were wont to call Him, "Servant of servants," but all the while He knew that He was Rex regum, or King of kings. He takes a towel and He washes His disciples' feet; but all the while He knows that He is their Master and their Lord. He associates with publicans and harlots, and dwells with the common people; but all the while He knows that He is the only begotten of the Father. He sits as a child, in the temple hearing and asking questions of the rabbis; He stands among His disciples as though He were one of themselves, conversing with the ignorant and foolish of the day, seeking their good; but He knows that He is not one of them; He knows that He has nothing to learn from them: He knows that he is able to teach senates and to instruct kings and philosophers, for he is greater than Solomon. He wears a peasant's garb, and has not where to lay His head; but He knows that, whatever the lowliness of His condition, He is greater than Solomon; He lets us perceive that he knows it, that all may understand the love which brought Him down so low. It is grand humility on Christ's part that He condescends to be our servant, our Saviour, when He is so great that the greatest of men are as nothing before Him. "He counted it not robbery to be equal with God": mark that; and yet "He made himself of no reputation." Some people do not know their own worth, and so, when they stoop to a lowly office it is no stoop to their minds, for they do not know their own abilities. They do not know to what they are equal; but Christ did know: He knew all about His own Deity, and His own wisdom and greatness as man. I admire, therefore, the clear understanding which

sparkles in His deep humiliation, like a gem in a dark mine. He is not one who stoops down according to the old rhyme -

As needs he must who cannot sit upright;

but He is One who comes down wittingly from His throne of glory, marking each step and fully estimating the descent which He is making. The cost of our redemption was known to Him, and He endured the cross, despising the shame. Watts well sings -

This was compassion like a God,  
That when the Saviour knew  
The price of pardon was his blood,  
His pity ne'er withdrew.

Brethren, if our Saviour Himself said that He was greater than Solomon, you and I must fully believe it, enthusiastically own it, and prepare to proclaim it. If others will not own it, let us be the more prompt to confess it. If He Himself had to say, before they would own it, "A greater than Solomon is here," let it not be necessary that the encomium should be repeated, but let us all confess that He is indeed greater than Solomon. Let us go home with this resolve in our minds, that we will speak greater things of Christ than we have done, that we will try to love Him more and serve Him better, and make Him in our own estimation and in the world's greater than He has ever been. Oh for a glorious high throne to set Him on, and a crown of stars to place upon His head! Oh to bring nations to His feet! I know my words cannot honor Him according to His merits: I wish they could. I am quite sure to fail in my own judgment when telling out His excellence; indeed, I grow less and less satisfied with my thoughts and language concerning Him. He is too glorious for my feeble language to describe Him. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, I could not speak worthily of Him. If I could borrow all the harmonies of heaven, and enlist every harp and song of the glorified, yet were not the music sweet enough for His praises. Our glorious Redeemer is ever blessed: let us bless Him. He is to be extolled above the highest heavens; let us sound forth His praises. Oh for a well-tuned harp! May the Spirit of God help both heart and lip to extol Him at this hour.



First, then, we shall try to draw a parallel between Jesus and Solomon; and, secondly, we will break away from all comparisons, and show where there cannot be any parallel between Christ and Solomon at all.

I. First, then, BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON there are some points of likeness.

When the Saviour Himself gives us a comparison it is a clear proof that a likeness was originally intended by the Holy Spirit, and therefore we may say without hesitation that Solomon was meant to be a type of Christ. I am not going into detail, nor am I about to refine upon small matters; but I shall give you five points in which Solomon was conspicuously like to Christ, and in which our Lord was greater than Solomon. O for help in the great task before me.

And, first, in wisdom. Whenever you talked about Solomon to a Jew his eyes began to flash with exultation; his blood leaped in his veins with national pride. Solomon—that name brought to mind the proudest time of David's dynasty, the age of gold. Solomon, the magnificent, why, surely, his name crowns Jewish history with glory, and the brightest beam of that glory is his wisdom. In the east, and I think I may say in the west, it still remains a proverb, "To be as wise as Solomon." No modern philosopher or learned monarch has ever divided the fame of the son of David, whose name abides as the synonym of wisdom. Of no man since could it be said as of him, "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart." He intermeddled with all knowledge, and was a master in all sciences. He was a naturalist: "and he spoke of trees from the cedar trees that are in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." He was an engineer and architect, for he wrote: "I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." He was one who understood the science of government— politician of the highest order. He was everything, in fact. God gave him wisdom and largeness of heart, says the Scripture, like the sand of the sea: "and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the

wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezralite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about." Yes; but our Saviour knows infinitely more than Solomon. I want you tonight to come to Him just as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, only for weightier reasons. You do not want to learn anything concerning architecture or navigation, agriculture or anatomy. You want to know only how you shall be built up a spiritual house, and how you shall cross those dangerous seas which lie between this land and the celestial city. Well, you may come to Jesus and He will teach you all that you need to know, for all wisdom is in Christ. Our divine Saviour knows things past and present and future: the secrets of God are with Him. He knows the inmost heart of God, for no one knoweth the Father save the Son and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him. To Him it is given to take the book of prophetic decree and loose the seven seals thereof. Come, then, to Christ Jesus if you want to know the mind of God, for it is written that He "is made unto us wisdom." Solomon might have wisdom, but he could not be wisdom to others; Christ Jesus is that to the full. In the multifarious knowledge which He possesses—the universal knowledge which is stored up in Him—there is enough for your guidance and instruction even to the end of life, however intricate and overshadowed your path may be.

Solomon proved his wisdom in part by his remarkable inventions. We cannot tell what Solomon did not know. At any rate, no man knows at this present moment how those huge stones, which have lately been discovered, which were the basis of the ascent by which Solomon went up to the house of the Lord, were ever put into their places. Many of the stones of Solomon's masonry are so enormous that scarcely could any modern machinery move them; and without the slightest cement they are put together so exactly that the blade of a knife could not be inserted between them. It is marvelous how the thing was done. How such great stones were brought from their original bed in the quarry—how the whole building of the temple was executed—nobody knows. The castings in brass and silver are scarcely less remarkable. No doubt many inventions have passed away from the knowledge of modern times, inventions as remarkable as those of our own age. We are a set of savages that are beginning to learn something, but Solomon knew and invented things

which we shall, perhaps, rediscover in 500 years time. By vehement exertion this boastful nineteenth century, wretched century as it is, will crawl towards the wisdom which Solomon possessed ages ago. Yet is Jesus greater than Solomon. As for inventions, Solomon is no inventor at all compared with Him who said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." O Saviour, didst thou find out the way of our salvation? Didst thou bring into the world and carry out and execute the way by which hell-gate should be closed, and heaven-gate, once barred, should be set wide open? Then, indeed, art thou wiser than Solomon. Thou art the deviser of salvation, the architect of the church, the author and finisher of our faith.

Solomon has left us some very valuable books—the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the matchless Song. But, oh, the words of Solomon fall far short of the words of Jesus Christ, for they are spirit and life.. The power of the word of Jesus is infinitely greater than all the deep sayings of the sage. Proverbial wisdom cannot match His sayings, nor can "The Preacher" rival His sermons, and even the divine Song itself would remain without a meaning—an allegory never to be explained—if it were not that Christ Himself is the sum and substance of it. Solomon may sing of Christ, but Christ is the substance of the song. He is greater than Solomon in His teachings, for His wisdom is from above, and leads men up to heaven. Blessed are they that sit at His feet.

Again, Solomon showed His wisdom in difficult judgments. You know how he settled the question between the two women concerning the child; many other puzzles Solomon solved, and many other knots Solomon was able to untie. He was a great ruler and governor—a man wise in politics, in social economy, and in commerce—wise in all human respects. But a greater than Solomon is present where Christ is. There is no difficulty which Christ cannot remove, no knot which He cannot untie, no question which He cannot answer. You may bring your hard questions to Him, and He will answer them; and if you have any difficulty on your heart tonight, do but resort to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and search His word, and you shall hear a voice as from the sacred oracle, which shall lead you in the path of safety.

My point at this time, especially as we are coming to the Communion

table, is this: I want you that love the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in His infinite wisdom, and come to Him for direction. I fear that when you are in trouble, you half suppose that the great keeper of Israel must have made a mistake. You get into such an intricate path that you say, "Surely, my Shepherd has not guided me aright." Never think so. When you are poor and needy still say, "This my poverty was ordained by a greater than Solomon." What if you seem to be deprived of every comfort, and you are brought into a strange and solitary way, where you find no city to dwell in? Yet a guide is near, and that guide is not foolish; but a greater than Solomon is here. I think I look tonight into a great furnace. It is so fierce that I cannot bear to gaze into its terrible blaze. For fear my eyeballs should utterly fail me and lose the power of sight through the glare of that tremendous flame, I turn aside, for the fury of its flame overpowers me. But when I am strengthened to look again I see ingots of silver refining in the white heat, and I note that the heat is tempered to the last degree of nicety. I watch the process to the end, and I say, as I behold those ingots brought out all clear and pure, refined from all dross, and ready for the heavenly treasury, "Behold, a greater than Solomon was in that furnace work." So you will find it, O sufferer. Infinite wisdom is in your lot. Come, poor child, do not begin to interfere with your Saviour's better judgment, but let it order all things. Do not let your little "Know" ever rise up against the great knowledge of your dear Redeemer. Think of this when you wade in deep waters and comfortably whisper to yourself—"A greater than Solomon is here."

I have not time to enlarge, and therefore I would have you notice, next, that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon in wealth. This was one of the things for which Solomon was noted. He had great treasures: he "made gold to be as stones, and as for silver it was little accounted of," so rich did he become. He had multitudes of servants. I think he had 60,000 hewers in the mountains hewing out stones and wood, so numerous were the workmen he employed. His court was magnificent to the last degree. When you read of the victuals that were prepared to feed the court, and of the stately way in which everything was arranged from the stables of the horses upwards to the ivory throne, you feel, like the queen of Sheba, utterly astonished, and say, "The half was not told me." But, oh, when you consider all the wealth of Solomon, what poor stuff it is

compared with the riches that are treasured up in Christ Jesus. Beloved, He who died upon the cross, and was indebted to a friend for a grave; He who was stripped even to the last rag ere He died; He who possessed no wealth but that of sorrow and sympathy, yet had about Him the power to make many rich, and He has made multitudes rich—rich to all the intents of everlasting bliss; and therefore He must be rich Himself. Is He not rich who enriches millions? Why, our Lord Jesus Christ, even by a word, comforted those that were bowed down. When He stretched out His hand He healed the sick with a touch. There was a wealth about His every movement. He was a full man, full of all that man could desire to be full of; and now, seeing that He has died and risen again, there is in Him a wealth of pardoning love, a wealth of saving power, a wealth of intercessory might before the Father's throne, a wealth of all things by which He enriches the sons of men, and shall enrich them to all eternity.

I want this truth to come home to you: I want you to recognize the riches of Christ, you that are His people; and, in addition, to remember the truth of our hymn -

Since Christ is rich can I be poor?  
What can I want besides?

I wish we could learn to reckon what we are by what Christ is. An old man said, "I am very old; I have lost my only son; I am penniless; and, worst of all, I am blind. But," added he, "this does not matter, for Christ is not infirm; Christ is not aged; Christ has all riches; and Christ is not blind; and Christ is mine; and I have all things in Him." Could you not get hold of that somehow, brothers and sisters? Will not the Holy Spirit teach you the art of appropriating the Lord Jesus and all that He is and has. If Christ be your representative, why, then you are rich in Him. Go to Him to be enriched. Suppose I were to meet a woman, and I knew her husband to be a very wealthy man, and that he loved her very much, and she were to say to me, "I am dreadfully poor; I do not know where to get raiment and food." "Oh," I should say, "That woman is out of her mind." If she has such a husband, surely she has only to go to him for all that she needs. And what if nothing is invested in her name, yet it is in his name, and they are one, and he will deny her nothing." I should say, "My good woman, you must not talk in that fashion, or I will tell your husband of

you." Well, I think that I shall have to say the same of you who are so very poor and cast down, and yet are married to Jesus Christ. I shall have to tell your Husband of you, that you bring such complaints against Him, for all things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's; wherefore, "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees"; use the knees of prayer and the hand of faith, and your estate will well content you. Do not think, that you are married to Rehoboam, who will beat you with scorpions, for you are joined to a greater than Solomon. Do not fancy that your heavenly Bridegroom is a beggar. All the wealth of eternity and infinity is His; how can you say that you are poor while all that He has is yours?

Now, thirdly, and very briefly indeed. There was one point about Solomon in which every Israelite rejoiced, namely that he was the prince of peace. His name signifies peace. His father, David, was a great warrior, but Solomon had not to carry on war. His power was such that no one dared to venture upon a conflict with so great and potent a monarch. Every man throughout Israel sat under his vine and figtree, and no man was afraid. No trumpet of invader was heard in the land. Those were halcyon days for Israel when Solomon reigned. Ah, but in that matter a greater than Solomon is here; for Solomon could not give his subjects peace of mind, he could not bestow upon them rest of heart, he could not ease them of their burden of guilt, or draw the arrow of conviction from their breast and heal its smart. But I preach to you tonight that blessed divine Man of Sorrows who has wrought out our redemption, and who is greater than Solomon in His peace-giving power. Oh, come and trust Him. Then shall your "peace be as a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea." Am I addressing one of God's people who is sorely troubled, tumbled up and down in his thoughts? Brother or sister, do not think that you must wait a week or two before you can recover your peace. You can become restful in a moment, for "He is our peace"—even He Himself, and He alone. And, oh, if you will but take Him at once, laying hold upon Him by the hand of faith as your Saviour, this Man shall be the peace even when the Assyrian shall come into the land. There is no peace like the peace which Jesus gives; it is like a river, deep, profound, renewed, ever flowing, overflowing, increasing and widening into an ocean of bliss. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall

keep your heart and mind, through Jesus Christ." Oh, come to Him. Come to Him at this moment. Do not remain an hour away from your Noah, or rest, for with Him in the ark your weary wing shall be tired no longer. You shall be safe and restful the moment you return to Him. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. I want you to get that joy and to enter into this peace. Blessed combination, joy and peace! Peace, peace, there is music in the very word: get it from Him who is the Word, and whose voice can still a storm into a calm. A greater than Solomon is here to give you that peace; beat the sword of your inward warfare, into the plow-share of holy service; no longer sound an alarm, but blow up the trumpet of peace in this day of peace.

A fourth thing for which Solomon was noted was his great works. Solomon built the temple; which was one of the seven wonders of the world in its time. A very marvelous building it must have been, but I will not stay to describe it, for time fails us. In addition to this he erected for himself palaces, constructed fortifications, and made aqueducts and great pools to bring streams from the mountains to the various towns. He also founded Palmyra and Baalbed—those cities of the desert—to facilitate his commerce with India, Arabia, and other remote regions. He was a marvelous man. Earth has not seen his like. And yet a greater than Solomon is here, for Christ has brought the living water from the throne of God right down to thirsty men, being Himself the eternal aqueduct through which the heavenly current streams. Christ has built fortresses and munitions of defense, behind which His children stand secure against the wrath of hell; and He has founded and is daily finishing a wondrous temple, His church, of which His people are the living stones, fashioned, polished, rendered beautiful—a temple which God Himself shall inhabit, for He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building"; but He dwells in a temple which He Himself doth pile, of which Christ is architect and builder, foundation, and chief corner-stone. But Jesus builds for eternity, an everlasting temple, and, when all visible things pass away, and the very ruins of Solomon's temple and Solomon's aqueduct are scarcely to be discerned, what a sight will be seen in that New Jerusalem! The twelve courses of its foundations are of precious stones, its walls bedight with diamonds rare, its streets are paved with gold, and its glory surpasses that of the sun. I am but talking

figures, poor figures, too; for the glory of the city of God is spiritual, and where shall I find words with which to depict it? There, where the Lamb Himself is the light, and the Lord God Himself doth dwell—there the whole edifice, the entire New Jerusalem—shall be to the praise and the glory of His grace who gave Jesus Christ to be the builder of the house of His glory, of which I hope we shall form a part for ever and ever.

Now, if Christ does such great works, I want you to come to Him, that He may work in you the work of God. That is the point. Come and trust Him at once. Trust Him to build you up. Come and trust Him to bring the living water to your lips. Come and trust Him to make you a temple of the living God. Come, dear child of God, if you have great works to do, come and ask for the power of Christ with which to perform them. Come, you that would leave some memorial to the honor of the divine name, come to Him to teach and strengthen you. He is the wise master-builder; come and be workers together with Christ. Baptize your weakness into His infinite strength, and you shall be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His mind. God help you to do so.

Once more. I draw the parallel upon the fifth point, and I have done with it. Solomon was great as to dominion. The kingdom of the Jews was never anything like the size before or after that Solomon made it. It appears to have extended from the river of Egypt right across the wilderness far up to the Persian Gulf. We can scarcely tell how far Solomon's dominions reached; they are said to have been "from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth." By one mode or another he managed to bring various kings into subjection to him, and he was the greatest monarch that ever swayed the sceptre of Judah. It has all gone now. Poor, feeble Rehoboam dropped from his foolish hands the reins his father held. The kingdom was rent in pieces, the tributary princes found their liberty, and the palmy days of Israel were over. On the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ at this moment has dominion over all things. God has set Him over all the works of His hands. Ay, tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. The feet that were nailed to the tree are set upon the necks of His enemies. The hands that bore the nails sway at this moment the sceptre of all words: Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Let universal sovereignty be ascribed to the Son of



man: to Him who was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Tell it out, ye saints, for your own comfort. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof Everything that happens in providence is under His sway still, and the time is coming when a moral and spiritual kingdom will be set up by Him which shall encompass the whole world. It does not look like it, does it? All these centuries have passed away, and little progress has been made. Ah, but He cometh; and when He cometh, or ere He cometh, He shall overturn, overturn, overturn, for His right it is, and God will give it Him. And, as surely as God lives, unto Him shall every man bow the knee, "and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Do not be afraid about it. Do not measure difficulties, much less tremble at them. What is faith made for but to believe that which seems impossible? To expect universal dominion for Christ when everything goes well is but the expectation of reason; but to expect it when everything goes ill, is the triumph of Abrahamic confidence. Look upon the great mountain and say, "Who art thou, o great mountain? Before the true Zerubbabel thou shall become a plain." In the blackest midnight, when the ebon darkness stands thick and hard as granite before you, believe that, at the mystic touch of Christ, the whole of it shall pass away, and at the brightness of His rising the eternal light shall dawn, never to be quenched. This is to act the part of a believer; and I ask you to act that part, and believe to the full in Christ the Omnipotent. What means this stinted faith in an almighty arm? What a fidget we are in and what a worry seizes us if a little delay arises! Everything has to be done in the next ten minutes, or we count our Lord to be slack. Is this the part of wisdom? The Eternal has infinite leisure, who are we that we should hasten Him?

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour.

A day is long to us: but a thousand years to Him are but the twinkling of a star. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, for the time shall come when the God of Israel shall put to rout His adversaries, and the Christ of the cross shall be the Christ of the crown. We shall one day hear it said—The great Shepherd reigns; and His unsuffering kingdom now

hath come, Then rocks and hills, and vales and islands of the sea shall all be vocal with the one song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and glory and power and dominion and might forever and ever!"

Thus have I tried to draw the parallel, but I pray you to see the Lord Jesus for yourself, and know whether I have spoken the truth about Him. You have heard the report; now, like the Queen of Sheba, go and see for yourself. Get to Christ, as to His dominion, come under His sway and own His sceptre. Go and trust your King; love your King; praise your King; delight in your King. How courtiers delight to be summoned to court! How glad they are to see the queen's face. How pleased they are if she gives them but a kindly word! Surely, their fortune is made, or at least their hopes are raised and their spirits lifted up. Shall we not sun ourselves in the presence of the blessed and only Potentate? Let us come into the presence of our King tonight, or else let us sit here and weep. Let us come to His table to feed upon Himself. Let us live on His Word. Let us delight in His love; and we shall surely say, "A greater than Solomon is here."

II. I shall not detain you longer than a minute or two while I remark that we must rise beyond all parallels, if we would reach the height of this great argument, for BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON THERE IS MUCH MORE CONTRAST THAN COMPARISON—much more difference than likeness.

In His nature the Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon. Alas, poor Solomon! The strongest man that ever lived, namely, Samson, was the weakest of men; and the wisest man that ever lived, was, perhaps, the greatest, certainly the most conspicuous, fool. How different is our Lord! There is no infirmity in Christ, no folly in the incarnate God. The backsliding of Solomon finds no parallel in Jesus, in whom the prince of this world found nothing though he searched Him through and through.

Our Lord is greater than Solomon because He is not mere man. He is man, perfect man, man to the utmost of manhood, sin excepted; but still He is more, and infinitely more, than man. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is God Himself, "The Word was God." God dwells in Him, and He Himself is God.

As in nature He was infinitely superior to Solomon, and not to be compared with him for a moment, so was He in character. Look at Christ and Solomon for a minute as to real greatness of character, and you can hardly see Solomon with a microscope, while Christ rises grandly before you, growing every moment till He fills the whole horizon of your admiration. Principally let me note the point of self-sacrifice. Jesus lived entirely for other people; He had never a thought about Himself. Solomon was, to a great extent, wise unto himself, rich unto himself, strong unto himself; and you see in those great palaces, and in all their arrangements, that he seeks his own pleasure, honor, and emolument; and, alas! that seeking of pleasure leads him into sin, that sin into a still greater one. Solomon, wonderful as he is, only compels you to admire him for his greatness, but you do not admire him for his goodness. You see nothing that makes you love him, you rather tremble before him than feel gladdened by him. Oh, but look at Christ. He does not have a thought for Himself. He lives for others. How grandly magnificent He is in disinterested love. He "loved his church and gave himself it." He pours out even His heart's blood for the good of men: and hence, dear friends, at this moment our blessed Lord is infinitely superior to Solomon in His influence. Solomon has little or no influence today. Even in his own time he never commanded the influence that Christ had in His deepest humiliation. I do not hear of any that were willing to die for Solomon; certainly nobody would do so now. But how perpetually is enthusiasm kindled in 10,000 breasts for Christ! They say that if again there were stakes in Smithfield we should not find men to burn at them for Christ. I tell you, it is not so. The Lord Jesus Christ has at this moment a remnant according to the election of His grace who would fling themselves into a pit of fire for Him, and joy to do it. "Who can separate us"—even us poor pygmies—"from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "Oh," says one, "I do not think I could suffer martyrdom." You are not yet called to do so, my brother, and God has not given You the strength to do it before the need arises; but you will have strength enough if ever it comes to your lot to die for Jesus. Did you never hear of the martyr who, the night before he was to be burnt, sat opposite the fire, and, taking his shoe off, he held his foot close to the flame till he began to feel the burning of it? He drew it back and said, "I see God does not give me power to bear such suffering as I put upon myself, but I make none the less doubt," said

he, "that I shall very well stand the stake tomorrow morning, and burn quick to the death for Christ without starting back." And so he did, for he was noticed never to stir at all while the flames were consuming him. There is a great deal of difference between your strength today and what your strength would be if you were called to some tremendous work or suffering. My Lord and Master, let me tell you, wakes more enthusiasm in human breasts at this moment than any other name in the universe. Napoleon once said, "I founded a kingdom upon force, and it will pass away"; but "Christ founded a kingdom upon love, and it will last forever and ever." And so it will. Blot out the name of Christ from the hearts of His people? Strike you sun from the firmament, and quench the stars; and when you have achieved that easy task, yet have you not begun to remove the glory of the indwelling Christ from the hearts of His people. Some of us delight to think that we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. "Where?" says one. I answer, it is all over us. We have been buried into His name, and we belong to Him, in spirit, soul, and body. That watermark, which denotes that we are His, can never be taken out of us. We are dead with Him, wherein also we were buried with Him and are risen again with Him; and there is nothing at this moment that stirs our soul like the name of Jesus. Speak for yourselves. Is it not so? Have you never heard of one who lay dying, his mind wandering, and his wife said to him, "My dear, do you not know me?" He shook his head; and they brought near his favorite child. "Do you not know me?" He shook his head. One whispered, "Do you know the lord Jesus Christ?" and he said, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." Oh, blessed name! Blessed name! Some years ago I was away from this place for a little rest, and I was thinking to myself, "Now, I wonder whether I really respond to the power of the gospel as I should like to do? I will go and hear a sermon and see." I would like to sit down with you, in the pews sometimes and hear somebody else preach—not everybody, mark you, for when I hear a good many I want to be doing it myself. I get tired of them if they do not glow and burn. But that morning I thought I would drop into a place of worship such as there might be in the little town. A poor, plain man, a countryman, began preaching about Jesus Christ. He praised my Master in very humble language, but he praised Him most sincerely. Oh, but the tears began to flow. I soon laid the dust all round me where I sat, and I thought, "Bless the Lord! I do love Him." It only wants somebody else to

play the harp instead of me, and my soul is ready to dance to the heavenly tune. Only let the music be Christ's sweet, dear, precious name, and my heart leaps at the sound. Oh, my brethren, sound out the praises of Jesus Christ! Sound out that precious name! There is none like it under heaven to stir my heart. I hope you can all say the same. I know you can if you love Him; for all renewed hearts are enamored of the sweet Lord Jesus. "A greater than Solomon is here." Solomon has no power over your hearts, but Jesus has. His influence is infinitely greater; his power to bless is infinitely greater; and so let us magnify and adore Him with all our hearts.

Oh, that all loved Him! Alas that so many do not! What strange monsters! Why, if you do not love Christ, what are you at? You hearts of stone, will you not break? If His dying love does not break them, what will? If you cannot see the beauties of Jesus, what can you see? You blind bats! O you that know not the music of His name, you are deaf. O you that do not rejoice in Him, you are dead. What are you at, that you are spared through the pleadings of His love, and yet do not love Him? God have mercy upon you, and bring you to delight yourselves in Christ, and trust him! As for us who do trust Him, we mean to love Him and delight in Him more and more, world without end. Amen.

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## **The Greatest Trial On Record**

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed. - Psalm 2:2

After our Lord had been betrayed by the false-hearted Judas, he was bound by the officers who had come to take him; no doubt the cords were drawn as tight, and twisted as mercilessly as possible. If we believe the

traditions of the fathers, these cords cut through the flesh even to the very bones, so that all the way from the garden to the house of Annas, his blood left a crimson trail. Our Redeemer was hurried along the road which crosses the brook Kedron. A second time he was made like unto David, who passed over that brook, weeping as he went; and perhaps it was on this occasion that he drank of that foul brook by the way. The brook Redron, you know, was that into which all the filth of the sacrifices of the temple was cast, and Christ, as though he were a foul and filthy thing, must be led to the black stream. He was led into Jerusalem by the sheep-gate, the gate through which the lambs of the Passover and the sheep for sacrifice were always driven. Little did they understand, that in so doing they were again following out to the very letter the significant types which God had ordained in the law of Moses. They led, I say, this Lamb of God through the sheep-gate, and they hastened him on to the house of Annas, the ex-high priest, who, either from his relationship to Caiaphas, from his natural ability, or his prominence in opposing the Savior, stood high in the opinion of the rulers. Here they made a temporary call, to gratify the bloodthirsty Annas with the sight of his victim; and then, hastening on, they brought him to the house of Caiaphas, some little distance off; where, though it was but a little past the dead of night, many members of the Sanhedrim were assembled. In a very short time, no doubt informed by some speedy messenger, all the rest of the elders came together, and sat down with great delight to the malicious work. Let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ, not, like Peter, afar off, but, like John, let us go in with Jesus into the high priest's house, and when we have tarried awhile there, and have seen our Savior despitefully used, let us traverse the streets with him, till we come to the hall of Pilate, and then to the palace of Herod, and then afterwards to the place called "the pavement," where Christ is subjected to an ignominious competition with Barabbas, the murderer, and where we hear the howling of the people, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Brethren, as the Lord gave commandment concerning even the ashes and offal of the sacrifices, we ought to think no matter trivial which stands in connection with our great burnt offering. My admonition is, "Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost." As goldsmiths sweep their shops, to save even the filings of the gold, so every word of Jesus

should be treasured up as very precious. But, indeed, the narrative to which I invite you is not unimportant. Things which were purposed of old, prophesied by seers, witnessed by apostles, written by evangelists, and published by the ambassadors of God, are not matters of secondary interest, but deserve our solemn and devout attention. Let all our hearts be awed as we follow the King of kings in his pathway of shame and suffering.

I. Come we, then, to the hall of Caiaphas. After the mob had dragged our Lord from the house of Annas, they reached the palace of Caiaphas, and there a brief interval occurred before the High Priest came forth to question the prisoner. How were those sad minutes spent? Was the poor victim allowed a little pause to collect his thoughts, that he might face his accusers calmly? Far from it; Luke shall tell the pitiful story: "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." The officers were pausing until the chairman of the court should please to have an interview with the prisoner, and instead of suffering the accused to take a little rest before a trial so important, upon which his life and character depended, they spend all the time in venting their bitter malice upon him. Observe how they insult his claim to the Messiahship! In effect, they mock him thus: "Thou claimest to be a prophet like unto Moses; thou knowest things to come; if thou be sent of God, prove it by discovering thy foes; we will put thee on thy trial, and test thee, O thou man of Nazareth." They bind his eyes, and then, smiting him one after another, they bid him exercise his prophetic gift, for their amusement, and prophesy who it was that smote him. Oh, shameful question! How gracious was the silence, for an answer might have withered them for ever. The day shall come when all that smite Christ, shall find that he has seen them, though they thought his eyes were blinded. The day shall come, blasphemer, worldling, careless man, when everything that you have done against Christ's cause and Christ's people, shall be published before the eyes of men and angels, and Christ shall answer your question, and shall tell you who it is that smote him. I speak to some this morning who have forgotten that Christ sees them; and they have ill-treated his people; they have spoken ill of his holy

cause, saying, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" I tell you, the Judge of men shall ere long, point you out, and make you, to your shame and confusion of face, confess that you smote the Savior when you smote his Church.

This preliminary mockery being over, Caiaphas, the high priest came in; he began at once to interrogate the Lord before the public trial doubtless with the view of catching him in his speech. The high priest asked him first of his disciples. We do not know what questions he asked; perhaps they were something like these: "What meanest thou, to allow a rabble to follow thee wherever thou goest? Who art thou, that thou shouldst have twelve persons always attending thee and calling thee Master? Dost thou intend to make these the leaders of a band of men? Are these to be thy lieutenants, to raise a host on thy behalf? Or dost thou pretend to be a prophet, and are these the sons of the prophets who follow thee, as Elisha did Elias? Moreover, where are they? Where are thy gallant followers? If thou art a good man, why are they not here to bear witness to thee? Where are they gone? Are they not ashamed of their folly, now that thy promises of honor all end in shame?" The high priest "asked him of his disciples." Our Lord Jesus on this point said not a syllable. Why this silence? Because it is not for our Advocate to accuse his disciples. He might have answered, "Well dost thou ask, 'Where are they?' the cowards forsook me; when one proved a traitor, the rest took to their heels. Thou sayest, 'Where are my disciples?' there is one yonder, sitting by the fire, warming his hands, the same who just now denied me with an oath." But no, he would not utter a word of accusation; he whose lips are mighty to intercede for his people, will never speak against them. Let Satan slander, but Christ pleads. The accuser of the brethren is the prince of this world: the Prince of peace is ever our Advocate before the eternal throne.

The high priest next shifted his ground, and asked him concerning his doctrine—what it was that he taught—whether what he taught was not in contradiction to the original teachings of their great law-giver Moses—and whether he had not railed at the Pharisees, reviled the Scribes, and exposed the rulers. The Master gave a noble answer. Truth is never shamefaced; he boldly points to his public life as his best answer. "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple,



whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said." No sophistries—no attempt at evasion—the best armor for truth is her own naked breast. He had preached in the market-places, on the mountain's brow, and in the temple courts; nothing had been done in a corner. Happy is the man who can make so noble a defense. Where is the joint in such harness? Where can the arrow pierce the man arrayed in so complete a panoply? Little did that arch-knave Caiaphas gain by his crafty questioning. For the rest of the questioning, our Lord Jesus said not a word in self-defense; he knew that it availed not for a lamb to plead with wolves; he was well aware that whatever he said would be misconstrued and made a fresh source of accusation, and he willed, moreover, to fulfill the prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." But what power he exerted in thus remaining silent! Perhaps nothing displays more fully the omnipotence of Christ, than this power of self-control. Control the Deity? What power less than divine can attempt the task? Behold, my brethren, the Son of God does more than rule the winds and commend the waves, he restrains himself. And when a word, a whisper, would have refuted his foes, and swept them to their eternal destruction, he "openeth not his mouth." He who opened his mouth for his enemies, will not utter a word for himself. If ever silence were more than golden, it is this deep silence under infinite provocation.

During this preliminary examination, our Lord suffered an outrage which needs a passing notice. When he had said, "Ask them that hear me," some over-officious person in the crowd struck him in the face. The margin in John 18:22, very properly corrects our version, and renders the passage, "with a rod." Now, considering that our blessed Lord suffered so much, this one little particular might seem unimportant, only it happens to be the subject of prophecy in the book of Micah 5:1, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." This smiting while under trial is peculiarly atrocious. To strike a man while he is pleading in his own defense, would surely be a violation of the laws even of barbarians. It brought Paul's blood into his face, and made him lose his balance when the high priest ordered them to smite him on the mouth. I think I hear his words of burning indignation: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall:

for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" How soon the servant loses his temper: how far more glorious the meekness of the Master. What a contrast do these gentle words afford us—"If I have spoken evil bear witness to the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" This was such a concentrated infamy, to strike a man while pleading for his life, that it well deserved the notice both of evangelist and prophet.

But now the Court are all sitting; the members of the great Sanhedrim are all in their various places, and Christ is brought forth for the public trial before the highest ecclesiastical court; though it is, mark you, a foregone conclusion, that by hook or by crook they will find him guilty. They scour the neighborhood for witnesses. There were fellows to be found in Jerusalem, like those who in the olden times frequented the Old Bailey, "straw witnesses," who were ready to be bought on either side; and, provided they were well paid, would swear to anything. But for all this, though the witnesses were ready to perjure themselves, they could not agree one with another; being heard separately, their tales did not tally. At last two came, with some degree of similarity in their witness; they were both liars, but for once the two liars had struck the same note. They declared that he said "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands," Mark 14:58. Now here was, first, misquotation. He never said, "I will destroy the temple," his words were, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." See how they add to his words and twist them to their own ends. Then again, they not only misquoted the words, but they misrepresented the sense, wilfully, because he spake concerning the temple of his body, and not the literal temple in which they worshipped; and this they must have known. He said, "Destroy this temple"—and the accompanying action might have showed them that he meant his own body, which was raised by his glorious resurrection after destruction upon the cross. Let us add, that even when thus misrepresented, the witness was not sufficient as the foundation of a capital charge. Surely there could be nothing worthy of death in a man's saying, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days." A person might make use of those words a thousand times over—he might be very foolish, but he would not be guilty of death for such an offense. But where men have

made up their minds to hate Christ, they will hate him without a cause. Oh! ye that are adversaries of Christ—and there are some such here to-day—I know ye try to invent some excuse for your opposition to his holy religion; ye forge a hundred falsehoods; but ye know that your witness is not true, and your trial in conscience through which you pass the Savior, is but a mock one. Oh that ye were wise, and would understand him to be what he is, and submit yourselves to him now.

Finding that their witness, even when tortured to the highest degree, was not strong enough, the high priest, to get matter of accusation, adjured him by the Most High God to answer whether he was the Christ, "the Son of the Blessed." Being thus adjured, our Master would not set us an example of cowardice; he spake to purpose; he said, "I am," Mark 14:62, and then, to show how fully he knew this to be true, he added, "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." I cannot understand what Unitarians do with this incident. Christ was put to death on a charge of blasphemy, for having declared himself to be the Son of God. Was not that the time when any sensible person would have denied the accusation? If he had not really claimed to be the Son of God, would he not now have spoken? Would he not now, once for all, have delivered our minds from the mistake under which we are laboring, if, indeed, it be a mistake, that he is the Son of God? But no, he seals it with his blood; he bears open testimony before the herd of his accusers. "I am." I am the Son of God, and I am the sent-one of the Most High. Now, now the thing is done. They want no further evidence. The judge, forgetting the impartiality which becomes his station, pretends to be wonderfully struck with horror, rends his garments, turns round to ask his co-assessors whether they need any further witness, and they, all too ready, hold up their hands in token of unanimity, and he is at once condemned to die. Ah! brethren, and no sooner condemned, than the high priest, stepping down from his divan, spits in his face, and then the Sanhedrim follow, and smite him on his cheek; and then they turn him down to the rabble that had gathered in the court, and they buffet him from one to the other, and spit upon his blessed cheeks, and smite him, and then they play the old game again, which they had learned so well before the trial came on; they blindfold him for a second time, place him in the chair, and as they smite him with

their fists they cry. "Prophet! Prophet! Prophet! who is it that smote thee? Prophecy unto us!" And thus the Savior passed a second time through that most brutal and ignominious treatment. If we had tears, if we had sympathies, if we had hearts, we should prepare to shed those tears, to awake those sympathies, and break those hearts, now. O thou Lord of life and glory! how shamefully wast thou illtreated by those who pretended to be the curators of holy truth, the conservators of integrity, and the teachers of the law!

Having thus sketched the trial as briefly as I could, let me just say, that, throughout the whole of this trial before the ecclesiastical tribunal, it is manifest that they did all they could to pour contempt upon his two claims—to Deity and to Messiahship. Now, friends, this morning—this morning, as truly as on that eventful occasion—you and I must range ourselves on one of two sides. Either this day we must cheerfully acknowledge his Godhead, and accept him also as the Messiah, the Savior promised of old to us; or else we must take our post with those who are the adversaries of God and of his Christ. Will you ask yourself the question, on which side will you now stand? I pray you, do not think that Christ's Deity needs any further proof than that which this one court gives. My dear friends, there is no religion under heaven, no false religion, which would have dared to hazard such a statement, as that yonder man who was spit upon and buffeted was none other than incarnate God. No false religion would venture to draw upon the credulity of its followers to that extent. What! that man there who speaks not a word, who is mocked, despised, rejected, made nothing of—what! he "very God of very God?" You do not find Mohammed, nor any false prophet, asking any person to believe a doctrine so extraordinary. They know too well that there is a limit even to human faith; and they have not ventured upon such a marvellous assertion as this, that yonder despised man is none other than the upholder of all things. No false religion would have taught a truth so humbling to him who is its founder and Lord. Besides, it is not in the power of any man-made religion to have conceived such a thought. That Deity should willingly submit to be spit upon to redeem those whose mouths vented the spittle! In what book do you read such a wonder as this? We have pictures drawn from imagination; we have been enchanted along romantic pages, and we have

marvelled at the creative flights of human genius; but where did you ever read such a thought as this? "God was made flesh and dwelt among us"—he was despised, scourged, mocked, treated as though he were the offscouring of all things, brutally treated, worse than a dog, and all out of pure love to his enemies. Why, the thought is such a great one, so God-like, the compassion in it is so divine, that it must be true. None but God could have thought of such a thing as this stoop from the highest throne in glory to the cross of deepest shame and woe. And do you think that if the doctrine of the cross were not true, such effects would follow from it? Would those South Sea Islands, once red with the blood of cannibalism, be now the abode of sacred song and peace? Would this island, once itself the place of naked savages, be what it is, through the influence of the benign gospel of God, if that gospel were a lie? Ah! hallowed mistake, indeed, to produce such peaceful, such blessed, such lasting, such divine results! Ah! he is God. The thing is not false. And that he is Messiah, who shall doubt? If God should send a prophet, what better prophet could you desire? What character would you seek to have exhibited more completely human and divine? What sort of a Savior would you wish for? What could better satisfy the cravings of conscience? Who could commend himself more fully to the affections of the heart? He must be, we feel at once, as we see him, one alone by himself, with no competitor; he must be the Messiah of God.

Come, now, sirs, on which side will you range yourselves? Will you smite him? I put the question—"Who is it that will smite him this day? Who is it that will spit upon him this day?" "I will not," says one, "but I do not accept nor believe in him." In that you smite him. "I do not hate him," says another, "but I am not saved by him." In refusing his love you smite him. Whoever among you will not trust him with your soul—in that you smite him, smite him in the tenderest part: since you impugn his love and power to save. Oh! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." That suffering man stands in the room, and place, and stead of every one that will believe on him. Trust him! trust him!—you have then accepted him as your God, as your Messiah. Refuse to trust him!—you have smitten him; and you may think it little to do this to-day; but when he rides upon the clouds of heaven you will see your sin in its true light, and you will shudder to think that ever

you could have refused him who now reigns "King of kings and Lord of lords." God help you to accept him, as your God and Christ, to-day!

II. But our time flies too rapidly, and we must hasten with it, and accompany our Savior to another place.

The Romans had taken away from the Jews the power to put a person to death, they sometimes did it still, but they did it, as in the case of Stephen, by popular tumult. Now, in our Savior's case they could not do this, because there was still a strong feeling in favor of Christ among the people, a feeling so strong, that had they not been bribed by the rulers, they would never have said, "Crucify him! crucify him!" You will remember that the priests and rulers did not arrest him on the feast day, "lest" said they "there be a tumult among the people." Besides, the Jewish way of putting a person to death, was by stoning: hence, unless there was a sufficient number of persons who hated him, a person would never get put to death at all. That is why the method of putting to death by stoning was chosen, because if a person was generally thought to be innocent, very few persons would stone him; and although he would be somewhat maimed, his life might possibly be spared. They thought, therefore, the Savior might escape as he did at other times, when they took up stones to stone him. Moreover they desired to put him to the death of the accursed; they would confound him with slaves and criminals, and hang him like the Canaanitish kings of old; therefore they hound him away to Pilate. The distance was about a mile. He was bound in the same cruel manner, and was doubtless cut by the cords. He had already suffered most dreadfully; please to remember the bloody sweat of last Sabbath week; then remember that he has already twice been beaten; and he is now hurried along, without any rest or refreshment, just as the morning is breaking, along the streets to the place where Pilate lived, perhaps the tower of Antonia, close to the temple itself; we are not quite sure. He is bound and they hurry him along the road; and here the Romish writers supply a great number of particulars of anguish out of their very fertile imaginations. After they had brought him there a difficulty occurred. These holy people, these very righteous elders, could not come into the company of Pilate, because Pilate, being a Gentile, would defile them; and there was a broad space outside the palace, like a raised platform, this

was called "the pavement," where Pilate was wont to sit on those high days, that he might not touch these blessed Jews. So he came out on the pavement, and they themselves went not into the hall, but remained before "the pavement." Always notice, that sinners who can swallow camels will strain at gnats, crowds of men who will do great sins are very much afraid of committing some little things which they they think will affect their religion. Notice, that many a man who is a big thief during the week, will ease his conscience by rigid Sabbatarianism when the day comes round. In fact, most hypocrites run for shelter to some close observance of days, ceremonies, and observations, when they have slighted the weightier matters of the law.

Well, Pilate receives him bound. The charge brought against him was not, of course, blasphemy; Pilate would have laughed at that, and declined all interference. They accused him of stirring up sedition, pretending to be a king, and teaching that it was not right to pay tribute to Caesar. This last charge was a clear and manifest lie. He refuse to pay tribute? Did not he send to the fish's mouth to get the money? He say that Caesar must not have his due? Did he not tell the Herodians—"Render unto Caesar the things that are Cresar's?" He stir up a sedition?—the man that had "not where to lay his head?" He pretend to snatch the diadem from Caesar?—he, the man who hid himself, when the people would have taken him by force and made him a king? Nothing can be more atrociously false. Pilate examines him, and discovers at once, both from his silence and from his answer, that he is a most extraordinary person; he perceives that the kingdom which he claims is something supernatural; he cannot understand it. He asks him what he came into the world for, the reply puzzles and amazes him, "To bear witness to the truth," says he. Now, that was a thing no Roman understood; for a hundred years before Pilate came, Jugurtha said of the city of Rome, "a city for sale;" bribery, corruption, falsehood, treachery, villany, these were the gods of Rome, and truth had fled the seven hills, the very meaning of the word was scarcely known. So Pilate turned on his heel, and said, "What is truth?" As much as to say, "I am the procurator of this part of the country; all I care for is money." "What's truth?" I do not think he asked the question, "What is truth?" as some preach from it, as if he seriously desired to know what it really was, for surely he would have paused for the divine reply

and not have gone away from Christ the moment afterwards. He said, "Pshaw; What's truth?" Yet there was something so awful about the prisoner, that his wife's dream, and her message—"See that thou have nothing to do with this just person," all worked upon the superstitious fears of this very weak-minded ruler; so he went back and told the Jews a second time, "I find no fault in him;" and when they said, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning at Galilee to this place," he caught at that word "Galilee." "Now," he thought, "I will be rid of this man; the people shall have their way, and yet I will not be guilty." "Galilee?" said he; "why, Herod is ruler there; you had better take him to Herod at once." He thus gained two or three points; he made Herod his friend; he hoped to exonerate himself of his crime, and yet please the mob. Away they go to Herod. Oh! I think I see that blessed Lamb of God again hounded through the streets. Did you ever read such a tale? No martyr, even in bloody Mary's time, was ever harried thus as the Savior was. We must not think that his agonies were all confined to the cross; they were endured in those streets—in those innumerable blows, and kicks, and strikings with the fist, that he had to bear. They took him before Herod, and Herod having heard of his miracles, thought to see some wonderful thing, some piece of jugglery, done in his presence; and when Christ refused to speak, and would not plead before "that fox" at all, then Herod treated him with a sneer. "They made nothing of him." Can you picture the scene? Herod, his captains, his lieutenants, all, down to the meanest soldiers, treat the Savior with a broad grin! "A pretty king," they seem to say; "a miserable beggar better! Look at his cheeks, all bruised where they have been smiting him: is that the color of royalty's complexion?" "Look," say they, "he is emaciated, he is covered with blood, as though he had been sweating drops of blood all night. Is that the imperial purple?" And so they "made nothing of him," and despised his kingship. And Herod said, "Bring out that costly white robe, you know, if he be a king, let us dress him so," and so the white robe is put on him—not a purple one—that Pilate put on afterwards. He has two robes put on him—the one put on by the Jews, the other by the Gentiles; seeming to be a fit comment on that passage in Solomon's song, where the spouse says, "My beloved is white and ruddy"—white with the gorgeous robe which marked him King of the Jews, and then red with the purple robe which Pilate afterwards cast upon his shoulders, which proved him King of



nations too. And so Herod and his men of war, after treating him as shamefully as they could, looking at him as some madman more fit for Bedlam than elsewhere, sent him back again to Pilate. Oh! can you not follow him? You want no great imagination—as you see them dragging him back again! It is another journey along those streets; another scene of shameful tumult, bitter scorn, and cruel smitings. Why, he dies a hundred deaths, my brethren, it is not one—it is death on death the Savior bears, as he is dragged from tribunal to tribunal.

See, they bring him to Pilate a second time. Pilate again is anxious to save him. He says, "I have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod; I will therefore release him!" "No, no," they say; and they clamor greatly. He proposes a cruel alternative, which yet he meant for tender mercy "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." He gave him over to his lictors to be scourged. The Roman scourge was, as I have explained before, a most dreadful instrument. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and little sharp pieces of bone, which, you know, cause the most frightful lacerations, if by accident you even run them into your hand; little sharp pieces, splinters of bone, were intertwined every here and there among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down some of these pieces of bone went right into the flesh, and tore off heavy thonglulls, and not only the blood but the very flesh would be rent away. The Savior was tied to the column, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this of the Roman lictor was probably the most severe of his flagellations. After Pilate had beaten him, he gave him up to the soldiers for a short time, that they might complete the mockery, and so be able to witness that Pilate had no idea of the royalty of Jesus, and no complicity in any supposed treason. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head, and bowed before him, and spat on him, and put a reed in his hands; they smote the crown of thorns into his temple, they covered him with a purple robe; and then Pilate brought him out, saying, "Behold the man!" I believe he did it out of pity. He thought, "Now I have wounded him and cut him to pieces thus, I will not kill him; that sight will move their hearts." Oh! that Ecce Homo ought to have melted their hearts, if Satan had not made them harder than flints and sterner than steel. But no, they cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" So Pilate listens to them again, and they change their note, "He hath spoken

blasphemy." This was a wrong charge to bring; for Pilate, having his superstition again aroused, is the more afraid to put him to death; and he comes out again, and says, "I find no fault in him." What a strong contest between good and evil in that man's heart! But they cried out again, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend." They hit the mark this time, and he yields to their clamor. He brings forth a basin of water, and he washes his hands before them all, and he says, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." A poor way of escaping! That water could not wash the blood from his hands, though their cry did bring the blood on their heads—"His blood be on us and on our children." When that is done, Pilate takes the last desperate step of sitting down on the pavement in royal state; he condemns Jesus, and bids them take him away. But ere he is taken to execution, the dogs of war shall snap at him again. The Jews no doubt having bribed the soldiers to excessive zeal of scorn, they a second time—(oh! mark this; perhaps ye thought this happened only once. This is the fifth time he has thus been treated)—the soldiers took him back again, and once more they mocked him, once more they spat upon him, and treated him shamefully. So, you see, there was once when he first went to the house of Caiaphas; then after he was condemned there; then Herod and his men of war; then Pilate after the scourging; and then the soldiers, after the ultimate condemnation. See ye not how manifestly "he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." I do not know when I ever more heartily wished to be eloquent than I do now. I am talking to my own lips, and saying, "Oh! that these lips had language worthy of the occasion!" I do but faintly sketch the scene. I cannot lay on the glowing colors. Oh, that I could set forth thy grief, thou Man of Sorrows! God the Holy Ghost impress it on your memories and on your souls, and help you pitifully to consider the griefs of your blessed Lord.

I will now leave this point, when I have made this practical application of it. Remember, dear friends, that this day, as truly as on that early morning, a division must be made among us. Either you must this day accept Christ as your King, or else his blood will be on you. I bring my Master out before your eyes, and say to you, "Behold your King." Are you willing to yield obedience to him? He claims first your implicit faith in his

merit: will you yield to that? He claims, next, that you will take him to be Lord of your heart, and that, as he shall be Lord within, so he shall be Lord without. Which shall it be? Will you choose him now? Does the Holy Spirit in your soul—for without that you never will—does the Holy Spirit say, "Bow the knee, and take him as your king?" Thank God, then. But if not, his blood is on you, to condemn you. You crucified him. Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the Jews and Romans, all meet in you. You scourged him; you said, "Let him be crucified." Do not say it was not so. In effect you join their clamours when you refuse him; when you go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, and despise his love and his blood, you do spiritually what they did literally—you despise the King of kings. Come to the fountain of his blood, and wash and be clean.

III. But we must close with a third remark. Christ really underwent yet a third trial. He was not only tried before the ecclesiastical and civil tribunals, but, he was really tried before the great democratical tribunal, that is, the assembly of the people in the street.

You will say, "How?" Well, the trial was somewhat singular, but yet it was really a trial. Barabbas—a thief, a felon, a murderer, a traitor, had been captured; he was probably one of a band of murderers who were accustomed to come up to Jerusalem at the time of the feast, carrying daggers under their cloaks to stab persons in the crowd, and rob them, and then he would be gone again; besides that, he had tried to stir up sedition, setting himself up possibly as a leader of banditti. Christ was put into competition with this villain; the two were presented before the popular eye, and to the shame of manhood, to the disgrace of Adam's race, let it be remembered that the perfect, loving, tender, sympathizing, disinterested Savior was met with the word, "Crucify him!" and Barabbas, the thief, was preferred. "Well," says one, "that was atrocious." The same thing is put before you this morning—the very same thing; and every unregenerate man will make the same choice that the Jews did, and only men renewed by grace will act upon the contrary principle. I say, friend, this day I put before you Christ Jesus, or your sins. The reason why many come not to Christ is because they cannot give up their lusts, their pleasures, their profits. Sin is Barabbas; sin is a thief; it will rob your soul of its life; it will rob God of his glory. Sin is a murderer; it stabbed our

father Adam; it slew our purity. Sin is a traitor; it rebels against the king of heaven and earth. If you prefer sin to Christ, Christ has stood at your tribunal, and you have given in your verdict that sin is better than Christ. Where is that man? He comes here every Sunday; and yet he is a drunkard? Where is he? You prefer that reeling demon Bacchus to Christ. Where is that man? He comes here. Yes; and where are his midnight haunts? The harlot and the prostitute can tell! You have preferred your own foul, filthy lust to Christ. I know some here that have their consciences open pricked, and yet there is no change in them. You prefer Sunday trading to Christ; you prefer cheating to Christ; you prefer the theater to Christ; you prefer the harlot to Christ; you prefer the devil himself to Christ, for he it is that is the father and author of these things. "No," says one, "I don't, I don't." Then I do again put this question, and I put it very pointedly to you—"If you do not prefer your sins to Christ, how is it that you are not a Christian?" I believe this is the main stumbling-stone, that "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." We come not to Christ because of the viciousness of our nature, and depravity of our heart; and this is the depravity of your heart, that you prefer darkness to light, put bitter for sweet, and choose evil as your good. Well, I think I hear one saying, "Oh! I would be on Jesus Christ's side, but I did not look at it in that light; I thought the question was, "Would he be on my side? I am such a poor guilty sinner that I would fain stand anywhere, if Jesu's blood would wash me." Sinner! sinner! if thou talkest like that, then I will meet thee right joyously. Never was a man one with Christ till Christ was one with him. If you feel that you can now stand with Christ, and say, "Yes, despised and rejected, he is nevertheless my God, my Savior, my king. Will he accept me? Why, soul, he has accepted you; he has renewed you, or else you would not talk so. You speak like a saved man. You may not have the comfort of salvation, but surely there is a work of grace in your heart, God's divine election has fallen upon you, and Christ's precious redemption has been made for you, or else you would not talk so. You cannot be willing to come to Christ, and yet Christ reject you. God forbid we should suppose the possibility of any sinner crying after the Savior, and the Savior saying, "No, I will not have you." Blessed be his name, "Him that cometh to me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "Well," says one, "then I would have him to-day. How can I do it?" There is nothing asked of thee but this. Trust him! trust him!

Believe that God put him in the stead of men; believe that what he suffered was accepted by God instead of their punishment; believe that this great equivalent for punishment can save you. Trust him; throw yourself on him; as a man commits himself to the waters, so do you; sink or swim! You will never sink, you will never sink; for "he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation."

May these faint words upon so thrilling a subject bless your souls, and unto God be glory, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

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## **Grieving The Holy Spirit**

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. - Ephesians 4:30

THERE IS SOMETHING very touching in this admonition, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." It does not say, "Do not make him angry." A more delicate and tender term is used - "Grieve him not." There are some men of so hard a character, that to make another angry does not give them much pain; and indeed, there are many of us who are scarcely to be moved by the information that another is angry with us; but where is the heart so hard, that it is not moved when we know that we have caused others grief? - for grief is a sweet combination of anger and of love. It is anger, but all the gall is taken from it. Love sweetens the anger, and turns the edge of it, not against the person, but against the offense. We all know how we use the two terms in contra-distinction the one to the other. When I commit any offense, some friend who hath but little patience, suddenly snaps asunder his forbearance and is angry with me. The same offense is observed by a loving father, and he is grieved. There is anger in

his bosom, but he is angry and he sins not, for he is angry against my sin; and yet there is love to neutralize and modify the anger towards me. Instead of wishing me ill as the punishment of my sin, he looks upon my sin itself as being the ill. He grieves to think that I am already injured, from the fact that I have sinned. I say this is a heavenly compound, more precious than all the ointment of the merchants. There may be the bitterness of myrrh, but there is all the sweetness of frankincense in this sweet term "to grieve." I am certain, my hearers, I do not flatter you when I declare, that I am sure that the most of you would grieve, if you thought you were grieving anyone else. You, perhaps, would not care much if you had made any one angry without a cause; but to grieve him, even though it were without a cause and without intention, would nevertheless cause you distress of heart, and you would not rest until this grief had subsided, till you had made some explanation or apology, and had done your best to allay the smart and take away the grief. When we see anger in another, we at once begin to feel hostility. Anger begets anger; but grief begets pity, and pity is next akin to love; and are love those whom we have caused to grieve. Now, is not this a very sweet expression - "Grieve not the Holy Spirit?" Of course, the language is to be understood as speaking after the manner of men. The Holy Spirit of God knoweth no passion or suffering, but nevertheless, his emotion is here described in human language as being that of grief. And is it not, I say a tender and touching thing, that the Holy Spirit should direct his servant Paul to say to us "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," do not excite his loving anger, do not vex him, do not cause him to mourn? He is a dove; do not cause him to mourn, because you have treated him harshly and ungratefully. Now, the purport of my sermon, this morning, will be to exhort you not to grieve the Spirit; but I shall divide it thus: - first, I shall discourse upon the love of the Spirit; secondly, upon the seal of the Spirit; and then, thirdly, upon the grieving of the Spirit.

I. The few words I have to say UPON THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT will all be pressing forward to my great mark, stirring you up not to grieve the Spirit; for when we are persuaded that another loves us, we find at once a very potent reason why we should not grieve him. The love of the Spirit! - how shall I tell it forth? Surely it needs a songster to sing it, for love is only to be spoken of in words of song. The love of the Spirit! - let me tell

you of his early love to us. He loved us without beginning. In the eternal covenant of grace, as I told you last Sabbath, he was one of the high contracting parties in the divine contract, whereby we are saved. All that can be said of the love of the Father, of the love of the Son, may be said of the love of the Spirit - it is eternal, it is infinite, it is sovereign, it is everlasting, it is a love which cannot be dissolved, which cannot be decreased, a love which cannot be removed from those who are the objects of it. Permit me, however, to refer you to his acts, rather than his attributes. Let me tell you of the love of the Spirit to you and to me. Oh how early was that love which he manifested towards us, even in our childhood! My brethren, we can well remember how the Spirit was wont to strive with us. We went astray from the womb speaking lies, but how early did the Spirit of God stir up our conscience, and solemnly correct us on account of our youthful sins. How frequently since then has the Spirit wooed us! How often under the ministry has he compelled our hearts to melt, and the tear has run down our cheeks, and he has sweetly whispered in our ear, "My son, give me thy heart; go to thy chamber, shut thy door about thee, confess thy sins, and seek a Saviour's love and blood." Oh, - but let us blush to tell it - how often have we done despite to him! When we were in a state of unregeneracy, how we were wont to resist him! We quenched the Spirit; he strove with us but we strove against him. But blessed be his dear name, and let him have everlasting songs for it, he would not let us go! We would not be saved, but he would save us. We sought to thrust ourselves into the fire, but he sought to pluck us from the burning. We would dash ourselves from the precipice, but he wrestled with us and held us fast; he would not let us destroy our souls. Oh, how we ill-treated him, how we did set at naught his counsel! How did we scorn and scoff him; how did we despise the ordinance which would lead us to Christ! How did we violate that holy cord which was gently drawing us to Jesus and his cross! I am sure, my brethren, at the recollections of the persevering struggles of the Spirit with you, you must be stirred up to love him. How often did he restrain you from sin, when you were about to plunge headlong into a course of vice! How often did he constrain you to good, when you would have neglected it! You, perhaps, would not have been in the way at all, and the Lord would not have met you, if it had not been for that sweet Spirit, who would not let you become a blasphemer, who would not suffer you to forsake the house

of God, and would not permit you to become a regular attendant at the haunts of vice, but checked you, and held you in, as it were, with bit and bridle. Though you were like a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke, yet he would not let you have your way. Though you struggled against him, yet he would not throw the reins upon your necks, but he said, "I will have him, I will have him against his will; I will change his heart, I will not let him go till I have made him a trophy of my mighty power to save." And then think my brethren of the love of the Spirit after that -

"Dost mind the time, the spot of land,  
Where Jesus did thee meet?  
Where he first took thee by the hand,  
Thy bridegroom's love - how sweet!"

Ah, then, in that blest hour, to memory dear, was it not the Holy Spirit who guided you to Jesus? Do you remember the love of the Spirit, when, after having quickened you, he took you aside, and showed you Jesus on the tree? Who was it that opened our blind eye to see a dying Saviour? Who was it that opened your deaf ear to hear the voice of pardoning love? Who opened your clasped and palsied hand to receive the tokens of a Saviour's grace? Who was it that brake your hard heart and made a way for the Saviour to enter and dwell therein? Oh! it was that precious Spirit that self-same Spirit, to whom you had done so much despite, whom in the days of your flesh you had resisted! What a mercy it was that he did not say, "I will swear in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest, for they have vexed me, and I will take my everlasting flight from them;" or thus, "Ephraim is joined unto idols, I will let him alone!" And since that time, my brethren, how sweetly has the Spirit proved his love to you and to me. It is not only in his first strivings, and then his divine quickenings; but in all the sequel, how much have we owed to his instruction. We have been dull scholars with the word before us, plain and simple, so that he that reads may read, and he that reads may understand, yet how small a portion of his Word has our memory retained, how little progress have we made in the school of God's grace! We are but learners yet, unstable, weak, and apt to slide, but what a blessed instructor we have had! Has he not led us into many a truth, and taken of the things of Christ and applied them unto us? Oh! When I think how stupid I have been, I wonder that he has not given me up. When I



think what a dolt I have been, when he would have taught me the things of the kingdom of God, I marvel that he should have had such patience with me. Is it a wonder that Jesus should become a babe? Is it not an equal wonder that the Spirit of the living God, should become a teacher of babes? It is a marvel that Jesus should lie in a manger; is it not an equal marvel that the Holy Spirit should become an usher in the sacred school, to teach fools, and make them wise? It was condescension that brought the Saviour to the cross, but is it not equal condescension that brings the mighty Spirit of grace down to dwell with stubborn unruly, wild asses' colts, to teach them the mystery of the kingdom, and make them know the wonders of a Saviour's love?

Furthermore, my brethren, forget not how much we owe to the Spirit's consolation, how much has he manifested his love to you in cherishing you in all your sicknesses, assisting you in all your labors; and comforting you in all your distresses. He has been a blessed comforter to me I can testify; when every other comfort failed, when the promise itself seemed empty, when the ministry was void of power, it is then the Holy Spirit has proved a rich comfort unto my soul, and filled my poor heart with peace and joy in believing. How many times would your heart have broken if the Spirit had not bound it up! How often has he who is your teacher become also your physician, has closed the wounds of your poor bleeding spirit, and has bound up those wounds with the court plaister of the promise, and so has stanchd the bleeding, and has given you back your spiritual health once more. It does seem to rise a marvel that the Holy Ghost should become a comforter, for comforting is, to many minds, but an inferior work in the church, though really it is not so. To teach, to preach, to command with authority, how many are willing to do this because this is honorable work; but to sit down and bear with the infirmities of the creature, to enter into all the stratagems of unbelief, to find the soul a way of peace in the midst of seas of trouble this is compassion like a God, that the Holy Spirit should stoop from heaven to become a comforter of disconsolate spirits. What! must he himself bring the cordial? must he wait upon his sick child and stand by his bed? must he make his bed for him in his afflictions must he carry him in his infirmity? must he breathe continually into him his very breath? Doth the Holy Spirit become a waiting servant of the church? Doth he become a

lamp to enlighten? and doth he become a staff on which we may lean? This, I say, should move us to love the Holy Spirit, for we have in all this abundant proofs of his love to us.

Stay not here, beloved, there are larger fields yet beyond, now that we are speaking of the love of the Spirit. Remember how much he loves us when he helpeth our infirmities. Nay, not only doth he help our infirmities, but when we know not what to pray for as we ought he teacheth us how to pray, and when "we ourselves groan within ourselves," then the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered - groans as we should groan, but more audibly, so that our prayer, which else would have been silent, reaches the ears of Christ, and is then presented before his Father's face. To help our infirmities is a mighty instance of love. When God overcomes infirmity altogether, or removes it, there is something very noble, and grand, and sublime in the deed; when he permits the infirmity to remain and yet works with the infirmity, this is tender compassion indeed. When the Saviour heals the lame man you see his Godhead, but when he walketh with the lame man, limping though his gait may be; when he sitteth with the beggar, when he talketh with the publican, when he carryeth the babe in his bosom, then this helping of infirmities is a manifestation of love almost unequalled. Save Christ's bearing our infirmities upon the tree and our sins in his own body, I know of no greater or more tender instance of divine love than when it is written, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Oh how much you owe to the Spirit when you have been on your knees in prayer! You know, my brethren, what it is to be dull and lifeless there; to groan for a word, and yet you cannot find it; to wish for a word, and yet the very wish is languid; to long to have desires, and yet all the desire you have is a desire that you may be able to desire. Oh, have you not sometimes, when your desires have been kindled longed to get a grip at the promise by the hand of faith? "Oh," you have said, "if I could but plead the promise, all my necessities would be removed, and all my sorrows would be allayed;" but, alas, the promise was beyond your reach. If you touched it with the tip of your finger, you could not grasp it as you desired, you could not plead it, and therefore you came away without the blessing. But when the Spirit has helped our infirmities how have we prayed! Why, there have been times when you and I have so grasped the

knocker of the gate of mercy, and have let it fall with such tremendous force, that it seemed as if the very gate itself did shake and totter; there have been seasons when we have laid hold upon the angel, have overcome heaven by prayer, have declared we would not let Jehovah himself go except he should bless us. We have, and we say it without blasphemy, moved the arm that moves the world. We have brought down upon us the eyes that look upon the universe. All this we have done, not by our own strength, but by the might and by the power of the Spirit, and seeing he has so sweetly enabled us, though we have so often forgotten to thank him; seeing that he has so graciously assisted us though we have often taken all the glory to ourselves instead of airing it to him, must we not admire his love, and must it not be a fearful sin indeed to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed?

Another token of the Spirit's love remains, namely, his indwelling in the saints. We sing in one of our hymns, -  
"Dost thou not dwell in all the saints?"

We ask a question which can have but one answer. He does dwell in the heart of all God's redeemed and blood-washed people. And what a condescension is this, that he whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, dwells in thy breast my brother. That breast often covered with rags, may be a breast often agitated with anxious care and thought, a breast too often defiled with sin, and yet he dwells there. The little narrow heart of man the Holy Spirit hath made his palace. Though it is but a cottage, a very hovel, and all unholy and unclean yet doth the Holy Spirit condescend to make the heart of his people his continual abode. Oh my friends, when I think how often you and I have let the devil in, I wonder the Spirit has not withdrawn from us. The final perseverance of the saints, is one of the greatest miracles on record; in fact, it is the sum total of miracles. The perseverance of a saint for a single day, is a multitude of miracles of mercy. When you consider that the Spirit is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet he dwells in the heart where sin often intrudes, a heart out of which comes blasphemies, and murders, and all manner of evil thoughts and concupiscence, what if sometimes he is grieved, and retires and leaves us to ourselves for a season? It is a marvel that he is there at all, for he must be daily grieved with these evil guests, these false

traitors, these base intruders who thrust themselves into that little temple which he has honored with his presence, the temple of the heart of man. I am afraid, dear friends, we are too much in the habit of talking of the love of Jesus, without thinking of the love of the Holy Spirit. Now I would not wish to exalt one person of the Trinity above another, but I do feel this, that because Jesus Christ was a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore there was something tangible in him that can be seen with the eyes, and handled with the hands, therefore we more readily think of him, and fix our love on him, than we do upon the Spirit. But why should it be? Let us love Jesus with all our hearts, and let us love the Holy Spirit too. Let us have songs for him, gratitude for him. We do not forget Christ's cross, let us not forget the Spirit's operations. We do not forget what Jesus has done for us, let us always remember what the Spirit does in us. Why you talk of the love, and grace, and tenderness, and faithfulness of Christ, why do you not say the like of the Spirit? Was ever love like his, that he should visit us? Was ever mercy like his, that he should bear with our ill manners, though constantly repeated by us? Was ever faithfulness like his, that multitudes of sins cannot drive him away? Was ever power like his, that overcometh all our iniquities, and yet leads us safely on, though hosts of foes within and without would rob us of our Christian life?

"Oh, the love of the Spirit I sing  
By whom is redemption applied."

And unto his name be glory for ever and ever.

II. This brings me to the second point. Here we have another reason why we should not grieve the Spirit. **IT IS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WE ARE SEALED.** "BY whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption." I shall be very brief here. The Spirit himself is expressed as the seal, even as he himself is directly said to be the pledge of our inheritance. The sealing, I think, has a three-fold meaning. It is a sealing of attestation or confirmation. I want to know whether I am truly a child of God. The Spirit itself also beareth witness with my spirit that I am born of God. I have the writings, the title-deeds of the inheritance that is to come - I want to know whether those are valid, whether they are true, or whether they are mere counterfeits written out by that old scribe of hell, Master

Presumption and Carnal Security. How am I to know? I look for the seal. After that we have believed on the Son of God, the Father seals us as his children, by the gift of the Holy Ghost. "Now he which hath anointed us is God, who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." No faith is genuine which does not bear the seal of the Spirit. No love, no hope can ever save us, except it be sealed with the Spirit of God, for whatever hath not his seal upon it is spurious. Faith that is unsealed may be a poison, it may be presumption; but faith that is sealed by the Spirit is true, real, genuine faith. Never be content, my dear hearers, unless you are sealed, unless you are sure, by the inward witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is possible for a man to know infallibly that he is secure of heaven. He may not only hope so, but he may know it beyond a doubt, and he may know it thus, - by being able with the eye of faith to see the seal, the broad stamp of the Holy Spirit set upon his own character and experience. It is a seal of attestation.

In the next place, it is a sealing of appropriation. When men put their mark upon an article, it is to show that it is their own. The farmer brands his tools that they may not be stolen. They are his. The shepherd marks his sheep that they may be recognized as belonging to his flock. The king himself puts his broad arrow upon everything that is his property. So the Holy Spirit puts the broad arm of God upon the hearts of all his people. He seals us. "Thou shalt be mine," saith the Lord, "in the day when I make up my jewels." And then the Spirit puts God's seal upon us to signify that we are God's reserved inheritance - his peculiar people, the portion in which his soul delighteth.

But, again, by sealing is meant preservation. Men seal up that which they wish to have preserved, and when a document is sealed it becomes valid henceforth. Now, it is by the Spirit of God that the Christian is sealed, that he is kept, he is preserved, sealed unto the day of redemption - sealed until Christ comes fully to redeem the bodies of his saints by raising them from the death, and fully to redeem the world by purging it from sin, and making it a kingdom unto himself in righteousness. We shall hold on our way, we shall be saved. The chosen seed cannot be lost they must be

brought home at last, but how? By the sealing of the Spirit. Apart from that they perish, they are undone. When the last general fire shall blaze out, everything that has not the seal of the Spirit on it, shall be burned up. But the men upon whose forehead is the seal shall be preserved. They shall be safe "amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." Their spirits, mounting above the flames shall dwell with Christ eternally, and with that same seal in their forehead upon Mount Zion, they shall sing the everlasting song of gratitude and praise. I say this is the second reason why we should love the Spirit and why we should not grieve him.

III. I come now to the third part of my discourse, namely, THE GRIEVING OF THE SPIRIT, How may we grieve him, - what will be the sad result of grieving him - if we have grieved him, how may we bring him back again? How may we grieve the Spirit? I am now, mark you, speaking of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is in your hearts, and it is very, very easy indeed to grieve him, Sin is as easy as it is wicked. You may grieve him by impure thoughts. He cannot bear sin. If you indulge in lascivious expressions, or if even you allow imagination to coat upon any lascivious act, or if your heart goes after covetousness, if you set your heart upon anything that is evil, the Spirit of God will be grieved, for thus I hear him speaking of himself. "I love this man, I want to have his heart, and yet he is entertaining these filthy lusts. His thoughts, instead of running after me, and after Christ, and after the Father, are running after the temptations that are in the world through lust." And then his Spirit is grieved. He sorrows in his soul because he knows what sorrow these things must bring to our souls. We grieve him yet more if we indulge in outward acts of sin. Then is he sometimes so grieved that he takes his flight for a season, for the dove will not dwell in our hearts if we take loathsome carrion in there. A cleanly being is the dove, and we must not strew the place which the dove frequents with filth and mire, if we do he will fly elsewhere. If we commit sin if we openly bring disgrace upon our religion, if we tempt others to go into iniquity by our evil example, it is not long before the Holy Spirit will begin to grieve. Again, if we neglect prayer, if our closet door is cob-webbed, if we forget to read the Scriptures, if the leaves of our Bible are almost stuck together by neglect, if we never seek to do any good in the world, if we live merely for ourselves and not to Christ, then the Holy Spirit will be grieved, for

thus he saith, "They have forsaken me, they have left the fountain of waters, they have hewn unto themselves broken cisterns." I think I now see the Spirit of God grieving, when you are sitting down to read a novel and there is your Bible unread. Perhaps you take down some book of travels, and you forget that you have got a more precious book of travels in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the story of your blessed Lord and Master. You have no time for prayer, but the Spirit sees you very active about worldly things, and having many hours to spare for relaxation and amusement. And then he is grieved because he sees that you love worldly things better than you love him. His spirit is grieved within him; take care that he does not go away from you, for it will be a pitiful thing for you if he leaves you to yourself. Again, ingratitude tends to grieve him. Nothing cuts a man to the heart more than after having done his utmost for another, he turns round and repays him with ingratitude or insult. If we do not want to be thanked, at least we do love to know that there is thankfulness in the heart upon which we have conferred a boon, and when the Holy Spirit looks into our soul and sees little love to Christ, no gratitude to him for all he has done for us, then is he grieved.

Again, the Holy Spirit is exceedingly grieved by our unbelief. When we distrust the promise he hath given and applied, when we doubt the power or the affection of our blessed Lord. then the Spirit saith within himself - "They doubt my fidelity, they distrust my power, they say Jesus is not able to save unto the uttermost, thus again is the Spirit grieved. Oh, I wish the Spirit had an advocate here this morning, that could speak in better terms than I can. I have a theme that overmasters me, I seem to grieve for him; but I cannot make you grieve, nor tell out the grief I feel. In my own soul I keep saying, "Oh, this is just what you have done - you have grieved him." Let me make a full and frank confession even before you all. I know that too often, I as well as you have grieved the Holy Spirit. Much within us has made that sacred dove to mourn, and my marvel is, that he has not taken his flight from us and left us utterly to ourselves.

Now suppose the Holy Spirit is grieved, what is the effect produced upon us? When the Spirit is grieved first, he bears with us. He is grieved again and again, and again and again, and still he bears with it all. But at last,

his grief becomes so excessive, that he says, "I will suspend my operations; I will begone; I will leave life behind me, but my own actual presence I will take away. And when the Spirit of God goes away from the soul and suspends all his operations what a miserable state we are in. He suspends his instructions; we read the word, we cannot understand it; we go to our commentaries, they cannot tell us the meaning; we fall on our knees and ask to be taught, but we get no answer, we learn nothing. He suspends his comfort; we used to dance, like David before the ark, and now we sit like Job in the ash-pit, and scrape our ulcers with a potsherd. There was a time when his candle shone round about us, but now he is gone; he has left us in the blackness of darkness. Now, he takes from us all spiritual power. Once we could do all things; now we can do nothing. We could slay the Philistines, and lay them heaps upon heaps, but now Delilah can deceive us, and our eyes are put out and we are made to grind in the mill. We go preaching, and there is no pleasure in preaching, and no good follows it. We go to our tract distributing, and our Sunday-school, we might almost as well be at home. There is the machinery there, but there is no love. There is the intention to do good, or perhaps not even that, but alas! there is no power to accomplish the intention. The Lord has withdrawn himself, his light, his joy, his comfort, his spiritual power, all are gone. And then all our graces flag. Our graces are much like the flower called the Hydrangia, when it has plenty of water it blooms, but as soon as moisture fails, the leaves drop down at once. And so when the Spirit goes away, faith shuts up its flowers; no perfume is exhaled. Then the fruit of our love begins to rot and drops from the tree; then the sweet buds of our hope become frostbitten, and they die. Oh, what a sad thing it is to lose the Spirit. Have you never, my brethren, been on your knees and have been conscious that the Spirit of God was not with you, and what awful work it has been to groan, and cry, and sigh, and yet go away again, and no light to shine upon the promises, not so much as a ray of light through the chink of the dungeon. All forsaken, forgotten, and forlorn, you are almost driven to despair. You sing with Cowper: -

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.  
Return, thou sacred dove, return,



Sweet messenger of rest,  
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,  
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee."

Ah! sad enough it is to have the Spirit drawn from us. But, my brethren, I am about to say something with the utmost charity, which, perhaps, may look severe, but, nevertheless, I must say it. The churches of the present day are very much in the position of those who have grieved the Spirit of God; for the Spirit deals with churches just as it does with individuals. Of these late years how little has God wrought in the midst of his churches. Throughout England, at least some four or five years ago, an almost universal torpor had fallen upon the visible body of Christ. There was a little action, but it was spasmodic; there was no real vitality. Oh! how few sinners were brought to Christ, how empty had our places of worship become; our prayer-meetings were dwindling away to nothing, and our church meetings were mere matters of farce. You know right well that this is the case with many London churches to this day; and there be some that do not mourn about it. They go up to their accustomed place, and the minister prays, and the people either sleep with their eyes or else with their hearts, and they go out, and there is never a soul saved. The pool of baptism is seldom stirred; but the saddest part of all is this, the churches are willing to have it so. They are not earnest to get a revival of religion. We have been doing something, the church at large has been doing something. I will not just now put my finger upon what the sin is, but there has been something done which has driven the Spirit of God from us. He is grieved, and he is gone. He is present with us here, I thank his name, he is still visible in our midst. He has not left us. Though we have been as unworthy as others, yet has he given us a long outpouring of his presence. These five years or more, we have had a revival which is not to be exceeded by any revival upon the face of the earth. Without cries or shoutings, without fallings down or swooning, steadily God adds to this church numbers upon numbers, so that your minister's heart is ready to

break with very joy when he thinks how manifestly the Spirit of God is with us. But brethren, we must not be content with this, we want to see the Spirit poured out on all churches. Look at the great gatherings that there were in St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and Exeter Hall, and other places, how was it that no good was done, or so very little? I have watched with anxious eye, and I have never from that day forth heard but of one conversion, and that in St. James' Hall, from all these services. Strange it seems. The blessing may have come in larger measure than we know, but not in so large a measure as we might have expected, if the Spirit of God had been present with all the ministers. Oh would that we may live to see greater things than we have ever seen yet. Go home to your houses, humble yourselves before God, ye members of Christ's church, and cry aloud that he will visit his church, and that he would open the windows of heaven and pour out his grace upon his thirsty hill of Zion, that nations may be born in a day, that sinners may be saved by thousands - that Zion may travail and may bring forth children. Oh! there are signs and tokens of a coming revival. We have heard but lately of a good work among the Ragged School boys of St. Giles's, and our soul has been glad on account of that; and the news from Ireland comes to us like good tidings, not from a far country, but from a sister province of the kingdom. Let us cry aloud to the Holy Spirit, who is certainly grieved with his church, and let us purge our churches of everything that is contrary to his Word and to sound doctrine, and then the Spirit will return, and his power shall be manifest.

And now, in conclusion, there may be some of you here who have lost the visible presence of Christ with you; who have in fact so grieved the Spirit that he has gone. It is a mercy for you to know that the Spirit of God never leaves his people finally; he leaves them for chastisement, but not for damnation. He sometimes leaves them that they may get good by knowing their own weakness, but he will not leave them finally to perish. Are you in a state of backsliding, declension, and coldness? Hearken to me for a moment, and God bless the words. Brother, stay not a moment in a condition so perilous; be not easy for a single second in the absence of the Holy Ghost. I beseech you use every means by which that Spirit may be brought back to you. Once more, let me tell you distinctly what the means are. Search out for the sin that has grieved the Spirit, give it

up, slay that sin upon the spot; repent with tears and sighs; continue in prayer, and never rest satisfied until the Holy Ghost comes back to you. Frequent an earnest ministry, get much with earnest saints, but above all, be much in prayer to God, and let your daily cry be, "Return, return, O Holy Spirit return, and dwell in my soul." Oh, I beseech you be not content till that prayer is heard, for you have become weak as water, and faint and empty while the Spirit has been away from you. Oh! it may be there are some here this morning with whom the Spirit has been striving during the past week. Oh yield to him, resist him not; grieve him not, but yield to him. Is he saying to you now "Turn to Christ?" Listen to him, obey him, he moves you. Oh I beseech you do not despise him. Have you resisted him many a time, then take care you do not again, for there may come a last time when the Spirit may say, "I will go unto my rest, I will not return unto him, the ground is accursed, it shall be given up to barrenness." Oh I hear the word of the gospel, ere ye separate, for the Spirit speaketh effectually to you now in this short sentence - "Repent and be converted everyone of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," and hear this solemn sentence, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." May the Lord grant that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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## **The Glorious Gospel**

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. - 1 Timothy 1:15

Suppose that the message delivered by God's servants to the people must always be called "the burden of the Lord." When the old prophets came forth from their Master, they had such dooms, and threatenings, and lamentations, and woe to preach, that their countenances were wan with

sorrow, and their hearts heavy within them. They usually commenced their discourses by announcing, "The burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord." But now, our message is no heavy one. No thunders compose the theme of the gospel minister. All is mercy; love is the sum and substance of our gospel—love undeserved; love to the very chief of sinners. But it is still a burden to us. So far as the matter of our preaching is concerned, it is our joy and our delight to preach it; but if others feel as I feel now, they will all acknowledge it to be a hard matter to preach the gospel. For now I am sore vexed, and my heart is troubled, not concerning what I have to preach, but how I shall preach it. What if so good a message should fail because of so ill an ambassador? What if my hearers should reject this saying which is worthy of all acceptance, because I may announce it with lack of earnestness? Surely—surely such a supposition is enough to draw the tears to the eyes of any man! But may God in his mercy prevent a consummation so fearfully to be dreaded; and, however I may now preach, may this Word of God commend itself to every man's conscience; and may many of you now gathered together, who have never as yet find to Jesus for refuge, by the simple preaching of the Word, now be persuaded to come in, that you may taste and see that the Lord is good.

Our text is one that pride would never prompt a man to select. It is quite impossible to flourish about it, it is so simple. Human nature is apt to cry, "Well I cannot preach upon that text—it is too plain; there is no mystery in it; I cannot show my learning: it is just a plain, common-sense announcement—I scarcely would wish to take it, for it lowers the man, however much it may exalt the Master." So, expect nothing but the text from me this morning, and the simplest possible explanation of it.

We shall have two heads: first there is the text; then there is a double commendation appended to the text—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

II. First, there is THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TEXT—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." In that there are three things very prominent. There is the Saviour, there is the sinner, and there is the salvation.

1. There is first of all, the Saviour. And in explaining the Christian religion, this is where we must begin. The person of the Saviour is the foundation-stone of our hope. Upon that person depends the usefulness of our gospel. Should someone arise and preach a Saviour, who was man, he would be unworthy of our hopes, and the salvation preached would be inadequate to what we need. Should another preach salvation by an angel, our sins are so heavy that an angelic atonement would have been insufficient; and therefore his gospel totters to the ground. I repeat it, upon the person of the Saviour rests the whole of the salvation. If he be not able, if he be not commissioned to perform the work, then indeed, the work itself is worthless to us, and falls short of its design. But, men and brethren, when we preach the gospel, we need not stop and stammer. We have to show you this day such a Saviour that earth and heaven could not show his fellow. He is one so loving, so great, so mighty, and so well adapted to all our needs, that it is evident enough that he was prepared of old to meet our deepest wants. We know that Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners was God; and that long before his descent to this lower world, he was adored by angels as the Son of the Highest. When we preach the Saviour to you, we tell you that although Jesus Christ was the Son of man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, yet was he eternally the Son of God, and hath in himself all the attributes which constitute perfect Godhead. What more of a Saviour can any man want than God? Is not he who made the heavens able to purge the soul? If he of old stretched the curtains of the skies, and made the earth, that man should dwell upon it, is he not able to rescue a sinner from the destruction that is to come? When we tell you he is God, we have at once declared his omnipotence and his infinity; and when these two things work together, what can be impossible? Let God undertake a work, it cannot meet with failure. Let him enter into an enterprise, and it is sure of its accomplishment. Since, then, Christ Jesus the man was also Christ Jesus the God, in announcing the Saviour, we have the fullest confidence that we are offering you something that is worthy of all acceptation.

The name given to Christ suggests something concerning his person. He is called in our text, "Christ Jesus." The two words mean, the "Anointed Saviour."-The Anointed Saviour "came into the world to save sinners."

Pause here, my soul, and read this o'er again:—He is the anointed Saviour. God the Father from before all worlds anointed Christ to the office of a Saviour of men; and, therefore, when I behold my Redeemer coming from heaven to redeem man from sin, I note that he does not come unsent, or uncommissioned. He has his Father's authority to back him in his work. Hence, there are two immutable things whereon our soul may rest,—there is the person of Christ, divine in itself; there is the anointing from on high, giving to him the stamp of a commission received from Jehovah his Father. O sinner, what greater Saviour dost thou want than he whom God anointed? What more canst thou require than the eternal Son of God to be thy ransom, and the anointing of the Father to be the ratification of the treaty?

Yet we have not fully described the person of the Redeemer, until we have noted that He was man. We read that he came into the world; by which coming into the world we do not understand his usual coming. for he often came into the world before. We read in Scripture, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." In fact, he is always here. The goings of God are to be seen in the sanctuary; both in providence and in nature they are to be seen most visibly. Does not God visit the earth when he makes the tempest his chariot, and rides upon the wings of the wind? But this visitation was different from all these. Christ came into the world in the sense of the fullest and most complete union with human nature. Oh, sinner, when we preach a Divine Saviour, perhaps the name of God is so terrible to thee, that thou canst scarcely think the Saviour is adapted to thee. But hear thou again the old story. Although Christ was the Son of God he left his highest throne in glory and stooped to the manger. There he is, an infant of a span long. See, he grows from boyhood up to manhood, and he come forth into the world to preach and suffer! See him as he groans under the yoke of oppression; he is mocked and despised; his visage more marred than that of any other man, and his form more than the sons of men! See him in the garden, as he sweats drops of blood! See him in Pilate's chamber, in which he is scourged and his shoulders run with gore! On the bloody tree behold him! See him dying with agony too exquisite to be imagined, much less to be described! Behold him in the silent tomb! See him at last bursting the bonds of

death, and rising the third day, and afterwards ascending up on high, "leading captivity captive!" Sinner, thou hast now the Saviour before thee, plainly manifested. He who was called Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the cross, who had his superscription written, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," this man was the Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father, "begotten by his Father before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Oh, could I bring him before you, could I now bring him here to show you his hands and his side, if ye could now, like Thomas, put your fingers in the holes of the nails and thrust your hand into his side, methinks you would not be faithless, but believing. This much I know, if there be anything that can make men believe under the hand of God's most Holy Spirit, it is a true picture of the person of Christ. Seeing is believing in his case. A true view of Christ, a right-looking at him, will most assuredly beget faith in the soul. Oh, I doubt not if ye knew our Master, some of you who are now doubting, and fearing, and trembling, would say, "Oh, I can trust him; a person so divine, and yet so human, ordained and anointed of God, must be worthy of my faith I can trust him; nay more, if I had a hundred souls I could trust him with them all. or, if I stood accountable for all the sins of all mankind, and were myself the very reservoir and sink of this world's infamy, I could trust him even then—for such a Saviour must be "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This, then, is the person of the Saviour.

2. Now. the second point is the sinner. If we had never heard this passage before, or any of similar import, I can suppose that the most breathless silence would reign over this place if for the first time I should commence to read them in your hearing, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save—" I know how you would thrust forward your heads. I know how you would put your hand against your ear, and look as if you would hear with the eye as well as with the ear, to know for whom the Saviour died. Every heart would say, whom did he come to save? And if we had never heard the message

before, how would our hearts palpitate with fear lest the character described should be one unto which it would be impossible for us to attain! Oh, how pleasant it is to hear again that one word which describes the character of those Christ came to save:—"He came into the world to save sinners." Monarch, there is here no distinction; princes, he hath not singled you out to be the objects of his love; but beggars and the poor shall taste his grace. Ye learned men, ye masters of Israel, Christ does not say he came specially to save you; the unlearned and illiterate peasant is equally welcome to his grace. Jew, with all thy pedigree of honor, thou art not justified more than the Gentile. Men of Britain, with all your civilization and your freedom, Christ does not say he came to save you: he names not you as the distinguishing class who are the objects of his love—no, and ye that have good works, and reckon yourselves saints among men, he doth not distinguish you either. The one simple title, large and broad as humanity itself, is simply this;—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Now, mark, we are to understand this in a general sense when we read it, "viz.," that all whom Jesus came to save are sinners. but if any man asks, may I infer from this that I am saved; we must then put another question to him. To begin then, with the general sense:—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." The men whom Christ came to save were by nature sinners, nothing less and nothing more than sinners. I have often said that Christ came into the world to save awakened sinners. It is quite true; so he did. But those sinners were not awakened sinners when he came to save them—they were nothing but "sinners dead in trespasses and sins" when he came to them. It is a common notion that we are to preach that Christ died to save what are called sensible sinners. Now that is true, but they were not sensible sinners when Christ died to save them. He makes them sensible or feeling sinners as the effect of his death. Those he died for are described, without any adjective to diminish the breadth of it, as being sinners, and simply sinners, without any badge of merit or mark of goodness which could distinguish them above their fellows. Sinners! Now, the term includes some of all kinds of sinners. There are some men whose sins appear but little. Trained up religiously, and educated in a moral way, they do not dash into the deeps of sin; they are content to coast along the shores of vice—they do not launch out into the depths. Now, Christ hath died for such as these, for many of these have been



brought to know and love him. Let no man think, because he is a less sinner than others, that therefore there is less hope for him. Strange it is that some have often thought that. "If I had been a blasphemer," says one, "or injurious, I could have had more hope; though I know I have sinned greatly in my own eyes yet so little have I erred in the eye of the world, that I can scarcely think myself included." Oh, say not so. It says, "Sinners." If thou canst put thyself in that catalogue, whether it be at the top or at the bottom, thou art still within it; and the truth still holds good that those Jesus came to save were originally sinners, and thou being such, thou hast no reason to believe that thou art shut out. Again, Christ died to save sinners of an opposite sort. We have some men whom we dare not describe; it would be a shame to speak of the things which are done by them in private. There have been men who have invented vices of which the devil himself was ignorant until they invented them. There have been men so bestial that the very dog was a more honorable creature than they. We have heard of beings whose crimes have been more diabolical, more detestable, than any action ascribed even to the devil himself. Yet my text does not shut out these. Have we not met with blasphemers so profane that they could not speak without an oath? Blasphemy, which at first was something terrible to them, has now become so common that they would curse themselves before they said their prayers, and swear when they were singing God's praises. It has come to be part of their meat and drink, a thing so natural to them that the very sinfulness of it does not shock them, they so continually do it. As for God's laws, they delight to know them for the mere sake of breaking them. Tell them of a new vice and you will please them. They have become like that Roman emperor whose parasites could never please him better than by inventing some new crime—men who have gone head over ears in the Stygian gulf of hellish sin—men, who not content with fouling their feet while walking through the mire have lifted up the trap-door with which we seal down depravity, and have dived into the very kennel—rebelling in the very filth of human iniquity. But there is nothing in my text which can exclude even these. Many of these shall yet be washed in the Saviour's blood, and be made partakers of the Saviour's love.

Nor does this text make a distinction as to the age of sinners. I see many among you here whose hairs if they were the color of your character

would be the very reverse of what they are; ye have become white without, but ye are blackened all within with sin. Ye have added layer to layer of crime; and, now, if one were to dig down through the various deposits of numerous years, he would discover stony relics of youthful sins, hidden down in the depths of your rocky hearts. Where once all was tender, everything has become sere and hardened. You have gone far into sin. If you were to be converted now, would it not, indeed, be a wonder of grace? For the old oak to be bent, oh, how hard! Now, that it has grown so rugged and tough, can it be bent? Can the Great Husbandman train it? Can he graft on so old and so rough a stem something that shall bring forth heavenly fruit? Ah, he can, for age is not mentioned in the text, and many of the most ancient of men have proved the love of Jesus in their latest years. "But," says one, "my sin has had peculiar aggravations connected with it. I have sinned against light and against knowledge. I have trampled on a mother's prayers; I have despised a father's tears. Warnings given to me have been neglected. On my sick bed God himself has rebuked me. My resolves have been frequent and as frequently forgotten. As for my guilt, it is not to be measured by any ordinary standard. My little grimes are greater than other men's deepest iniquities, for I have sinned against the light, against the prickings of conscience, and against everything that should have taught me better. "Well, my friend, I do not see that thou art shut out here; my text makes no distinction but just this;—"Sinners!" And as far as my text is concerned there is no limit whatever: I must deal with the text as it stands; and even for you I cannot consent to limit it; it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There have been men of your sort saved; why, then, should you not be saved? There have been the grossest blackguards, and the vilest thieves, and the most debauched harlots saved; then, why not you, even if you be such as they are? Sinners a hundred years old have been saved; we have instance on record of such cases; then, why not you? If from one of God's instances we may generally infer a rule, and moreover, we have his own Word to back us, where lives the man who is so wickedly arrogant as to shut himself out, and close the door of mercy in his own face? No, beloved, the text says "Sinner;" and why should it not include you and me within its list? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

But I said, and I must return to it if any-one wishes to make a particular application of the text to his own case it is necessary he should read this text in another way. Every man in this place must not infer that Christ came to save him. Those whom Christ came to save were sinners; but Christ will not save all sinners. There are some sinners who undoubtedly will be lost, because they reject Christ. They despise him; they will not repent; they choose their own self-righteousness; they do not turn to Christ, they will have none of his ways and none of his love. For such sinners, there is no promise of mercy, for there remains no other way of salvation. Despise Christ, and you despise your own mercy. Turn away from him, and you have proved that in his blood there is no efficacy for you. Despise him, and die doing so, die without giving your soul into his hands, and you have given a most awful proof that though the blood of Christ was mighty, yet never was it applied to you, never was it sprinkled on your hearts to the taking away of your sins. If, then, I want to know did Christ so die for me that I may now believe in him, and feel myself to be a saved man, I must answer this question;—Do I feel to-day that I am a sinner? Not, do I say so, as a compliment, but do I feel it? In my inmost soul is that a truth printed in great capitals of burning fire—I am a sinner? Then, if it be so, Christ died for me. I am included in his special purpose. The covenant of grace includes my name in the ancient roll of eternal election. there my person is recorded, and I shall, without a doubt, be saved, if now, feeling myself to be a sinner, I cast myself upon that simple truth, believing it and trusting in it to be my sheet anchor in every time of trouble Come, man and brother, are you not prepared to trust in him. Are not many of you able to say that you feel yourself sinners? Oh, I beseech you, whoever you are, believe this great truth which is worthy of all acceptation—Christ Jesus came to save you, I know your doubts, I know your fears, for I have suffered them myself; and the only way whereby I can keep my hopes alive is just this:—I am brought every day to the cross; I believe that to my dying hour I shall never have any hope but this -

"Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And my only reason at this hour for believing Jesus Christ is my

Redeemer is just this:—I know that I am a sinner: this I feel, and over this I mourn; and though I mourn it much, when Satan tells me that I cannot be the Lord's, I draw from my very mourning the comfortable inference, that inasmuch as he has made me feel I am lost, he would not have done this if he had not intended to save me; and inasmuch as he has given me to see that I belong to that great class of characters whom he came to save, I infer from that, beyond a doubt, that he will save me. Oh, can you do the same, ye sin stricken, weary, sad, and disappointed souls, to whom the world has become an empty thing? Ye weary spirits who have gone your round of pleasure, now exhausted with satiety, or even with disease, are longing to be rid of it—oh, ye spirits that are looking for something better than this mad world can ever give you here, I preach to you the blessed Gospel of the blessed God:—Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; dead and buried, and raised again the third day to save you—even you, for he came into the world to save sinners.

3. And, now, very briefly, the third point: What is meant by saving sinners? "Christ came to save sinners." Brethren, if you want a picture to show you what is meant by being saved, let me give it to you here. There is a poor wretch who has lived many a year in the grossest sin; so inured to sin has he become, that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin than he could learn to do well. Drunkenness, and vice, and folly have cast their iron net about him, and he has become loathsome and unable to escape from his loathsomeness. Do you see him? He is tottering onwards to his ruin. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, he has sinned right on, and now he is going towards his last days. The pit of hell is flaring across his path, flinging its frightful rays immediately before his face, and yet he sees it not: he still goes on in his wickedness, despising God and hating his own salvation. Leave him there. A few years have and now hear another story. Do you see that spirit yonder—foremost among the ranks most sweetly singing the praises of God? Do you mark it robed in white, an emblem of its purity? Do you see it as it casts its crown before the feet of Jesus, and acknowledges him the Lord of all? Hark! do you hear it as it sings the sweetest song that ever charmed Paradise itself? Listen to it, its song is this: -

"I, the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me."

"Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, world without end." And who is that whose song thus emulates the seraph's strains The same person who a little while ago was so frightfully depraved, the selfsame man! But he has been washed, he has been sanctified, he has been justified. If you ask me, then, what is meant by salvation, I tell you that it reaches all the way from that poor, desperately fallen piece of humanity, to that high-soaring spirit up yonder, praising God. That is to be saved—to have our old thoughts made into new ones, to have our old habits broken off, and to have new habits given; to have our old sins pardoned, and to have righteousness imputed; to have peace in the conscience, peace to man, and peace with God; to have the spotless robe of imputed righteousness cast about our loins, and ourselves healed and cleansed. To be saved is to be rescued from the gulf of perdition; to be raised to the throne of heaven; to be delivered from the wrath and curse! and the thunders of an angry God, and brought to feel and taste the love, the approval, and applause of Jehovah, our Father and our Friend. And all this Christ gives to sinners. When I preach this simple gospel, I have nothing to do with those who will not call themselves sinners. If you must be canonized, if you claim a saintly perfection of your own, I have nothing to do with you. My gospel is to sinners, and sinners alone; and the whole of this salvation, so broad and brilliant, and unspeakably precious, and everlastingly secure, is addressed this day to the outcast, to the offscouring—in one word, it is addressed to sinners.

Now, I think I have announced the truth of the text. Certainly, no man can misunderstand me unless he does so intentionally—"Christ Jesus came to save sinners."

II. And, now, I have but little to do, but yet I have the hardest work—THE DOUBLE COMMENDATION of the text. First, "it is a faithful saying; that is a commendation to the doubter: secondly, it is worthy of all acceptation; "that is a commendation to the careless—nay, to the anxious, too.

1. First, "it is a faithful saying;" that is a commendation to the doubter. Oh, the devil, as soon as he finds men under the sound of the word of God, slips along through the crowd, and he whispers in one heart, "Don't believe it!" and in another, "Laugh at it!" and in another, "Away with it!" And when he finds a person for whom the message was intended—one who feels himself a sinner, he is generally doubly in earnest, that he may not believe it at all. I know what Satan said to you, poor friend, over there. He said, "Don't believe it—it's too good to be true." Let me answer the devil by God's own words: "This is a faithful saying." It is good, and it is as true as it is good. It is too good to be true if God had not himself said it; but, inasmuch as he said it, it is not too good to be true. I will tell thee why thou thinkest it to too good to be true, it is because thou measurest God's corn by thine own bushel. Please to remember, that his ways are not as thy ways, nor his thoughts as thy thoughts; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways high above thy ways, and his thoughts above thy thoughts. Why, thou thinkest that if any man had offended thee, thou couldst not have forgiven him. Ay, but God is not a man: he can forgive where thou canst not; and where thou wouldst take thy brother by the throat, God would forgive him seventy times seven. Thou dost not know Jesus, or else thou wouldst believe him. We think that we are honoring God when we think great thoughts of our sin. Let us recollect, that while we ought to think very greatly of our own sin, we dishonor God if we think our sin greater than his grace. God's grace is infinitely greater than the greatest of our crimes. There is but one exception that he has ever made, and a penitent cannot be included in that. I beseech you, therefore, get better thoughts of him. Think how good he is, and how great he is; and when you know this to be a true saying, I hope you will thrust Satan away from you, and not think it too good to be true I know what he will say to you next;—"Well, if it is true, it is not true to you: it is true to all the world, but not to you. Christ died to save sinners; it is true you are a sinner, but you are not included in it." Tell the devil he is a liar to his face. There is no way of answering him except by straightforward language. We do not believe in the individuality of the existence of the devil, as Martin Luther did. When the devil came to him, he served him as he did other impostors; he turned him out of doors, with a good hard saying. Tell him on the authority of Christ himself, that he is a liar. Christ says, he came to save sinners; the devil says he did not. He

says, virtually, he did not, for he declares that he did not come to save you, and you feel that you are a sinner. Tell him he is a liar, and send him about his business. At any rate, never put his testimony in comparison with that of Christ. He looks today on thee from Calvary's cross with those same dear tearful eyes that once wept over Jerusalem. He looks on thee my brother, my sister, and says through these lips of mine, "I came into the world to save sinners." Sinner! wilt thou not believe on him, and trust thy soul in his hands? Wilt thou not say,—"Sweet Lord Jesus, thou shalt be our confidence henceforth! 'For thee all other hopes I resign, thou art, thou ever shalt be mine.' " Come, poor timid one, I must endeavor to re-assure you, by repeating again this text:—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is a true saying, I cannot have you reject it You say you cannot believe it. Let me ask you, "Do you not believe the Bible?" "Yes," you say, "every word of it." Then, this is one word of it—"Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I charge thee by thy honesty—as thou sayest, "I believe the Bible," believe this. There it stands. Dost thou believe Jesus Christ? Come, answer me Dost thou think he lieth? Would a God of Truth stoop to deceit? "No," thou sayest, "whatever God says, I believe." It is God that says it to thee, then, in his own book. He died to save sinners.—Come, once again. Dost thou not believe facts? Did not Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Does not that prove his gospel to be authentic? If, then, the gospel be authentic, the whole of what Christ declares to be the gospel must be true. I charge thee, as thou believest his resurrection, believe that he died for sinners, and cast thyself upon this truth. Once again. Wilt thou deny the testimony of all the saints in heaven and of all the saints on earth? Ask every one of them, and they will tell you this is true—he died to save sinners. I, as one of the least of his servants, must bear my testimony. When Jesus came to save me, I protest he found nothing good in me. I know of a surety, that there was nothing in me to recommend me to Christ; and if he loved me, he loved me because he would do so; for there was nothing loveable, nothing that he could desire in me. What I am, I am by his grace; he made me what I am. But a sinner he found me at first, and his own sovereign love was the only reason for his choice. Ask all the people of God, and they will all say the same.

But you say you are too great a sinner. Why. you are not greater than

some in heaven already. You say that you are the greatest sinner that ever lived. I say you are mistaken. The greatest sinner died some years ago and went to heaven. My text says so:—"Of whom I am chief" So, you see, the chief one has been saved before you; and if the chief one has been saved, why should you not be? There are the sinners standing in a line, and I see one starting out from the ranks, and he says, "Make way, make way; I stand at the head of you, I am the chief of sinners. give me the lowest place; let me take the lowest room." "No," cries another, "not you; I am a greater sinner than you." Then the apostle Paul comes, and says: "I challenge you all, Manasseh and Magdalene, I challenge you. I will have the lowest place. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but I have obtained mercy, that in me first God might show his long-suffering." Now, if Christ has saved the greatest sinner that ever lived, oh, sinner, great as you may be, you cannot be greater than the greatest, and he is able to save you. Oh, I beseech you by the myriads of witnesses around the throne, and by the thousands of witnesses on earth, by Jesus Christ, the witness on Calvary, by the blood of sprinkling that is a witness even now, by God himself, and by his Word which is faithful, I beseech you believe this faithful saying, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2. And, now, to close. The second commendation of the text is to the careless and to the anxious too To the careless one this text is worthy of all acceptation. Oh, man, thou scornest it. I saw thee curl thy lip in derision. The story was badly told, and therefore thou didst scorn it. Thou saidst in thine heart, "What is that to me? If this be what the man preaches, I care not to hear it: if this be the gospel it is nothing." Ah, sir, it is something, though thou knowest it not. It is worthy of thy acceptation: the thing I have preached, however poor the way in which it is preached, is well worthy of thy attention I care not what orator may lecture to you, he can never have a subject greater than mine. Damosthenes himself, might stand here, or Cicero, his later compeer, they could never have a weightier subject. Though a child should tell you of it, the subject might well excuse him, for it is so important. Man it is not your house that is in danger, it is not your body only, it is your soul I beseech you, by eternity, by its dreadful terrors, by the horrors of hell, by that fearful word, "Eternity—Eternity," I beseech thee as a man, thy brother, one who loves



thee, and who would fain snatch thee from the burning, I beseech thee do not despise thine own mercies; for this is worthy of thee, man, worthy of all thy attention, and worthy of thy heartiest acceptance. Art thou wise? This is more worthy than thy wisdom. Art thou rich? This is worthier than all thy wealth. Art thou famous? This is worthier than all thy honor. Art thou princely? This is worthier than thine ancestry, or than all thy goodly heritage. The thing I preach is the worthiest thing under heaven, because it will last thee when all things else fade away. It will stand by thee when thou hast to stand alone. In the hour of death it will plead for thee when thou hast to answer the summons of justice at God's bar. And it shall be thine eternal consolation through never ending ages. It is worthy of thy acceptance.

And, now, dost thou feel anxious? Is thy heart sad? Dost thou say, "I desire to be saved. Can I trust to this gospel? Is it strong enough to bear me? I am an elephantine sinner; will not its pillars crumble like leaves beneath my weight of sin?" "I the chief of sinners am;" will its portals be wide enough to receive me? My spirit is diseased with sin; can this medicine cure it? Yes, it is worthy of you: it is equal to your disease, it is equal to your wants, it is all-sufficient for your demands. If I had a half-gospel to preach, or a defective one, I would not preach it earnestly; but I have one that is worthy of all acceptance. "But, sir I have been a thief, a whoremonger, a drunkard." It is worthy of thee, for he came to save sinners, and thou art one. "But, sir, I have been a blasphemer." It does not exclude even thee; it is worthy of thy acceptance. But, mark, it is worthy of all the acceptance you can give it. You may not only accept it in your head but in your heart; you may press it to your soul and call it all in all, you may feed on it, and live on it. And if you live for it, and suffer for it, and die for it, it is worthy of all.

I must let you go now; but my spirit feels as if it would linger here. Strange it should be that many men should not care for their own souls, when your minister this day cares for you. What matters it to me whether men be lost or saved? Shall I be any the better for your salvation? Assuredly there is little gain there. And yet I feel more for you, many of you, than you feel for yourselves. Oh, strange hardening of the heart, that a man should not care for his men salvation, that he should, without a

thought, reject the most precious truth. Stay, sinner stay, ere thou turnest from thine own mercy—stay, once more—perhaps this shall be thy last warning, or worse, it may be the last warning thou shalt ever feel. Thou feelest it now. Oh I beseech thee quench not the Spirit. Go not forth from this place to talk with idle gossip on thy way home. Go not forth to forget what manner of man thou art. But hasten to thy home; seek thy chamber; shut to the door; fall on thy face by thy bedside; confess thy sin; cry unto Jesus, tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace, tell him thou has heard this morning that he came to save sinners, and that the thought of such a love as that hath made thee lay down the weapons of thy rebellion, and that thou art desirous to be his. There on thy face plead with him, and say unto him, "Lord save me, or I perish."

The Lord bless you all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The Glorious Habitation**

Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. - Psalm 90:1

Moses was the inspired author of three devotional compositions. We first of all find him as Moses the poet, singing the song which is aptly joined with that of Jesus, in the Revelation, where it says, "The song of Moses and of the Lamb." He was a poet on the occasion when Pharaoh and his hosts were cast into the Red Sea, "his chosen captains also were drowned in the Red Sea." Further on in his life we discover him in the character of a preacher; and then his doctrine distilled as the dew, and his speech dropped like the rain, in those chapters which are full of glorious imagery, and rich with poetry, which you will find in the book of

Deuteronomy. And now in the Psalms, we find him the author of a prayer: "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Happy combination of the poet, the preacher, and the man of prayer! Where three such things are found together, the man becomes a very giant above his fellows. It often happens that the man who preaches has but little poetry; and the man who is the poet would not be able to preach and utter his poems before immense assemblies, but would be only fit to write them by himself. It is a rare combination when true devotion and the spirit of poetry and eloquence meet in the same man. You will see in this Psalm a wondrous depth of spirituality; you will mark how the poet subsides into the man of God; and how, lost in himself, he sings his own frailty, declared the glory of God, and asks that he may have the blessing of his heavenly Father always resting on his head.

This first verse will derive peculiar interest if you remember the place where Moses was when he thus prayed. He was in the wilderness; not in some of the halls of Pharaoh, nor yet in a habitation in the land of Goshen; but in a wilderness. And perhaps from the summit of the hill, looking upon the tribes of Israel as they were taking up their tents and marching along, he thought, "Ah! poor travelers. They seldom rest anywhere; they have not any settled habitation where they can dwell. Here they have no continuing city;" but he lifted his eyes above, and he said, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Passing his eye back through history, he saw one great temple where God's people had dwelt; and with his prophetic eye rolling with sacred frenzy, he could see that throughout all futurity the specially chosen of God would be able to sing, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Taking this verse as the subject of our discourse this morning, we shall, first of all, explain it; and then we shall try and do what the old Puritans called "improve" it; by which they did not mean improve the text, but improve the people a little in the consideration of the verse.

I. First, we will try to explain it somewhat. Here is a habitation: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place;" and, secondly, if I may use such a common word, here is the lease of it: "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

First, then here is a habitation: "Lord, thou hast been our habitation." The mighty Jehovah, who filleth all immensity, the Eternal, Everlasting, Great I Am, does not refuse to allow figures concerning himself. Though he is so high that the eye of angel hath not seen him, though he is so lofty that the wing of cherub hath not reached him, though he is so great that the utmost extent of the travels of immortal spirits have never discovered the limit of himself - yet he does not object that his people should speak of him thus familiarly, and should say, "Jehovah, thou hast been our dwelling-place." We shall understand this figure better by contrasting the thought, with the state of Israel in the wilderness; and, secondly, by making mention of some things by way of comparison, which are peculiar to our house, and which we never can enjoy if we are not the possessors of a dwelling-place of our own.

First, we shall contrast this thought, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place," with the peculiar position of the Israelites as they were traveling through the wilderness.

We remark, first, that they must have been in a state of great uneasiness. At nightfall, or when the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched, and they laid themselves down to rest. Perhaps to-morrow, ere the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, they stirred themselves from their beds and found the ark was in motion, and the fiery cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow defiles of the mountain up the hillside, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to arrange their little property in their tents and make all things comfortable for themselves, before they heard the sound of "Away! away! away! this is not your rest; you must still be onward journeying toward Cannan!" They could not plant a little patch of ground around their tents, they could not lay out their house in order, and arrange their furniture, they could not become attached to the spot of ground. Even though just now their father had been buried in a place where a tent had tarried for a time yet they must be off. They must have no attachment to the place, they must have nothing of what we call comfort, ease, and peace; but be always journeying, always traveling. Moreover, so exposed were they, that they never could be very easy in their tents. At one time the sand, with the hot simoom behind it, would drive through the tent and cover them

almost to burial. On frequent occasions the hot sun would scorch them, and their canvas would scarce be a preservation; at another time the biting north wind would freeze around them, so that within their tents they sat shivering and cowering around their fires. They had little ease; but behold the contrast which Moses, the man of God, discerns with gratitude, "Thou art not our tent, but thou art our dwelling-place. Though we are uneasy here, though we are tossed from side to side by troubles, though we travel through a wilderness, and find it a rough pathway, though when we sit down here we know not what comfort means, O Lord, in thee we possess all the comfort which a house can afford, we have all that a mansion or palace can give the prince, who can loll upon his couch, and rest upon his bed of down. Lord, thou art to us comfort, thou art a house and habitation." Have you ever known what it is to have God for your dwelling-place in the sense of comfort? Do you know what it is, when you have storms behind you, to feel like a sea-bird, blown to the land by the very storm? Do you know what it is, when you have been caged sometimes by adversity, to have the string cut by divine grace, and like the pigeon that flies at once to its own dovecot, have you sped your way across the ether, and found yourself in God? Do you know what it is, when you are tossed on the waves, to do down into the depths of Godhead, there rejoicing that not a wave of trouble ruffles your spirit, but that you are serenely at home with God your own Almighty Father? Can you, amid all the uneasiness of this desert journey, find a comfort there? Is the breast of Jesus a sweet pillow for your head? Can you, lie thus on the breast of Deity? Can you put yourself in the stream of Providence and float along without a struggle, while angels sing around you - divinely guided, divinely led - "We are bearing thee along the stream of Providence to the ocean of eternal bliss!" Do you know what it is to lie on God, to give up all care, to drive anxiety away, and there - not in a recklessness of spirit, but in a holy carelessness - to be careful for nothing, "but in every thing by supplication to make known your wants unto God?" If so you have gained the first idea; "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations."

Again, the Israelites were very much exposed to all kinds of noxious creatures, owing to their residing in tents, and their habits of wandering. At one time the fiery serpent was their foe. By night the wild beasts

prowled around them. Unless that fiery pillar had been a wall of fire around them and glory in the midst, they might all have fallen a prey to the wild monsters that roamed the deserts. Worse foes they found in human kind. The Amalekites rushed down from the mountains; wild wandering hordes constantly attacked them. They never felt themselves secure, for they were travelers through an enemy's country. They were hasting across a land where they were not wanted, to another land that was providing means to oppose them when they should arrive. Such is the Christian. He is journeying through an enemy's land; every day he is exposed to danger. His tent may be broken down by death; the slanderer is behind him, the open foeman is before him; the wild beast that prowls by night, and the pestilence that wasteth by day, continually seek his destruction; he finds no rest where he is; he feels himself exposed. But, says Moses, "Though we live in a tent exposed to wild beasts and fierce men, yet thou art our habitation. In thee we find no exposure. Within thee we find ourselves secure, and in thy glorious person we dwell as in an impregnable tower of defense, safe from every fear and alarm, knowing that we are secure." O Christian, hast thou ever known what it is to stand in the midst of battles, with arrows flying thick around thee more than thy shield can catch; and yet thou hast been as secure as if thou wert folding thine arms and resting within the walls of some strong bastion, where arrow could not reach thee, and where even the sound of trumpet could not disturb thine ears? Hast thou known what it is to dwell securely in God, to enter into the Most High, and laugh to scorn the anger, the frowns, the sneers, the contempt, the slander and calumny of men; to ascent into the sacred place of the pavilion of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and to feel thyself secure? And mark thee, thou mayest do this. In times of pestilence it is possible to walk in the midst of cholera and death, singing -

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,  
Till he please, I cannot die."

It is possible to stand exposed to the utmost degree of danger, and yet to feel such a holy serenity that we can laugh at fear; too great, too mighty, too powerful through God to stoop for one moment to the cowardice of trembling, "we know whom we have believed, and we are persuaded that

he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him." When houseless men wander, when poor distressed spirits, beaten by the storm, find no refuge, we enter into God, and shutting behind us the door of faith, we say, "Howl, ye winds; blow, ye tempests; roar, ye wild beasts; come on, ye robbers!"

"He that hath made his refuge God,  
Shall find a most secure abode,  
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,  
And there at night shall rest his head."

Lord, in this sense, thou hast been our habitation.

Again, poor Israel, in the wilderness, were continually exposed to change. They were never in one place long. Sometimes they might tarry for a month in one spot - just near the seventy palm-trees. What a sweet and pleasant place to go out each morning, to sit beside the well and drink that clear stream! "Onward!" cries Moses; and he takes them to a place where the bare rocks stand out from the mountain side, and the red burning sand is beneath their feet; vipers spring up around them, and thorny brakes grow instead of pleasing vegetation. What a change have they! Yet, another day they shall come to a place that shall be more dreary still. They walk through a defile so close and narrow, that the affrighted rays of the sun dare scarce enter such a prison, lest they should never find their way out again! They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle, and to say, "Now we are secure, in this place we shall dwell." Here, again, the contrast casts light upon the text: "Ah!" says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations." The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich to-day, and poor to-morrow; he may be sickly to-day and well to-morrow; he may be in happiness to-day, to-morrow he may be distressed; but there is no change with regard to his relationship to God. If he loved me yesterday he loves me to-day. I am neither better nor worse in God than I ever was. Let prospects be blighted, let hopes be blasted, let joy be withered, let mildews destroy every thing, I have lost nothing of what I have in God. He is my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort. The Christian never becomes poorer, and never grows richer with regard to

God. "Here," he can say, "is a thing that never can pass away or change. On the brow of the Eternal there is never a furrow; his hair is unwhitened by age; his arm is unpalsied by weakness; his heart does not change in its affections; his will does not vary in its purpose; he is the immutable Jehovah, standing fast and forever. Thou art our habitation! As the house changes not, but stands in the same place, so have I found thee from my youth up. When first I was cast upon thee from my mother's breast, I found thee my God of Providence. When first I knew thee by that spiritual knowledge which thou alone canst give, I found thee a sure habitation; and I find thee such now. Yea, when I shall be old and gray-headed, I know thou wilt not forsake me; thou wilt be the same dwelling-place in all generations."

One thought more in contrasting the position of the Israelites with ourselves - that is, weariness. How weary must Israel have been in the wilderness! How tired must have been the soles of their feet with their constant journeyings! They were not in a place of repose, luxury, and rest, but in a land of journeying, and weariness, and trouble. I think I see them traveling, wiping frequently the burning sweat from their brows, and saying, "O that we had a habitation where we might rest! O that we could enter a land of vines and pomegranates, a city where we might enjoy immunity from alarm! God has promised it to us, but we have not found it. There remaineth a rest for the people of God; O that we might find it." Christian! God is your habitation in this sense. He is your rest; and you will never find rest except in him. I defy a man who has no God to have a soul at rest. He who has not Jesus for his Saviour, will always be a restless spirit. Read some of Byron's verses, and you will find him - if he was truly picturing himself - to be the very personification of that spirit who "walked to and fro seeking rest and finding none." Here is one of his verses: -

"I fly like a bird of the air,  
In search of a home and a rest;  
A balm for the sickness of care,  
A bliss for a bosom unblest."

Read the lives of any men who have had no gospel justification, or have had no knowledge of God, and you will find that they were like the poor



bird that had its nest pulled down, and knew not where to rest, flying about, wandering, and seeking a habitation. Some of you have tried to find rest out of God. You have sought to find it in your wealth; but you have pricked your head when you have laid it on that pillow. You have sought it in a friend, but that friend's arm has been a broken reed, where you hoped it would be a wall of strength. You will never find rest except in God; there is no refuge but in him. Oh! what rest and composure are there in him! It is more than sleep, more than calm, more than quiet; deeper than the dead stillness of the noiseless sea in its utmost depths, where it is undisturbed by the slightest ripple, and winds can never intrude. There is a holy calm and sweet repose which the Christian only knows, something like the slumbering stars up there in beds of azure; or like the seraphic rest which we may suppose beatified spirits have when they before the throne continually bow; there is a rest so deep and calm, so still and quiet, so profound, that we find no words to describe it. You have tried it, and can rejoice in it. You know that the Lord has been your dwelling-place - your sweet, calm, constant home, where you can enjoy peace in all generations. But I have dwelt too long upon this part of the subject, and I will speak of it in a different way.

First of all, the dwelling-place of man is the place where he can unbend himself, and feel himself at home, and speak familiarly. In this pulpit I must somewhat check my words; I deal with men of the world who watch my speech, and are ever on the catch, men who wish to have this or that to retail - I must be on my guard. So you men of business, when you are on the exchange, or in your shops, have to guard yourselves. What does the man do at home? He can lay bare his breast, and do and say as he pleases; it is his own house, his dwelling-place; and is he not master there? Shall he not do as he will with his own? Assuredly; for he feels himself at home. Ah! my beloved, do you ever find yourself in God to be at home? Have you been with Christ, and told your secrets in his ear, and found that you could do so without reserve? We do not generally tell secrets to other people, for if we do, and make them promise that they will never tell them, they will never tell them except to the first person they meet. Most persons who have secrets told them, are like the lady of whom it is said she never told her secrets except to two sorts of persons - those that asked her and those that did not. You must not trust men of

the world; but do you know what it is to tell all your secrets to God in prayer, to whisper all your thoughts to him? You are not ashamed to confess your sins to him with all their aggravations; you make no apologies to God, but you put in every aggravation, you describe all the depths of your baseness. Then, as for your little wants, you would be ashamed to tell them to another; before God you can tell them all. You can tell him your grief that you would not whisper to your dearest friend. With God you can be always at home, you need be under no restraint. The Christian at once gives God the key of his heart, and lets him turn every thing over. He says, "There is the key of every cabinet; it is my desire that thou wouldst open them all. If there are jewels, they are thine; and if there be things that should not be there, drive them out. Search me, and try my heart." The more God lives in the Christian, the better the Christian loves him; the oftener God comes to see him, the better he loves his God. And God loves his people all the more when they are familiar with him. Can you say in this sense, "Lord, thou hast been my dwelling place?"

Then, again, man's home is the place where his affections are centered. God deliver us from those men who do not love their homes! Lives there a man so base, so dead, that he has no affection for his own house? If so, surely the spark of Christianity must have died entirely out. It is natural that men should love their homes; it is spiritual that they should love them better still. In our homes we find those to whom we must and ever shall be most attached. There our best friends and kindred dwell. When we wander, we are as birds that have left their nests and can find no settled home. We wish to go back and to see again that smile, to grasp once more that loving hand, and to find that we are with those to whom the ties of affection have knit us. We wish to feel - and every Christian man will feel - with regard to his own family, that they are the warp and woof of his own nature, that he has become a part and portion of them; and there he centers his affection. He can not afford to lavish his love everywhere. He centers it in that particular spot, that oasis in this dark desert world. Christian man, is God your habitation in that sense? Have you given your whole soul to God? Do you feel you can bring your whole heart to him, and say, "O, God! I love from my soul; with the most impassioned earnestness I love thee.

"The dearest idol I have known -  
Whate'er that idol be -  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee!"

O God! though I sometimes wander, yet I love thee in my wanderings, and my heart is fixed on thee. What though the creature doth beguile me, I detest that creature; it is to me as the apple of Sodom. Thou art the master of my soul, the emperor of my heart; no vice-regent, but King of kings. My spirit is fixed on thee as the center of my soul.

"Thou art the sea of love  
Where all my pleasures roll,  
The circle where my passions move;  
The center of my soul."

O God! thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations."

My next remark is concerning the lease of this dwelling-place. God is the believer's habitation. Sometimes, you know, people get turned out of their houses, or their houses tumble down about their ears. It is never so with ours: God is our dwelling-place throughout all generations. Let us look back in times past, and we shall find that God has been our habitation. Oh, the old house at home! who does not love it - the place of our childhood, the old roof-tree, the old cottage! There is no village in all the world half so good as that particular village where we were born! True, the gates, and stiles, and posts have been altered; but still there is an attachment to those old houses, the old tree in the park, and the old ivy-mantled tower. It is not very picturesque, perhaps, but we love to go to see it. We like to see the haunts of our boyhood. There is something pleasant in those old stairs where the clock used to stand; and in the room where grandmother was wont to bend her knee, and where we had family prayer. There is no place like that house after all! Well, beloved, God has been the habitation of the Christian in years that are gone by. Christian, your house is indeed a venerable house, and you have long dwelt there. You dwelt there in the person of Christ long before you were brought into this sinful world; and it is to be your dwelling-place throughout all generations. You are never to ask for another house; you

will always be contented with that one you have; you will never wish to change your habitation. And if you wished it, you could not; for he is your dwelling-place in all generations. God give you to know what it is to take this house in its long lease, and ever to have God for your dwelling-place!

II. Now I come to improve this text somewhat. First, let us improve it to SELF EXAMINATION. How may we know whether we be Christians or not, whether the Lord is our dwelling-place, and will be throughout all generations? I shall give you some hints for self-examination, by referring you to several passages which I have looked out in the first epistle of John. It is remarkable that almost the only scriptural writer who speaks of God as a dwelling-place, is that most loving apostle, John, out of whose epistle we have been reading.

He gives us in the 12th verse of the 4th chapter, one means of knowing whether we are living in God: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." And again further on, he says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." You may then tell whether you are a tenant of this great spiritual house by the love you have toward others. Have you a love toward the saints? Well, then, you are a saint yourself. The goats will not love the sheep; and if you love the sheep, it is an evidence that you are a sheep yourself. Many of the Lord's weak family never can get any other evidence of their conversion except this- "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And though that is very little evidence, yet it is such a one that the strongest faith often can not get a much better. "If I do not love God, I love his people; if I am not a Christian, I love his house." What! has the devil told thee thou art not the Lord's? Poor Faintheart, dost thou love the Lord's people? "Yes," sayest thou, "I love to see their faces, and to hear their prayers; I could almost kiss the hem of their garments." Is it so? and would you give them if they were poor? would you visit them if they were sick, and tend them if they needed assistance? "Ah! yes." Then fear not. You who love God's people must love the Master. We know we dwell in God if we love one another.

In the 13th verse is another sign: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Have we ever had the

Spirit of God in us? That is one of the most solemn questions I can ask. Many of you know what it is to be excited by religious feeling who never had the Spirit of God. Many of us have great need to tremble lest we should not have received that Spirit. I have tried myself scores of times, in different ways, to see whether I really am a possessor of the Spirit of God or not. I know that the people of the world scoff at the idea, and say, "It is impossible for any body to have the Spirit of God." Then it is impossible for any body to go to heaven; for we must have the Spirit of God, we must be born again of the Spirit, before we can enter there. What a serious question is this: "Have I had the Spirit of God in me? True, my soul is at times lifted on high, and I feel I could sing like a seraph. True, sometimes I am melted down by deep devotion, and I could pray in terrible solemnity. But so could hypocrites, perhaps. Have I the Spirit of God? Have you any evidence within you that you have the Spirit? Are you sure that you are not laboring under a delusion and a dream? Have you actually the Spirit of God within you? If so, you dwell in God. That is the second sign.

But the apostle gives another sign in the 15th verse: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." The confession of our faith in the Saviour is another sign that we live in God. Oh! poor heart, canst thou not come under this sign? Thou mayest have but little boldness, but canst thou say, "I believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?" If so, thou dwellest in God. Many of you, I know, say - "When I hear a sermon, I feel affected by it. When I am in the house of God I feel like a child of God, but the business, cares, and troubles of life take me off, and then I fear I am not." But you can say, "I do believe in Christ; I know I cast myself on his mercy, and hope to be saved by him." Then do not say you are not a child of God if you have faith.

But there is one more sign whereby we ought to examine ourselves, in the 3rd chapter, 24th verse: "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." Obedience to the commandments of God is a blessed sign of a dwelling in God. Some of you have a deal of religious talk, but not much religious walk; a large stock of outside piety, but not much real inward piety, which develops itself in your actions. That is a hint for some

of you who know that it is right to be baptized, and are not. You know it is one of the commandments of God, that "he that believeth shall be baptized," and you are neglecting what you know to be your duty. You are dwelling in God, I doubt not, but you lack one evidence of it, namely - obedience to God's commandments. Obey God, and then you will know that you are dwelling in him.

But I have another word by way of improvement, and that is one of CONGRATULATION. You who dwell in God, allow me to congratulate you. Thrice happy men are ye, if ye are dwelling in God! You need not blush to compare yourselves with angels, you need not think that any on earth can share such happiness as yours! Zion, O how blessed art thou, freed from all sins! Now thou art, through Christ, made to dwell in God, and therefore art eternally secure! I congratulate you, Christians, first, that you have such a magnificent house to dwell in. You have not a palace that shall be as gorgeous as Solomon's - a mighty palace as immense as the dwellings of the kings of Assyria, or Babylon; but you have a God that is more than mortal creatures can behold; you dwell in an immortal fabric, you dwell in the Godhead - something which is beyond all human skill. I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in such a perfect house. There never was a house on earth that could not be made a little better; but the house you dwell in has every thing you want; in God you have all you require. I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in a house that shall last forever, a dwelling-place that shall not pass away; when this world shall have been scattered like a dream; when, like the bubble on the breaker, creation shall have died away; when all this universe shall have died out like a spark from an expiring brand, your house shall live and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, for it is God! Be happy then.

Now, lastly, a word of ADMONITION AND WARNING to some of you. My hearers, what a pity it is that we have to divide our congregation, that we can not speak to you in a mass as being all Christians. This morning, I would I could take God's word and address it to you all, that you all might share the sweet promises it contains. But some of you would not have them if I were to offer them. Some of you despise Christ, my blessed Master. Many of you think sin to be a trifle, and grace to be worthless,

heaven to be a vision, and hell to be a fiction. Some of you are careless, and hardened, and thoughtless, without God, and without Christ. Oh! my hearers, I wonder at myself that I should have so little benevolence, that I do not preach more fervently to you. Methinks if I could get a right estimate of your souls' value that I should speak not as I do now with stammering tongue, but with flaming words. I have great cause to blush at my own slothfulness, though God knows I have striven to preach God's truth as vehemently as possible, and would spend myself in his service; but I wonder I do not stand in every street in London and preach his truth. When I think of the thousands of souls in this great city that have never heard of Jesus, that have never listened to him; when I think of how much ignorance exists, and how little gospel preaching there is, how few souls are saved, I think - O God! what little grace I must have, that I do not strive more for souls.

One word by way of warning. Do you know, poor soul, that you have not a house to live in? You have a house for your body but no house for your soul. Have you ever seen a poor girl at midnight sitting down on a door-step crying? Somebody passes by, and says, "Why do you sit here?" "I have no house, sir. I have no home." "Where is your father?" "My father's dead, sir." "Where is your mother?" "I have no mother, sir." "Have you no friends?" "No friends at all." "Have you no house?" "No; I have none. I am houseless." And she shivers in the chill air, and gathers her poor ragged shawl around her, and cries again, "I have no house - I have no home." Would you not pity her? Would you blame her for her tears? Ah! there are some of you that have houseless souls here this morning. It is something to have a houseless body; but to think of a houseless soul! Methinks I see you in eternity sitting on the door-step of heaven. An angel says, "What! have you no house to live in?" "No house," says the poor soul." "Have you no father?" "No; God is not my father; and there is none beside him." "Have you no mother?" "No; the church is not my mother; I never sought her ways, nor loved Jesus. I have neither father nor mother." "Have you no house, then?" "No; I am a houseless soul." But there is one thing worse about that - houseless souls have to be sent into hell; to a dungeon, to a lake that burns with fire. Houseless soul! in a little while thy body will have gone; and where wilt thou house thyself when the hot hail of eternal vengeance comes from heaven? Where wilt thou hide thy guilty head,

when the winds of the last judgment-day shall sweep on thee with fury? Where wilt thou shelter thyself, when the blast of the terrible one shall be as a storm against a wall, when the darkness of eternity comes upon thee, and hell thickens round thee? It will be all in vain for you to cry, "Rocks, hide me; mountains, fall upon me;" the rocks will not obey you, the mountains will not hide you. Caverns would be palaces if you could dwell in them, but there will be no caverns for you to hide your head in, but you will be houseless souls, houseless spirits, wandering through the shades of hell, tormented, destitute, afflicted, and that throughout eternity. Poor houseless soul, dost thou want a house? I have a house to let this morning for every sinner who feels his misery. Do you want a house for your soul? Then I will condescend to men of low estate, and tell you in homely language, that I have a house to let. Do you ask me what is the purchase? I will tell you; it is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is without money and without price. Ah! you would like to pay some rent wouldn't you? You would love to do something to win Christ. You can not have the house then; it is "without money and without price." I have told you enough of the house itself, and therefore I will not describe its excellences. But I will tell you one thing - that if you feel that you are a houseless soul this morning, you may have the key to-morrow; and if you feel yourself to be a houseless soul to-day, you may enter it now. If you had a house of your own I would not offer it to you; but since you have no other, here it is. Will you take my Master's house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground-rent of loving and serving him forever? Will you take Jesus, and dwell in him throughout eternity? or will you be content to be a houseless soul? Come inside, sir; see, it is furnished from top to bottom with all you want. It has cellars filled with gold, more than you will spend as long as you live; it hath a parlor where you can entertain yourself with Christ, and feast on his love; it has tables well stored with food for you to live on forever; it hath a drawing-room of brotherly love where you can receive your friends. You will find a resting room up there where you can rest with Jesus; and on the top there is a look-out, whence you can see heaven itself. Will you have the house, or will you not? Ah! if you are houseless, you will say, "I should like to have the house; but may I have it?" Yes; there is the key. The key is, "Come to Jesus." But, you say, "I am too shabby for such a house." Never mind; there are garments inside. As



Rowland Hill once said -

"Come naked, come filthy, come ragged, come poor,  
Come wretched, come dirty, come just as you are."

If you feel guilty and condemned, come, and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house by-and-by. He will wash you, and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing with Moses, with the same unfaltering voice, "Lord, thou hast been my dwelling place throughout all generations."

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## **A Glorious Church**

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. - Ephesians 5:25-27

What a golden example Christ gives to his disciples! There are few masters who could venture to say, "If YOU would practice my teaching, imitate my life." But the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, and therefore he can point to himself as the paragon of holiness, as well as the teacher of it. The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace which was in Christ Jesus. Even as a husband, which is a relationship that the Christian sustains in common with the rest of men, he is to look upon Christ Jesus as being set before him as the picture, and he is to paint according to that copy. Christ himself being the bridegroom of the Church, the true Christian is to seek to be such a

husband as Christ was to his spouse. I fear, brethren, that we often stop short of the Master's example; that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are therefore far from being wise. We think if we avoid the egregious faults of some, and can attain to the moderate virtues of others, we have done well. Let it be so no longer. He would never excel in statuary who should take the works of some mere tyro to be his copy. No; the sculptor knows that he cannot rival Praxiteles or Phidias, and yet he takes some Greek torso, or bust from the antique to be his model: he must have perfection there, if there be none in his own workmanship. The painter would never attain to eminence if he went to an exhibition and devoted himself to the study of some work of moderate worth, and said; "I will attempt to reach this, and there I will stop contented." No, he goes to the galleries of the great masters, and though his timid pencil may not dare to hope that he shall strike out thoughts so clearly and make life stand out upon the canvas as they have done, yet he seeks to drink in their inspiration, hoping that he may rise to some proud eminence in art by imitating them. Let the Christian then aspire to be like unto his Lord, who is the author and finisher of his faith; and let him, as he runs the heavenly race, look unto Jesus, and make "the Apostle and High Priest of his profession" his continual study, and aim to be changed into his image from glory unto glory.

You must be struck in reading the passage before us, on what high ground the apostle takes the Christian. It is possible that some husbands might say, "How can I love such a wife as I have?" It might be a supposable case that some Christian was unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, and found himself for ever bound with a fetter to one possessed of a morose disposition, of a froward temper, of a bitter spirit. He might therefore say, "Surely I am excused from loving in such a case as this. It cannot be expected that I should love that which is in itself so unlovely." But mark, beloved, the wisdom of the apostle. He silences that excuse, which may possibly have occurred to his mind while writing the passage, by taking the example of the Savior, who loved, not because there was loveliness in his Church, but in order to make her lovely. You perceive "he loved his Church and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." He did not admire her because there was no spot in her;

he did not choose her because she had no wrinkle; but fixed his affections where there were multitudinous spots and wrinkles; where everything was deformity, he still set his heart, and would not withdraw till he had loved the spots away, and loved every wrinkle out of her who was the object of his choice. And now he seems to say to every Christian man, however unhappily he may have fared; "If perchance in the lot of Providence you have been yoked to one who deserves but little of your affection, yet if you cannot love because of esteem, love because of pity; if you cannot love because of present merit, then love because of future hope, for possibly, even there, in that bad soil, some sweet flower may grow; he not weary of holy tillage, and of heavenly ploughing and sowing, because at the last there may spring up some fair harvest that shall make glad your soul." He loved his Church and gave himself for it that he might present it to himself a glorious Church. I do not intend, however, this morning, entering into the duty of husbands, that is not the reason for which I selected the text, but to set forth the love of Jesus towards his people.

And first, let us consider the object of the Savior's love. "He loved the Church;" then let us observe the work which love has carried on in pursuance of its gracious design. "He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the word." Then, thirdly, let us look at the beloved object when the design is accomplished -- "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and then, let us pause awhile to behold this beloved object, presented by our Lord to himself in the day of his triumphant espousals.

I. First, then, may the Spirit of God help us while we look at THE CHOSEN CHURCH, THE OBJECT OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE.

Some of our brethren are very fond of what is called the general or universal view of God's benevolence. I trust we are not afraid to deal with that, whenever we come across it in Holy Scripture. We believe that "God is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works." We believe him to have the love of benevolence towards all his creatures, and we can preach without bated breath upon such a text as this -- "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But some of these brethren are very much afraid of the peculiar and

special sign of the Savior's love, and they seem to shrink from a text which has anything particular and discriminating in it; and shake it off from their hand into the fire, as Paul did the viper of old. Now we thank God we have learned to love the distinguishing doctrines of grace; and that predestination and discrimination are not hard words for us to pronounce now, neither do they grate upon our ears; but we love to read this text, and put the emphasis upon the accusative case. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. We perceive that Christ did not love the world in the sense in which the term "loved" is here meant. We see here that Christ gave himself not for the world, but for it, that is the Church. In the sense in which he is said here to give himself, he did so for none except his chosen people, the Church; his one, special, and particular object of affection. It is not thus that Christ has loved universal creatureship-and all mankind alike without exception or difference-but he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.

Now what is this Church which Jesus Christ loved, if it be not the entire company of the elect? As many as the Father gave him from before the foundation of the world, whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the stars began to shine-as many as were taken by him to be the sheep of his pasture, the jewels of his crown, the children of his love, the subjects of his kingdom, the members of his body, each one of them being particularly known to him, and chosen in him before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds-so many compose the Church of Christ which was the object of his redeeming love. We have to search for these chosen ones in what is called the Church visible. We know that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, and that the visible Church is not identical with that Church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself. There is a Church invisible, and this is the center, and life of the Church visible; what the wheat is to the chaff and heap upon the threshing floor, such are these living Christians amongst the mass of professors in the world. There is a distinction which we cannot see, which it is not for us to try and make manifest, lest, haply, in endeavoring to root up the tares, we root up the wheat also. There is an unseen Church which becomes visible in heaven, which will be apparent and manifest at the coming of the Son of man. This it is which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself.

Now, observe what this Church was by nature, for that is the subject of our discourse just now upon this first head. The Church which Christ loved was in her origin as sinful as the rest of the human race. Have the damned in hell fallen through Adam's transgression? So had the saved in glory once. The sin which was imputed to lost spirits was equally and with as fatal consequences imputed to them, and had it not been for the incoming of the covenant head, the second Adam, they had for ever suffered with the rest. They, too, were alike depraved in nature. Is the heart deceitful above all things in the unregenerate? So it is in the elect before regeneration. Was the will perverse? Was the understanding darkened? Was the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint in the case of those who continued in sin? It was just the same at first with those who have been by sovereign grace taken into the heart of Christ. "We were," says the apostle, "by nature the children of wrath even as others." Remember that between the brightest saint in heaven and the blackest sinner in hell, there is no difference except that which Christ has made. Had those glorified ones been left to continue in their natural state, they would have sinned as foully and as constantly as the worst of sinners have done. To begin with, there is no difference between the election and the non-election. They are all alike fallen; "they are all gone out of the way,- they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Nay, more, this Church of Christ is made up of persons who are actually defiled by their own transgressions. Are you and I members of that Church? Ah, then, we are compelled to confess that in us by nature dwelt all manner of concupiscence, vileness, and an evil heart of unbelief, ever prone to depart from the living God and to rebel against the Most High. And what since have we done? Or rather, what have we not done?

"We wandered each a different way,  
But all the downward road."

We did not all fall into the same vices, but still when the black catalogue of sin is read, we have to weep over it, and to say, "Such were some of us." But why we should make a part of Christ's Church is a question that never can be answered except with this one reply, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Do the wicked sink to hell with their sins like

millstones about their necks? We should have sunk there too, and as rapidly and as fatally, unless eternal love had said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." Look at Christ's Church as you see her visibly in the world, and I ask you, brethren, though she has much about her that is admirable, whether there is not much that might cause her Lord to cast her away. Even in her regenerate estate, she speaks truly when she says, "she is black as the tents of Kedar." Mark the hypocrites that come into the Christian Church and that mar her purity.

Observe the formalists that crowd her courts, that sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing, but have hearts full of rottenness and villainy. Observe even the true saints-how unbelieving, how carnally-minded often, how childish, how ready to murmur against God. How few of them are fathers in Israel. When they ought to be teachers they have need to be instructed in the first elements of the faith. What heresies come into the Church, and how many unstable minds are carried away with them. What divisions there are! How one saith, "I am of Paul;" and another, "I am of Apollos;" and a third, "I am of Christ." What envyings there are, what backbitings of those that are eminent for usefulness. What suspicions against those who are a little more zealous than their fellows! My brethren, what a want of affection we can see in the Church of Christ; how little brotherly kindness, how little sympathy. On the other hand, how much of pride is discovered: how much caste creeps in and prevails even among those who profess to be brethren! How we find some claiming to be lords in God's heritage, and taking to themselves names and titles to which they have no right, seeing that "One is our Master," and we are not to be called "Rabbi" among men. When I look at the Church even with a blinded eye, having no power to see her as God's omniscient eye must see, yet is she covered with spots. Well may she wear her veil and say, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." O Church of God, how is it Jesus Christ could love thee, for even in thy Church- capacity and Church-estate how much there is that could make him say, "Thou art reprobate silver; thou shalt be cast into the fire." Lo, how ranch there is that must make him say of thee,

"Salt is good, but this salt has lost its savor, and wherewith shall it be

seasoned? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men."

And yet you see, dear friends, it is written that Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it. I think I see it -- a piece of ground untilled; neither hedged, nor walled, not covered with vines, nor redolent with the perfume of sweet flowers, but it is a spot in the wilderness, filled with the thorn, and the thistle, and the brier; her hedges are broken down; the stones of her wall are scattered; the wild boar out of the wood wasteth her; all kinds of unclean creatures lurk among her weeds and brambles. Oh, how is it, thou Lord of glory, that thou couldst buy, at the price of thy heart's blood, such a waste piece of ground as that? What couldst thou see in that garden that thou shouldst determine to make it the fairest spot of all the earth, that should yield thee the richest of all fruit?

Methinks, again, I see the Church of God, not as a fair maid decorated for the marriage-day with jewels, and carrying herself right gloriously both in her person and her apparel; but I see her as a helpless child, neglected by her parents, cast out, unwashed, unclothed, left uncared for, and covered with her filth and blood. No eye pities her, no arm comes to bring her salvation. But the eye of the Lord Jesus looks upon that infant, and straightway love beams forth from that eye, and speaks from that lip, and acts through that hand; he says, "Live!" and the helpless infant is cared for: she is nurtured; she is decked with dainty apparel; she is fed, and clothed, and sustained, and made comely through the comeliness of him who chose her at the first. Thus it is that strong love moved the grace of God, and the Church found that Christ gave himself for it.

I must not, however, leave this point without just reminding you of what kind of love it is which Jesus Christ gives to this Church: you perceive it is the love of a husband. Now the love of a husband is special. Those gentlemen who think that Christ did not love the Church more than he loved the rest of the world, must have a very queer idea of how a husband ought to love his wife, for it says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church;" and surely a husband ought to love his wife more than he loves other people. Therefore Christ cherishes for the Church a special, particular affection, which is set upon her rather than upon the rest of mankind. The Lord has set his Church as much above the rest of the

world, as he has fixed his own throne above the kings and princes of this lower earth and the day shall come when she, "fair as the moon and clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," shall be recognized as being the favourite of heaven, the peculiar treasure of Christ-his regalia, the crown of his head, the bracelet of his arm, the breastplate of his heart, the very center and core of his own love. Let us not cavil at this truth, for it is exceedingly precious. Let us seek the honey out of it, and believe that Christ loves the Church with a special love.

Again, a husband loves his wife with a constant love, and so does Christ his Church. He will not cast her away to-morrow having loved her to-day. He does not vary in his affection. He may change in his display of affection, but the affection itself is still the same. A husband loves his wife with an enduring love; it never will die out: he says, "Till death us do part will I cherish thee;" but Christ will not even let death part his love to his people. "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." A husband loves his wife with a hearty love, with a love that is true and intense. It is not mere lip-service. He does not merely speak, but he acts; he is ready to provide for her wants; he will defend her character; he will vindicate her honor; because his heart is set upon her. It is not merely with the eye that he delighteth now and then to glance upon her, but his soul hath her continually in his remembrance: she has a mansion in his heart from whence she can never be cast away. She has become a portion of himself; she is a member of his body, she is part of his flesh and of his bones; and so is the Church to Christ for ever, an eternal spouse. He says,

"Forget thee, I will not, I cannot;  
thy name Engraved on my heart doth for ever remain;  
The palms of my hands whilst I look on,  
I see The wounds I received when suffering for thee."

Now let us leave this point, only reminding you again, that this Church is only a Church of Christ, because he has made her so. She had no right or title to his affection; he loved her because he chose to do so, and having once loved her, he never will divorce her: she shall be his, world without end.



II. And now I shall want your patience a few minutes on the second point, and that is, THE WORK WHICH LOVE SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH IN ITS GRACIOUS DESIGNS.

Since the Church is not fit for Christ by nature, he resolved to make her so by grace. He could not be in communion with sin. Therefore it must be purged away. Perfect holiness was absolutely necessary in one who was to be the bride of Christ. He purposes to work that in her, and to make her meet to be his spouse eternally. The great means by which he attempts to do this, is, "he gave himself for her."

Beloved, I wish I had the power of speech this morning as one sometimes has it, or rather, I wish that another had to handle such a weighty theme as this, for how can I set forth to you the preciousness of this gift? He gave himself for his Church. Had he given his crown and royalty, and come down to earth for a while, that were mercy. Had he given up for a time the happiness and pleasure of his Father's house, this were somewhat-and this he did. But it was not enough. He would not merely leave his glory, and part with his crown, but he must give himself. Here he is on earth, born of the Virgin; a helpless infant, he slumbers at her breast. Throughout his life, foxes had holes, and birds of the air nests, but "He had not where to lay his head." He hath given you much in this. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The thorn crown is on his brow, the lash of the scourge is on his back, the spear is at his breast, the nails are in his hands and feet. He has given you much, but now he is about to give you all he has. He is stripped naked to his shame; he gives his last garment that he may cover the nakedness of man, but when he cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" when having drunk the last drop of the bitter cup of woe, he bows his head, and says, "It is finished!" and gives up the ghost, he has given you all that he can give, for he has given you himself. He gives you his Godhead; that comes on earth, but is veiled in clay; he gives you his entire manhood, for his body is given to the scourge and tomb, and his soul to agony and death-he gives himself.

Perhaps you will say, "But how does his giving himself tend to cleanse his Church?" You know, beloved, how the precious blood of his heart takes away sin; how the righteousness of his life covers his Church, and makes

her beautiful in the sight of God; you know how the water which flowed with the blood purifies and sanctifies his people. But, perhaps, you will never realize better how Christ gives himself to you than you do at the sacramental table. There in type and symbol you see in that bread, his broken body; you see set forth in shadow in that wine, his blood; and what do you with that bread? Do you look at it? ay! with tears in your eyes. What do you with the cup? Do you regard it? Yes, with loving eyes. But this is not all. "Take, eat!" saith the Savior. "Drink ye, drink ye all of it," saith he; and as you eat and drink, you are thereby reminded of the great truth, that he has given you his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink; and that these, like some healing medicine, will purge you of all diseases, cleanse you of every lingering cancer, go through and through the secret parts of your soul, and expel with their sanctifying influence the very roots and seeds of corruption, and make you perfect in every good work to do his will. I admit that you may not feel this at present, but you have that within you in having received Christ, which will be the death of all sin. He has given himself to dwell in you, to kill every lust, to slay every corruption, to expel the Canaanites out of the Canaan of your heart, till King David shall reign in Jerusalem and the Jebusite shall be put away for ever. Beloved, this is the way in which he sanctifies and cleanses his Church, by giving himself for it, first upon the tree, and afterwards in the Church, by the work of the Holy Spirit as a quickening and cleansing power, dwelling there evermore.

When the text says, "he gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it," is there not allusion here to the double cure of sin? Here is Christ sanctifying by the Spirit, that is to say, taking away the propensity to sin, killing the power of sin in us, helping us to reign over our corruptions that we may in heart and life be pure, even as our Father which is in heaven is pure. And as to the cleansing, may not that allude to justification and pardon? Of that we spoke particularly last Saturday to our own joy if not to yours. We are complete in him; we are perfect in Christ Jesus, and the design of Christ is, that sanctification shall be as perfect as justification, that the power of sin shall be as thoroughly slain as the guilt of it, that altogether sin shall cease to be in the Christian.

But what is the outward instrumentality which Christ uses? The text says,

"With the washing of water by the word." We Baptists are generally thought to lay great stress upon baptism. There can be no greater mistake made, than to suppose that we exaggerate its importance. I sometimes think we do not value it enough. Those who practice infant baptism might be much more fairly charged with exaggerating the importance of baptism, than those of us, who scrupulously require a profession of faith from all persons, before we think of baptizing them into the name of the Lord. I do not believe that baptism is intended here, nor even referred to. I know that the most of commentators say it is. I do not think it. It strikes me that one word explains the whole. Christ sanctifies and cleanses us by the washing of water, but what sort of water? By the Word. The water which washes away sin, which cleanses and purifies the soul, is the Word. The Word of God has a cleansing influence. It comes and convinces the man of sin. It makes him see his impurity so as to hate it. When applied with power by the Holy Spirit, it works repentance; it leads the man to weep and bewail himself before God. That same Word leads to faith in Christ Jesus, and faith works by love and purifies the soul. The Word is preached, the Word is believed; and as soon as ever that Word is believed, it begins to act like water in the heart of man. You cannot receive the gospel and yet be as filthy as you were before. My brother, if you really welcome the truth, those grosser sins will be washed away at once. Next, as you discover them, your besetting sins will be cleansed away, and constantly, as you understand the Word better, believe it more firmly, and feel its effect more powerfully, you will by it, as by water, be washed and cleansed from all indwelling sin, till you are sanctified and cleansed and made fit to enter into heaven. This one thing let me say solemnly, I go not into this world to preach the efficacy of baptismal water in cleansing souls from sin. Let those who care to do it, and think it their office, magnify their office exceedingly. Let those who think that sacraments have necessarily efficacy in them, stand out and boldly declare it; but, as for us, we believe that the water which cleanses is none other than the Word of God, which is preached by man, and applied by the Holy Ghost. We rest upon the uplifted cross of Christ, upon the doctrine of his atonement, on the great truth of his abiding presence in the Church of God, and ever pray, "Sanctify us by thy truth, thy word is truth."

And, mark you, the world has had a fair trial of both plans. Throughout the dark ages the world tried the efficacy of baptisms and sacraments; for century after century Popery and priest-craft gulled the world with the idea that Baptism and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper were a prescription for cleansing away sin. What was the result? Were not the cities filled with harlots? Were not the dungeons crowded with prisoners? Had not the earth become an aceldama, and was not the whole land, like Sodom, reeking with filth? Then came Luther and Calvin, and though these men held not all the truth in its fullness, yet, at least they held "the washing of water by the Word," and Luther, and Zwingli, and Calvin declared, "The world's great purgative is faith in Jesus Christ, not sacraments. The priesthood lies with Christ, and not with men. Priest-craft is to be put away. Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith comes by hearing, and that hearing by the preaching of the Word." And what happened? Why, the world woke as from a long slumber. She found herself in chains; she snapped the chains as Samson snapped the green withes. Progress came-knowledge, light, truth; and if the world be not holy, yet what strides has she made since the day when Tetzels "Indulgence for Sin" defiled the world through and through to its very center with blasphemy! We have but to keep on using this washing of water by the continual preaching of the Word, and the day shall come when our poor planet shall be cleansed from blood and filth, and shall come out from the mists in which she is now swathed, and shine like her sister stars, bright in the light of her God; and the only sounds that shall be heard from her shall be songs of joy and peace, because the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. This, then, is Christ's way of cleansing and sanctifying his Church-by the washing of water, that is to say, by the Word.

III. And now let us pass on, again troubling your patience, to the third point - THE LOVED ONE AS SHE IS PERFECTED.

One is inclined to draw a veil over the face of beauty, which never can be painted. She is to be a glorious Church. We love our own highly-favored Church. I am sure there is not a member of it-at least I do not know one-but what feels his heart leap every time he thinks of this Church, which God has so prospered, and blessed, and honored. For all that, we are

nothing but a militant Church, and a very imperfect one- a Church that has cause to mourn and humble herself before God for many sins; and I, as pastor, looking upon you all, cannot help while I bless God for all I see that is excellent, bowing mine own head in the dust because of the sins of a people favored with the gospel, who, nevertheless, have much to confess before God. We are not a glorious Church. You can cast your eyes upon such Churches as the Moravians, who gave themselves up, men and women, to Christ's cause, and scattered themselves all over the world, preaching the gospel. Greenland was not too cold, the Sahara was not too hot-they sacrificed everything for Christ; but yet the Moravian Church with all its excellence has much of which it may well repent. It is not a glorious Church. You may look where you like, and you shall see that the dust of travel is still upon the wilderness Church. She has the presence of God, she has her Shekinah, but alas, she is troubled within by a mixed multitude. Korab, Dathan, and Abiram, sometimes vex her. Her Master has to send her fiery serpents sometimes, and she still needs to keep the brazen serpent lifted up every day; for even in her ranks, there are some that still need to look and live. We have no glorious Church on earth, nor do I think we can get much idea of what a glorious Church is. I tried yesterday, last Sunday rather, (and all the days since then seem to have gone so rapidly that I thought it yesterday). I tried last Sunday to show what a glorious person was. But what must a glorious Church be? There is one lamp; well, that is very bright, very pleasing; you like to have it in your room; but think of all London illuminated to the very top of the cross of St. Paul's, and what an idea you then have of brightness. Now, one glorified Christian is a lamp. Think, then, of all heaven, with its domes of glory lit up with ten thousand times ten thousand companies of blood-bought spirits, whom Jesus Christ has taken up-a glorious Church! One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman's garden, acres in extent, and there are beds of flowers, the blue, and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria and the geranium and many others, all in order, and in ranks. Oh, how glorious is this! Those undulating lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept, all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! a garden! who can tell how sweet this is! So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious Church is Christ's garden. A drop of water may be very precious to a

thirsty tongue, but a river full of it! Children are pleased, when for the first time in their lives they sail across some little lake, but how surprised they are when they come to the deep and rolling sea, which seems without shore or bottom. Well, so pleased am I at the very thought of the glorious Church. As yet I have never seen anything but one little lake-this Church, the Church of God in England, the Church of God in the world, what is it after all but "as a drop of a bucket!" but the glorious Church-the whole of the people of God gathered together in one, all perfectly free from sin, all made like unto Christ, and all bedight and bright with the glory which excelleth even that which Moses and Elms had when they were with Christ in the holy mountain, or such as Moses had when he came down from the top of Horeb, when he had been forty days with God-a glorious Church, a mighty company of glorified beings.

But do observe what is said of her. She is to be "Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "Without spot" -- that is much; but you see spots can be taken off. The face is washed, and the spot comes out. The garment is thoroughly cleansed, and there are some chemicals and acids applied, and the spots can be got out. Though, truly, some of us have scarlet spots of a crimson-like dye, yet the blood of Jesus is a wonderful detergent, and it can get out spots of any color. Though we may have been lying in the ley-tub of sin even for seventy years, yet Christ will get all the spots out of us if we are a part of his Church. Though his Church be double-dyed, yet Christ will make her white as snow.

But that is not the wonder of the text; the marvel is, "without spot or wrinkle." You may get a spot out of your face, but you cannot smooth out a wrinkle. You may make what efforts you please, but you cannot get rid of your wrinkles. You that are getting old, if time has come and driven his plough across your brow, why there the furrow will remain, it will not come out. Yes, but the Church of Christ is to be without wrinkle as well as without spot. How will he get the wrinkles out? There is no chemical that I know of that can get rid of them; but Jesus Christ has a sacred art, having in himself by the washing of water, even the Word, the power to get wrinkles out. Lightfoot says there is an allusion here to the carefulness of the Jew in his ablutions. The Jew not only washes very carefully when he is purifying himself for worship, but lest any dust or

impurity should remain in any crack of the skin, or in any wrinkle, he seeks by washing again and again with the severest care, to get out the least filth that would be in the wrinkle. Very good, Dr. Lightfoot, but the Jew cannot wash wrinkles out; he can wash away the dirt, but he cannot get rid of the wrinkle. But Christ can banish away both. Another good writer says, that perhaps there is an allusion here to the fuller's trade. The fuller gets out the spots first, and then as the cloth may have been so folded up that there are creases and wrinkles in it, he uses divers stretchings and millings, till at last he manages to get out the creases and wrinkles from the cloth as well as the spot. I do not know whether there is an allusion to that, but this I know, that there shall not be a spot of sin on any of God's people, nor yet a wrinkle of infirmity. They shall lose the effect of old age and weakness in their bodies, and they shall lose the defects and infirmities in their souls. The outward spot shall be removed, and the inward deformity, which was like a wrinkle ingrained into their very nature, this shall also be taken away.

But do observe the next word. The Holy Ghost seems to exhaust language to describe this purity. He says, "Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!" She shall have nothing like a spot, nothing that can be construed into a wrinkle; she shall be fair, and the world shall be compelled to acknowledge that she is. The eyes of God shall look upon her; and though he sees in darkness, and discovereth the hidden things of night, even he shall discern neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, in any one single part of the body or the soul of any one of the members of the mystical body of Christ. Oh what perfection, beloved, is this! I cannot speak of it, but I can delight in thinking of it. I was trying to think last night, what I should be like when I was freed from my spots and wrinkles. Ah! you can all see them now-I wonder you put up with them sometimes; but what shall I be when I have parted with them for ever? And I shall get rid of them. Death is stamped on every infirmity: the Lord has put the poison into the heart of my inbred sins, and bless his name for it. But what will you and I be like when we are perfect? No hasty temper, no sloth, no wrong thoughts, no cold hearts, no dilatoriness in prayer, no sluggishness in praise. Oh, brethren, there will be some of you so different, we shall scarcely know you. When some brethren die, I believe they will go to heaven, but they will be strangely altered by the time they

get there. They are good people, but they have such crotchety ways, such queer humours, such hot tempers, that surely we shall have to be very wise people to know them in heaven. We shall need to be informed who they are, they will be so greatly changed; but this will be the happy state of all, whether altered much or little, we shall be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

I must not dwell longer, though the theme invites. Hypocrisies, heresies, declensions, divisions, all these will be put away from the Church. Infirmity, doubt, sin, fear of every kind, will be put away from every believer, and we shall be presented blameless, holy, and unreprouvable in the sight of God.

#### IV. And lastly, THE LOVED ONE IS TO BE PRESENTED

It is said, he is "to present her to himself." Every day Christ presents his people to his Father in his intercession. The Holy Spirit presents poor sinners every day in conversion to Christ, but there is to be a day when Christ will present his glorious Church "to himself." When he shall come, then shall be the wedding day. There shall be heard the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Then the virgins with their lamps trimmed shall go forth to meet him, and his Church shall enter into the supper, to sit down and sup with him and he with her. To-day the Church is like Esther bathing herself in spices, making herself ready for Ahasuerus, her Lord and master; to-day we are espoused, at the coming we shall be married. We are waiting now impatiently for him, then we shall be in his embrace. To-day we wear not the crown, to-day we wave not the palm, but tomorrow when he cometh, we shall be crowned with him and triumph with him. Let us long for his appearing. Let this bright hope sustain you in the dreary months of waiting and the weary hours of fighting, "He cometh! He cometh!" And when he cometh, he will be glorified in all his saints, and admired in those that have believed on him.

I would to God we were all members of his Church. There is only one token of membership which is infallible, and that is, saving faith in Christ. If thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt be without spot or wrinkle; but if thou believest not, thou art not of his Church, neither shalt thou be a partaker of his cleansing power nor of his glorious advent. God give



thee a new heart and a right spirit, and wash thee with water this day by the Word, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The Gladness Of The Man Of Sorrows**

Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. - Psalm 45:7-8

During the last few sabbath days we have been considering the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. We followed him through the agony of the garden, the sorrows of the betrayal, the weariness and slander of his various trials, the shame and mockery of the soldiery, and the sorrows of his cross-bearing progress along the streets of the city. It seems fit this morning to make a pause that we may take breath awhile in this our pilgrimage of sorrow, and be comforted by a view of the glory-land to which the thorny pathway leads. A festive occasion like the present may have unfitted your minds for deep contemplations upon the Passion, and it may be more congenial with our present mood of gladness to meditate upon the glory which followed the shame. The same person will be before our eye, but we shall view him in a brighter light, we shall see the silver lining of the black cloud of anguish, the rich pearls hidden in the stormy deep of his sufferings, and the days of heaven which were conceived in the womb of the black night of his agony. The Man of Sorrows is the fountain of all joy to others, and is the possessor of all the joys of heaven and earth, by virtue of his triumphs. He has experienced joys in proportion to his sorrows; as he once waded through deep waters of grief he has now climbed to the highest mountains of happiness. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross despising the shame, and now having sat down at his Father's right-hand he enjoys pleasures for evermore. We have seen our David crossing the brook Kedron weeping as he went; shall we not gaze upon him as he dances before the ark for joy? We saw him crowned with thorns, shall we not go forth to meet him and behold him with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart? Oh that while

we muse upon these things our heavenly Father may hear the prayer of our great Advocate who once cried on our behalf—"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

Our text describes the joy poured forth upon our glorious King in a twofold manner. Our Lord is first made joyous by his Father—"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." But there is another joy, which he getteth not from one person, but from many. Read the next verse—"All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." Here both saints and angels unite to swell the ever-deepening, and widening river of the Savior's gladness. When we shall have walked by these still waters and trodden these green pastures, perhaps we shall be prepared to say with the apostle, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," and we shall be qualified to sing with the spouse, "We will rejoice and be glad in thee; Ye will remember thy love more than wine; the upright love thee."

I. Come, my brethren, let us ponder that part of OUR SAVIOR'S JOY WHICH IS GIVEN HIM BY HIS FATHER.

To a degree the Redeemer possessed this joy even while he was here on earth. We are not sure that the early life of the Savior was full of sorrow. As he grew in wisdom and in stature, he also grew in favor both with God and man; and favor with God and man would probably give the youthful Jesus an unusual degree of holy happiness. When he entered upon his public ministry, sorrows in troops beset him, so that the countenance once fairer than the children of men, became more marred than that of any man, and at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three he was taken to be near fifty, from the effect of labor, hardship and woe. Yet, even in the days of his affliction, the Great Mourner was not utterly wretched, even amid the wormwood and the gall there were drops of joy. When, in his baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended, did that divine Dove bring no peace, no comfort upon his wings? When the Father bare witness, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

am well pleased," did those approving words from the opening heavens afford no satisfaction to the mind of the obedient Son? Brethren, the perfect nature of our Redeemer could not but rejoice exceedingly in the smile of the Father and the descent of the Holy Ghost. When in the wilderness, after the forty days of fasting and of temptation, the angels ministered unto him, did they bring him no celestial joys, no consolations of God? Did he know no secret joys upon the mountain-tops, where he communed with God at midnight? Was it no delight to him to utter sweet invitations and loving words of mercy? Surely those lips were blessed which poured forth benedictions, and there must have been some comfort in the hands which bound up the broken-hearted and opened the prisons of the captives. We read that Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The doctrine of electing love stirred the deeps of his great soul, and made the floods clap their hands. "The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice."

Do you think, brethren, our Savior lived in this world, doing so much good, without receiving some joy in his acts of mercy? To teach, to labor, and to make men holy, must give joy to a benevolent mind. It could not be otherwise than pleasant to a good man to do good. If God delighteth in mercy, surely his express image must do the same. To restore the dead to their sorrowing relations, was this no satisfaction? Did the widow's grateful eye in the gates of Nain kindle no joy-flashes in his heart? Bid the thankfulness of Mary and Martha inspire no comfort in the Life-giver? Think you that it was not gladsome work to feed the famishing multitudes? Who could look upon the feasting thousands without rejoicing? To heal the leper, to restore the lame, to give eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf, who could do all this and not be happy in distributing the boons? Surely, brethren, there were some hosannas in Jesu's ears, and though he could always bear the cry of "Crucify him! Crucify him!" yet he must have felt the wondrous joy of doing good, which is one of the delights entailed on all self-sacrificing lovers of others.

Bethink you, beloved, of his character, and surely he must have known

the joy of being good; for there is a deep gladness in holiness, a blessed peacefulness in righteousness. The holiness of angels is their happiness, and although to a large degree the Savior laid his peace aside, yet there is a rest of soul from which virtue cannot separate. Distractions of conscience he never knew, disturbance of mind, on account of sin he did not feel on his own account, although as our substitute he was made sin for us. He suffered. Mark, I am not for a moment detracting from his sufferings, high mountains of grief I see; the eagle's wing cannot reach their summit, nor foot of angel climb their brows; but lo, I see leaping streams of pleasure running adown the rugged steeps, and amid the hollows of the desolate hills I gaze upon deep lakes of joy unfathomable by mortal line.

Brethren, we have every reason to believe that our Savior permanently found a solace while on earth, in the consideration that he was doing his Father's will. He said, "It is my meat and my drink, to do the will of him that sent me." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" On several occasions the voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's good pleasure in his only begotten: once the glory of heaven enwraps him on the holy mount; and during his whole life he had the presence of God until the moment of necessary desertion, when we find him, for the first and only time, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" To do a work which he had contemplated from all eternity, to engage in an occupation which had always been most delightful in prospect, could not have been altogether and only sorrowful. It was a Passover with many bitter herbs, but with desire had he desired to eat of it. It was a baptism, and a baptism of blood, but he was straitened until it was accomplished. Of old, in expectation his delights were with the sons of men. Were there none in the work? Brethren, let your Lord speak for himself—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

In the glorious prospect which this great work opened to him when it should be completed, I am absolutely sure our Savior found comfort. Think not I speak too strongly; I have scriptural warrant. Turn to the twenty-second Psalm, which is the soliloquy of Christ upon the cross, and you find him, after he bemoaned his desolate condition, comforting

himself thus, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto he Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." He saw with prescient eye through the thick darkness which enveloped the cross, the rising of the bright sun of heaven's eternal noon. He saw, when he hung upon the cross, not only the mocking eyes of multitudes of enemies, but the loving eyes of millions of souls whom he should redeem from hell; he heard not only the shouts of the ribald mob, but the songs of blood-redeemed spirits. When he saw the lions and heard them roar, was it not a comfort to the shepherd that he had kept the sheep, and none of them had perished. Indeed, my brethren, there is more than enough of evidence to prove that a rich anointing of gladness rested on the head of the Man of Sorrows.

Still, dear friends, this may be viewed by some as a moot point; we allow that there is room for difference of opinion; but not so as to the great joy which Christ obtained after he had endured the cross, despising the shame. Let us enter into the secret joys of our Beloved. Consider, my brethren, the work accomplished; Christ has borne the wrath of God; God is reconciled to his people; death has been destroyed; Christ as risen from the dead; the dragon's head has been broken, the powers of sin have been subdued; our Lord ascends to heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel; the glorified spirits accord him a triumphal entry. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" He sits down upon his throne at his Father's right hand, and then it is that he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

I should not have failed to remark that, as God, our Redeemer always possessed fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore, We are speaking of him in his complex person as man and God, and in his official character as Mediator, it is his delight in this capacity which we now consider.

The joy of the risen Mediator laid, first of all, in this, that he had now accomplished a work which he had meditated upon from all eternity.

Before the day-star marked the dawn; before the calm of space had ever been stirred by wing of angel, or the solemnity of silence had been startled with song of seraph, Christ had purposed to redeem his people, It was in the eternal purpose of the great Second Person in the Divine Unity, from before all worlds, to redeem unto himself a people by price. What joy must it give him now that he can say, "I have finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

His heart had not only meditated, but had been mightily set upon his work. He had bound his people's names upon his breast; he had graven them upon the pylons of his hands. His ears were bored, for he intended to serve even until death. What if I say that, from before all worlds, he thirsted and panted that he might do the Father's will, and redeem his people from their ruin! Now, brethren, that desire which had been in him like coals of juniper, unquenchable, is now fulfilled to the uttermost; how can he be otherwise than anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, since none other ever purposed so firmly or succeeded so perfectly.

Consider, too, how great the pains which he endured, and we must believe the joy to be commensurate with the pain. In the accomplishing of his great life-purpose, he descended to the cross of deepest woe. Have I not tried to paint in my poor way the mysterious agonies of our blessed Savior? but I feel that I have failed. Now when all this had been suffered, what joy to look back upon it! Never day so bright as that which follows black darkness; never calm so sweet as that which succeeds hurricane and tempest; never native place so delightful as to the long exiled pilgrim. So deep the sorrow, so high the joy; so unspeakable the grief, so unutterable the bliss.

Remember, beloved brethren, the enemies he had overcome, and you will not marvel that his joy was matchless. Had he not worsted Death—grim tyrant—vanquisher of all mankind? Had he not broken the head of the old serpent, who in his crushing coils had bound and pressed a universe of souls? Did he not defeat in battle all the fiends in hell? Was not evil forever dethroned? Did not goodness sit upon a glorious high throne? Was not virtue exalted to the highest heaven, and sin cast down to the lowest

hell in that day of the judgment of this world, when the Prince of Darkness was cast out? "Behold," he might have said, "I see Satan falling like lightning from heaven; the dragon bound with a great chain. Lo, hell's gates are shut upon the saints, the grave is rifled of its spoils, heaven is crowded with the saved, and earth purified from sin." O Jesus, thou mighty conqueror, thy glorious victories must surely give to thee, as they do to us, a blessed anointing with the oil of gladness!

Our Lord possesses in heaven now, as perfect man, the joy of looking back upon a life without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; the satisfaction of seeing this perfect obedience covering all his people, till they stand lovely in his loveliness; the equal delight of observing the efficacy of his blood to wash the foulest, and make them whiter than snow, while his intercession scatters mercy in one everlasting shower upon the sons of men. Since his heart was love his joy must be in deeds of love, and as he has become a fountain always welling up with loving gifts towards the chosen sons of men, his delight must be unchanging like his nature, and unbounded like his divinity. "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

We pause a moment, having tried to dwell upon the joy, to notice the cause of it. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness, therefore God hath anointed thee." It seems, then, that the first cause why Jesus Christ has received fullness of joy lies in his having loved righteousness. This he did necessarily because of the spotless purity of his nature; this he did practically in the hallowed sincerity and integrity of his life. Of whom could it be said so truly as of our Lord, that the law of God was in his heart. How abundantly did he prove his love to righteousness, by vindicating it in his death, fulfilling in his own person all the sentence of divine wrath taking upon himself all the curses which fell upon offenders. You cannot suppose righteousness to be more clearly manifested than in the living works of Jesus, nor more completely avenged than in the dying throes. How sovereign is that righteousness to which even the Son of God bowed his head and gave up the ghost. The world deluged with water, the plains of Sodom smoking with brimstone, the land of Egypt vexed with plagues, all these terrible things in righteousness manifest the justice of God, but none of them so solemnly as the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus.



Our Beloved loved righteousness indeed when he emptied out all his heart-floods that he might make us righteous. Moreover, as in his life and death we see that he loved righteousness, we discern it too in the constant effect of his work. His gospel makes men righteous. Does it not give them a legal righteousness by imputation, a real righteousness by infusion, a righteousness which covers them with fine linen without and makes them all glorious within. The spirit of the gospel which we preach is to magnify that which is pure and lovely and of good repute. Wherever the Lord Jesus displays his gracious power, sin yields the throne, purity wins the scepter, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through the perfect sacrifice, the living power of Jesus.

The text adds, "Thou hatest wickedness." A man's character is not complete without a perfect hatred of sin. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There can hardly be goodness in a man if he be not angry at sin; he who loves truth must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed him in different forms, but ever it was, "Get thee behind me, Satan." How he hated it when he saw it in others; none the less fervently because he showed his hate oftener in tears of pity than in words of rebuke; yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer." He hated wickedness so much that he bled that he might wound it to the heart; he died that it might die; he was buried that he might bury in his tomb; and he rose that he might for ever trample it beneath his feet. Christ is in the Gospel, my brethren, and you all know how utterly that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. No matter how wickedness may array itself in fair garments, and imitate the language of holiness, the precepts of Jesus, like his famous scourge of small cords, chase wickedness out of the temple, and will not let it have peaceful lodging in the Church. So too, in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial? And when our Redeemer shall come to be our judge, in those thundering words, "Depart, ye cursed," which are, indeed, but a prolongation of his life-teaching concerning sin, then shall it be seen, I say, that he hated wickedness. As warm as is his love to sinners, so hot is his hatred of sin; as perfect as is the righteousness which he completed, so perfect shall be the destruction of every form of

wickedness. Oh thou glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause hath God, even thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

But, beloved, we must dwell for one moment upon another thought supplied by the text. The character of this joy is hinted at by way of comparison—"God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And who are his fellows? Suppose his fellows to be the kings and princes of this world, for the psalm is descriptive of Christ in his royalty. Well, is he not anointed with gladness above them all? Kings rejoice in their dominions, their extent and population: our King looks from shore to shore, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, and of his dominion there is no end. Princes delight in the fame and honor which their office and deeds may bring them; but before the Lord Jesus Christ the fame of monarchs dwindles into nothing. His name shall endure for ever; throughout all generations the people shall praise him. Monarchs delight in the riches and treasure which their dominions yield; Christ receiveth a wealth of love and homage from his people, before which the riches of Croesus become poverty itself. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor." Kings are wont to rejoice in the victories they have achieved. He that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, hath more joy than they. They boast the sureness of their throne; but "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The inward thought of some kings may be that they are invincible in power, and that their will is law; but at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and his enemies shall become as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away. Good kings rejoice in the beneficence of their rule, and the happiness of their subjects; our King may surely glory in the favors which he has scattered from his scepter. But time would hail us if we were to complete the contrast here. Kings of the earth, ye may take off your crowns, and remain uncrowned in the presence of lying Jesus, for on his head are many crowns. O ye lords and mighty men, ye may lay down your dignities and honors, for ye are unhonoured and undignified in the presence of him who is above his fellows!

My brethren, where shall his fellows be found? Search ye among the wise, and who shall match the gladness of incarnate wisdom, for man's wisdom bringeth sorrow. Go ye, and travel among the famous, and who shall be compared with his illustrious name, where else is there a name so full of joy? Search out the mighty, who hath an arm like his? Go ye, and search among the good and excellent, who have blessed their kind by philanthropy; who among them is so anointed as the Man of Nazareth? As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Standing as high above all the rest of men as the heavens are above the earth; he is, indeed, anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. I find that some interpreters read it—"The oil of gladness for his fellows." The rendering is probably incorrect, but it bears a very truthful, sweet, and comfortable thought in it. If the saints are his fellows, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren, then the oil of gladness was first poured on his head, that it might descend even to the skirts of his garments, and that all the saints might be made partakers of his joy.

We have said enough, we think, on this first point; here is the material for much meditation. Search, my brethren, and learn how the Lord, even our God, has glorified his Son Jesus.

II. Turn we now to THE GLADNESS AFFORDED BY THE CHURCH. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and cassia, and aloes, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." His garments have been saturated with very precious and fragrant odours; this is the work of his Church. In the phrase, "ivory palaces" the allusion is to certain costly structures which some Oriental kings erected, plated within and without with ivory. We read of Ahab that he built an ivory house; and it was a solemn threat from the lip of Amos, "the houses of ivory shall perish." These ivory houses relate, I suppose, either to the courts of glory, or, more consistently with our interpretation this morning, to the hearts of believers; or, better still, to the churches, which are like palaces of ivory, both for glory and majesty, for richness, and for purity. The saints' graces, their love, their praise, their prayers, their faith, are like myrrh, cassia, and aloes, and the Savior's garments are so perfumed therewith, that when he rides in his triumphal chariot he scatters sweet odours all around. It is a great and certain truth, that Christ finds an intense

satisfaction in his Church. "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." In his people, as the objects of his choice, he finds satisfaction; 'tis true there is nothing in them naturally; they are by nature heirs of wrath, even as others; but having set his love upon them, having determined to make them his people, he takes a delight in the objects of his choice because of that choice. Nothing in us could have been the origin of the Saviours first delight in us. Now, doubtless, that we are his workmanship, he takes a delight in the works of his own hands; but when we were like broken potsherds, thrown away upon the dunghill of the fall, if he saw anything in us it must have been in his own eyes.

But, dear friends, as men always take a deep interest in that which has cost them dearly, so since that triumphant day when Jesus stretched out his hands upon the tree and paid the price for his people, he has found an infinite solace and delight in them. He sees in every believer's face a memento of his groans; he looks into the eye of every penitent, and sees his own tears there; he hears the cry of every mourner, and there hears his own groans over again; he beholds the reward of his soul's travail in every regenerate heart, and hence, as the purchase of his blood, we make him glad.

Again, as his workmanship, as he sees us day by day more conformed to his image, he rejoices in us. Just as you see the sculptor with his chisel fetching out the statue which lies hidden in the block of marble, taking off a corner here, and a chip there, and a piece here—see how he smiles when he brings out the features of the form divine—so our Savior, as he proceeds with his graving tool, working through the operation of the Spirit, and making us like unto himself, finds much delight in us. The painter makes rough drafts at first, and lays on the colors roughly; some do not understand what he is doing, and for three or four sittings the portrait is much unlike the man it aims at representing; but the painter can discern the features in the canvass; he sees it looming through that mist and haze of color; he knows that beauty will yet beam forth from yonder daubs and blotches. So Jesus, though we are yet but mere outlines of his image, can discover his own perfection in us where no eye but his own, as the Mighty Artist, can perceive it. Dear friends, it is for this

reason, because we are the work of his hands, that he taketh delight in us.

Know ye not that we are his brethren—and brothers should delight in brothers. Nay, we are his spouse—and where should the husband find his comfort but in his bride? We are his body—shall not the head be content with the members? We are one with him, vitally, personally, everlastingly one; and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have a mutual joy in each other, so that his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces of his Church, wherein he hath been made glad.

Let us think how we can make him glad. Brethren, our love to Christ—oh! we think it so cold, so little, and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be, but it is very sweet to Christ. We can never compare our love to Christ with his love to us, and yet he does not despise it. Hear his own eulogy of his Church in the Song, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirza, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." See, see, my brethren, his delight in you. When you lean your head on his bosom, you not only receive, but you give him joy; when you gaze with love upon his beauteous face, you not only receive comfort, but give delight. Our praise, too, gives him joy, when from our hearts we sing his name, and when gratefully, though silently, we breathe a song up to his throne. As princes are delighted with incense, so is Christ delighted with the praise of his people. And our gifts, too, delight him. As the son of our good Queen accepts rich tokens of kindness from the people of his land, so our Lord Jesus is charmed with the offerings of his people. He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon his altar, not for the value of what we give, but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. He takes far more delight in what we do for him than our Queen's son could take in splendid arches, or in the glorious pageantry of yesterday. To Christ the shouts of his people are better than the cheers of the most enthusiastic populace, and to him the lowly offerings of his saints are more acceptable than thousands of gold and silver. Forgive your enemy, and you make Christ

glad; distribute of your substance to the poor, and he rejoices; be the means of saving souls, and you give him to see of the travail of his soul; preach his gospel, and you are a sweet savor unto him; go among the ignorant and among the hopeless, and try to lift them up, and you have given him satisfaction. I tell you, brother, it is in your power this very day to break the alabaster box and pour the precious ointment on his head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth. You can anoint him above all his fellows with the oil of gladness.

I think I see a great procession. It is Jesus Christ riding alone through the tens of thousands of souls whom he has redeemed with his own blood. I think I see him looking to the right hand and to the left as he rides along the centuries. See how every windows of every age are crowded! Glorified spirits look down from the housetops of heaven: the Church militant looks up from the streets of earth, multitudes upon multitudes of souls that love him, and call him King, salute him as their Redeemer. I notice that, as he goes along in this great procession, his eyes are bright with joy. We liked to see the Prince and Princess happy yesterday but their joy could be nothing compared with that of Christ as he rides along in triumph. How the multitudes delight him; the ten thousand times ten thousand—who shall tell how many Christ has redeemed? Their number is beyond all human count; so many are they that, as they clap their hands and shout to his name, I hear a voice like many waters, or like great thunders, while they cry "Hallelujah, Sweet Prince! ride on triumphantly! and reign for ever and ever!" There is one thing Christ feels as he looks upon the crowd around him, which our Prince could not feel yesterday. He knows that everyone of these would lay down their lives for him. Of all those whom Jesus bought with blood; among those who are renewed in heart; there is not one who would not bleed for him. To the stake they walk, and sing amidst the flames. To the dungeon they go, and praise him while they rot in darkness. They are dragged at the heels of horses, they are stoned, they are sawn in sunder, they wander about in sheep-skins and in goat-skins, and they glory in all these things that they may show their love to Christ. Every eye in the vast throng which gathers about the triumphal chariot of Christ beams with intense love to him; and when they shout, each one shouts louder than his fellow; each one in the whole throng feels he owes more to the great King than anyone else; there

is something special about each face the King looks on, and as he remembers the special circumstances, he perceives the reason for that special love. Either it is much forgiven, or else it is much trial averted, or much strength conferred by which to perform labor. I am sure that when you and I are in that throng looking upon him, we may truly say -

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,  
While heaven's resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Ye did well to applaud your Prince yesterday, but what had he ever done for you? What debt did you owe to him? Owed he not far more to you? But our King as he rides along in the midst of the joyful hosts of the blood-bought, has this upon his mind—"I bought all these souls with my blood." He recollects, as he looks upon them, where they would have been but for his grace, and the very pangs of hell must add joy to his soul, when he remembers that he saved them from passing into the pit. He recollects, too, what they once were—how full of sin, what enemies to God, how they crucified him, how they trampled on his precious blood, and now he sees them bowing, before him, too glad to catch but a glimpse of him as he rides by, too happy to be as the dust of his feet if he will but honor them by treading upon them that he might be lifted the higher. O my brethren, we love the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts give him a reception such as never was accorded to earthly Prince. Pile the arches! pile the arches! Let hearts pour forth their life-blood, if in no other way the banners can be dyed red! Strew the streets; strip off your garments if in no other way the pageant can be made illustrious! bring forth the royal diadem, and let every saint renounce wealth and comfort if by no other means Jesus can be crowned! Empty heaven, if by no other way Jesus can be attended with guards of honor. Come, all ye sons and daughters of his great family, and offer yourselves a living sacrifice, if there can be no other incense! We are all prepared—I speak for the sacramental host of God's elect—we are all prepared by his grace to follow him through floods and through flames! We are prepared to give him all the honor that heart can conceive. We are prepared to kiss his feet as well as to crown his head. Bring forth the royal diadem to-day and crown him Lord of all; and each day as he rides along, till he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, let him be

crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. Now for another text, but not another sermon. It is in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon:—"WE WILL BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN THEE."

God has made the king glad, and his saints make him glad; let us be glad too. But let us mind that our gladness is of the right sort. "We will rejoice and be glad in thee." That man is glad in his farm; that other in his merchandise; that one yonder in his wealth; that woman in her jewels; that other in her beauty; "We will rejoice and be glad in thee." But in what? We will rejoice, more especially, in his love to us. You remember Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Interpreters read that two ways. Some think he meant, "Lovest thou me more that thou lovest these nets, and this fishery, and this thine earthly calling and these thy friends?" I think I hear Jesus Christ speaking this morning, and he says, "My people, I love you more than these." He points to spirits that once stood around his throne, angels that have sinned; they fell like lightning from heaven, and there they lie in flames, and Christ says, "I loved you more than these; I let these perish, but I saved you." Pointing to the kings and princes of this world, the great, the mighty, and the learned men, and to all the nations that sit in darkness, he says, "I love you more than these; I gave Ethiopia and Seba for you." Then taking a higher range he joints to heaven. There sit the angels before the throne, and he says, "I loved you more than these; I left their company for yours." He bids you listen to their harps and to their songs, and he says, "I loved you more than these; I left all these melodies that I might be able to meet your groans." Yea, he points to his own throne, so bright with glory that mortal eyes scarce dare to rest upon it, and he says, "I loved you more than these, for I left the glory of my throne that I might redeem you with my blood." Saint, will you not join with me? Shall we not both say, "Savior, blessed be thine unexampled love! We will rejoice and be glad in thee!"

But some interpreters read the text—"Lovest thou me more than these?"—"Lovest thou me more than these others love me?" Jesus speaks to-day to us, "I have loved thee more than these; thy mother loved thee; strong were her pangs when thou wast born, and anxious her cares when



she nursed thee at her bosom; but I have loved thee more than these, and thy brethren loved thee, and thy sisters; born of the same parents they watched over thee with delight, and they have been ready to help thee in thy time of need, but I have loved thee more than these: and thy husband loved thee, loved thee as his own soul, he has cherished thee, and has been ready to lay down his life to give thee back health when thou hast been sick; but I have loved thee more than these: thy children, too, have loved thee; they have climbed thy knee and smiled upon thee for all thy kindness to them, and they have strengthened thine old age, and thou hast leaned upon them, as upon a staff, when thou hast been tottering with weakness; but I have loved thee more than these: and thou hast had a joyous companion, a dear friend who has been with thee from thy youth up, and has never lifted his heel against thee; and thou hast had thine intimates and thy familiars who went up to the house of God with thee, and talked cheerfully by the way, but I have loved thee more than these," I think I hear him say to me—"There are some in this congregation who would pluck out their own eyes to give them to thee; they love thee, for thou art their spiritual father, but I have loved thee more than these." And he points to all the good men that have ever tried to teach you, to all the comforters who have given you joy, to all the helpers that have aided you on the road to immortality; and he says, "I have loved you more than these." Well, if his love be matchless like this, we will rejoice and be glad in him. I have nothing, else to rejoice in, the Lord knoweth. I cannot rejoice in myself, there are so many sins and so many doubts; but I will rejoice and be glad in him if he loves me like this. He has finished the work for me, given me a perfect righteousness, washed me in his blood, taken off his robe to clothe me, given his life that he may make me live, entered the grave to bring me out of it, and said that I shall shortly be enthroned with him above the sky. I will rejoice and be glad in him. When King Solomon was crowned, all the people rejoiced; and shall we be mourners when Christ sits upon his throne? Let the heaviest heart begin to leap; and if you have to bear your burdens to-morrow, yet do throw them off to-day. "We will rejoice and be glad in thee." I should not like one Christian to go down these aisles this morning without some light of heaven's brightness on his cheek—without some note of heaven's music in his ear. "Oh!" says the Christian, "Yes. I will; the cross is heavy, but I will hope beneath it; the furnace is hot, but I will sing in it; the way is

rough, but I will tread it with light footsteps, for I will rejoice and be glad in him who has loved me and given himself for me." Well, you see, there is a glad Christ in heaven, and here is a glad Church on earth; there is Christ anointed by his Father, here are his people sharing that anointing; here is Christ giving you joy, and you giving Christ joy. Belt the world with happiness; fire zodiac with joy. Lift up the ladder of your songs; while the bottom rests on earth, let the top reach to heaven; and ye angels of God, hold fellowship to-day with God and with us through the joy and peace which God the Father gives us, while we rejoice and are glad in him.

I would you all understood this subject, but some of you are strangers to it altogether! Remember, there is no joy anywhere but in Christ. It is all poor mockery which you get elsewhere. Jesus Christ is to be had, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

The Lord give you his benediction, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **A Harp Of Ten Strings**

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. - Luke 1:46-47

It is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing; for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been for a long time present: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord; and when once a soul has a deep sense of God's mercy, and begins magnifying him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds upon: the more you magnify God, the more you can magnify him. The higher you rise, the more you can see; your view of God is increased in extent; and whereas you praised him

somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of his exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly, and your soul doth more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." What does it mean? The usual signification of the word "magnify" is, to make great, or to make to appear great. We say, when we use the microscope, that it magnifies so many times. The insect is the same small and tiny thing; but it is increased to our apprehension. The word is very suitable in this connection. We cannot make God greater than he is. Nor can we have any conception of his actual greatness. He is infinitely above our highest thoughts; when we meditate upon his attributes—

"Imagination's utmost stretch  
In wonder dies away."

But we magnify him by having higher, larger, truer conceptions of him; by making known his mighty acts, and praising his glorious name, so that others, too, may exalt him in their thoughts. This is what Mary was doing: she was a woman who was given, in after-life, to pondering. Those who heard what the shepherds said concerning the holy child Jesus wondered; but "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." They wondered; Mary pondered. It is only the change of a letter; but it makes a great difference in the attitude of the soul, a change from a vague flash of interest to a deep attention of heart. She pondered; she weighed the matter; she turned it over in her mind; she thought about it; she estimated its value and result. She was like that other Mary, a meditative woman, who could quietly wait at her Lord's feet to hear gracious words, and drink them in with yearning faith.

It is no idle occupation thus to get alone, and in your own hearts to magnify the Lord; to make him great to your mind, to your affections; great in your memory, great in your expectations. It is one of the grandest exercises of the renewed nature. You need not, at such a time, think of the deep questions of Scripture, and may leave the abstruse doctrines to wiser heads, if you will; but if your very soul is bent on making God great to your own apprehension, you will be spending time in one of the most

profitable ways possible to a child of God. Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of God, as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thoughts of him. The root of false theology is belittling God; and the essence of true divinity is greatening God, magnifying him, and enlarging our conceptions of his majesty and his glory to the utmost degree.

But Mary did not mean, by magnifying the Lord, merely to extol him in her own thoughts; being a true poetess, she intended to magnify the Lord by her words. No, I must correct myself; she did not intend to do it, she had been doing it all along, she was doing it when she came, panting and breathless, into her cousin Elizabeth's house. She said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord. I am now in such a favored condition that I cannot open my mouth to talk to you, Elizabeth, without speaking of my Lord. My soul now seems filled with thoughts of him. I must speak, first of all, about him, and say such things of his grace and power as may help even you, my goodly elder sister, still to think grander thoughts of God than you have ever before enjoyed. My soul doth magnify the Lord."

We must recall the fact that Mary was highly distinguished and honored. No other woman was ever blessed as she was; perhaps no other could have borne the honor that was put upon her—to be the mother of the human nature of our Savior. It was the highest possible honor that could be put upon mortal, and the Lord knew, at the appointed time, where to find a guileless, lowly woman, who could be entrusted with such a gift, and yet not seek to filch away his glory. She is not proud; nay, it is a false heart that steals the revenues of God, and buys therewith the intoxicating cup of self-congratulation. The more God gives to a true heart, the more it gives to him. Like Peter's boat, which sank into the waters the more deeply, the more fully it was laden with fish, God's true children sink in their own esteem, as they are honored by their Lord. God's gifts, when he gives grace with them, do not puff us up; they build us up. A humble and lowly estimate of ourselves is added to a greater esteem of him. The more God gives thee, the more do thou magnify him, and not thyself. Be this thy rule—"He must increase, but I must decrease." Be thou less and less. Be thou the Lord's humble handmaid, yet bold and confident in thy

praise of him who hath done for thee great things. Henceforth and for ever, let this be the one description of thy life: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; I have nothing else to do any more but to magnify him, and to rejoice in God my Savior."

A week might be profitably employed were I to attempt to preach upon each part of Mary's song; but with quite another purpose in view, I am going to present it to you as a whole. As I put before you this instrument of ten strings, I will ask you, just for a minute or two, to place your fingers on each of them as they shall be indicated, and see whether you cannot wake some melody to the praise of the great King, some harmony in his honor; whether you cannot, at this good hour, magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God your Savior. Luther used to say that the glory of Scripture was to be found in the pronouns; and it is certainly true of the toss. Look at the personal touch of them, how it comes over and over again! "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." At one of our Orphanage Festivals, I put before our many friends who were gathered together several reasons why everybody should contribute to the support of the children; indeed, I said, nobody ought to go off the ground without giving something. I was struck with one brother, who had no money with him, but who brought me his watch and chain. "Oh," I said, "do not give me them; those things sell for so little compared with their value;" but he insisted upon my keeping them, and said, "I will redeem them to-morrow, but I cannot go away without giving something now." How glad I would be if every child of God here should be as earnest in adoration, and say, "I am going to give some praise to God at this service: out of some of those strings I will get music; perhaps out of them all. I will endeavor with my whole heart to say, at some portion of the sermon, and from some point of view, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'! Do I hear you whisper, "My soul is very heavy." Lift it up, then, by praising the Lord; begin a psalm, even if at first the tune must be in a minor key: soon the strain will change, and the "Miserere" become a "Hallelujah Chorus."

I. The first string which Mary seems to touch, and which, I trust, we, too, may reach with the hand of faith, is that of THE GREAT JOY WHICH THERE IS IN THE LORD. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit

hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Let us bless God that our religion is not one of gloom. I do not know of any command anywhere in Scripture, "Groan in the Lord alway; and again I say, Groan." From the conduct of some people, we might almost imagine that they must have altered their New Testament in that particular passage, and thus woefully changed the glory of the original verse, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The first I ever knew of Christ my Master truly, was when I found myself at the foot of his cross, with the great burden that had crushed me effectually gone. I looked round for it, wondering where it could be, and, behold, it was tumbling down into his sepulcher! I have never seen it since, blessed be his name, nor do I ever want to see it again! Well do I remember the leaps I gave for joy when first I found that all my burden of guilt had been borne by him, and was now buried in the depths of his grave.

"Many days have passed since then;  
Many changes I have seen."

I have been to a great many wells to draw water; but when I have drawn it, and tasted thereof, it has been brackish as the waters of Marah; but whenever I have gone to this well—"my God, my Savior"—I have never drawn one drop that was not sweet and refreshing. He who truly knows God must be glad in him; to abide in his house is to be still praising him; yea, we may exalt in him all the day long. A very notable word is that which is found in the mouth of David: "God my exceeding joy." Other things may give us pleasure; we may be happy in the gifts of God, and in his creatures, but God himself, the spring of all our joys, is greater than them all. Therefore, "Delight thyself also in the Lord." This is his command; and is it not a lovely one? Let no one say that the faith of the Christian is not to be exultant; it is to be a delight; and so greatly does God desire us to rejoice in him, that to the command is added a promise, "And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." What a religion is ours, in which delight becomes a duty, in which to be happy is to be obedient to a command! Heathen religions exact not only self-denials of a proper kind, but tortures which men invent to accustom themselves to misery; but in our holy faith, if we keep close to Christ, while it is true that we bear the cross, it is also true that the cross ceases to be a torture; in fact, it

often bears us as we bear it; we discover in the service of our Master that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light," and, strange to say, his burden gives us rest, and his yoke gives us liberty. We have never had anything from our Master but it has ultimately tended to our joy. Even when his rod has made us smart he has intended it to work for our good, and so has it wrought. Praise him, then, for such goodness.

Our religion is one of holy joy, especially with regard to our Savior. The more we understand that glorious word "Savior", the more are we ready to dance with delight. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." The good tidings of great joy have reached us, and as we, by his grace, have believed them, he has saved us from sin, and death, and hell. He has not simply promised to do it some day, but he has done it; we have been saved. What is more, we have, many of us, entered into rest by faith in him; salvation is to us a present experience at this hour, though we still wait for the fullness of it to be revealed in the world to come.

Oh, come, let us joy in our Savior! Let us thank him that we have so much for which to thank him. Let us praise him that there is so much that we may rejoice in; nay, so much that we must rejoice in. Let us adore his dear name that he has so arranged the whole plan of salvation, that it is calculated to bring heaven to us while we are here, and to bring us who are here into heaven hereafter. Thus we lift up our hearts because of the great joy there is laid up for us in God. This is the first string: touch it now; think of all the joy you have had in God; praise him for all the holy mirth he has given you in his house; the bliss of communion with him at his table; the delights of fellowship with him in secret. Sing to him with a grateful heart, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

II. The second string we would desire to lay our fingers upon is THE GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOR. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." I have not a little Lord. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." I know that my Savior is a man, and rejoice in his humanity; but we will contend to the death for this—that he is more than man; he is our Savior. One human being could not redeem another, or give to God a ransom for his brother. An angel's arm could not bear the tremendous load of the disaster of the Fall; but Christ's arm is more than angelic. He whom we

magnify as our Savior counted it not robbery to be equal with God; and when he undertook the wondrous task of our redemption, he brought the Godhead with him to sustain him in the more than herculean labor. Our trust is in Jesus Christ, very God of very God; we shall never cease, not only to believe in him, but to speak of him, and rejoice in him, and sing of him, as the incarnate Deity. What a frozen religion that is which has not the Godhead of Christ in it! Surely, they must be men of a very sanguine and imaginative temperament who can pretend to receive any comfort out of a Christianity which has not the divine Savior as its very center. I would as soon think of going to all iceberg to warm myself, as to a faith of that kind to find comfort. Nobody can ever praise up Christ too much for you and for me; they can never say too much of his wisdom, or of his power. Every divine attribute ascribed to Christ makes us lift up a new song unto him; for, whatever he may be to others, he is to us God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

I wish that I could sing instead of speaking to you of him who was with the Father before all worlds began, whose delights, even then, were with the sons of men in prospect of their creation. I wish that I could tell the wonderful story of how he entered into covenant with God on the behalf of his people; and pledged himself to pay the debts of those his Father gave to him. He undertook to gather into one fold all the sheep whom he pledged himself to purchase with his precious blood; he engaged to bring them back from all their wanderings, and fold them on the hill-tops of the Delectable Mountains at his Father's feet. This he vowed to do; and he has gone about his task with a zeal that clothed him as a cloak; and he will achieve the diving purpose before he delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." It is our delight to hear this Son of God, this Son of Mary, this wondrous Being in his complex nature as our Mediator, exalted and extolled, and made very high. Have you not sometimes felt that if the minister preached more about Jesus Christ, you would be very glad to hear him? I hope that is your inclination; yet I am afraid that we talk a great deal about many things rather than about our Master. Come, let me hear of him; sing to me or talk to me of Jesus, whose name is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and heaven in the heart. Oh, for more praise to his holy name! Yes, some of us can touch this string, and say with Mary, "My soul doth



magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

III. The third string has softer, sweeter music in it, and it may suit some of us better than the sublimer themes that we have touched already. Let us sing, and magnify the LORD'S LOVING CONDESCENSION; for so the blessed virgin did when she went on to say, "for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Here is something to sing about; for ours was not only a low estate, but perhaps some here would have had to say, like Gideon, "My family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house," and, like him, you would have been passed over by most of the people. Perhaps even in your own family you were counted as nobody; if there was a jest uttered, you were sure to be the butt of it, and generally you were misunderstood, and your actions misinterpreted. This was a trying experience for you; but from this you have been gloriously delivered. It may have been that, like Joseph, you were a little dreamy, and perhaps you were a trifle too fond of telling your dreams. Yet, though because of this you were much put upon, the Lord at length raised up your head above those round about you. It may have been that your lot in life was cast among the very poorest and lowest of mankind; yet the Lord has looked upon you in infinite compassion, and saved you. Will you not, then, magnify him?

If Christ wanted a people, why did he not choose the kings, and princes, and nobles of the earth? Instead of that, he takes the poor, and makes them to know the wonders of his dying love; and instead of selecting the wisest men in the world, he takes even the most foolish, and instructs them in the things of the kingdom.

"Wonders of grace to God belong,  
Repeat his mercies in your song."

All of us who have been saved by grace must strike a tenderer note still; for we were sinful as well as lowly. We went astray like lost sheep; therefore we magnify the Lord, who bought us, and sought us, and brought us back to his fold. It may be painful to remember what we once were, but it is well sometimes to go back in our thoughts to the time past when we lived in sin, that we may the better appreciate the favor of which

we have been made partakers. When the apostle Paul wrote out a catalogue of those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, he added, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed." Oh, let us bless the name of the Lord, and magnify him for this! Who else could have cleansed us from our sin, or in what other fountain save that opened to the house of David could we have plunged, to rid us of our awful defilement? He stoops very low, for some of God's elect were once the offscouring of all things; and even when converted, many of them remained so in the estimate of the world, which sneers at humble Christians. If the professed followers of Christ happen to meet in some fine building, and worship God with grand music and gorgeous ritual, then the people of the world put up with them; they may go even so far as to patronize them, though, even then, their respect is chiefly called forth, not on behalf of the people, but because of the building, the fine music, and the carriages. The carriages are especially important, for without a certain number of them at the door, it is deemed impossible to have a proper display of cultured Christianity. But the more God's people cling to the Lord, the less likely are they to be esteemed by the vulgar judgment of unholy men. Yet the Lord has chosen such, blessed be his name! It is a great wonder to me that the Lord ever chose some of you; but it is a far greater wonder that he should ever have chosen me. I can somehow understand his love of you, when I look at the gracious points in your character, though I am fully aware that they are only wrought by grace; but I cannot understand the love which he has displayed to me, who am the least of all the saints. "Oh!" say you, "that is what we were going to say about ourselves." Yes, I know. I am trying to put it into your mouths, so that we may all join in adoring gratitude. It is a miracle of mercy that he should have loved any of us, or stooped in his grace to have raised such beggars from the dunghill to set us among the princes at his right hand.

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,  
And enter while there's room;  
When thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come."

IV. The next string, however, is THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GOODNESS; for Mary goes on to sing,— "He hath regarded the low estate

of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Oh, the Lord has done great things for his people! "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name." God has made you blessed. You were once under the curse, but for you there is now no condemnation, for you are in Christ Jesus. If the curse had withered you, like some lightning-blasted oak, you could not have wondered; but, instead thereof, the gracious Lord has planted you by the rivers of water, and he makes you to bring forth your fruit in your season, and your leaf also doth not wither. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." To be lifted up from that horrible pit is such a great thing that we cannot measure it, but to be set up on that throne of mercy exceeds our highest thought: who can measure that? Take your line, and see if you can fathom the depth of such grace, or measure the height of such mercy. Shall we be silent when we behold such marvellous loving-kindness? God forbid it! Let us break forth in our hearts now with gladsome hallelujahs to him who has done such wonderful things for us!

Think, brethren, you were blind: he has made you see. You were lame: he has made you leap. Worse than that, you were dead: he has made you live. You were in prison: and he has made you free. Some of us were in the dungeon, with our feet fast in the stocks. Can I not well remember when I did lie in that inner prison, moaning and groaning, without any voice to comfort me, or even a ray of light to cheer me in the darkness? And now that he has brought me out, shall I forget to utter my deep thanks? Nay, but I will sing a song of deliverance, that others may hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord. But that is not all. He has not only taken us from the prison, he has raised us to the throne: you and I could go in and out of heaven to-night, if God called us there, and every angel would treat us with respect. If we entered into the glory-land, even though we had come from the poorest home in London, we should find that the highest angels are only ministering servants to the chosen people of God. Oh, he has done wonders for us!

I am not so much attempting to preach, as trying to wake up your memory, that you may think of the goodness of the Lord's grace, and say, "Oh, yes, it is so, and my soul doth magnify the Lord!" Not one of the wonders of divine grace has been wrought for us without deep necessity

for its manifestation. If the very least grace, which may perhaps hitherto have escaped your attention, were taken from you, where would you be? I often meet with people of God who used to be very happy and joyful, but who have fallen into despondency, and who now talk about the mercies of God's covenant love in such a way as to make me blush. They say, "I thought I once had that blessing, sir, and I am afraid I have not got it now, though there is nothing I long for more. Oh, what a precious thing it would be to be able to have access to God in prayer! I would give my eyes to be able to know that I am really a child of God." Yet those of us who have those blessings do not half value them; nay, brethren, we do not value them a thousandth part as much as we ought. Our constant song should be, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Instead of that, we often take the gifts thoughtlessly and unthankfully from his hand. When a man is in the sea, he may have much water over his head and not feel it; but when he comes out, if you then put a little pail of water on his head, it becomes quite a burden as he carries it. So some of you are swimming in God's mercy; you are diving into it, and you do not recognize the weight of the glory which God hath bestowed upon you; but if you should once get out of this ocean of joy, and fall into a state of sadness of heart, you would begin to appreciate the weight of any one of the mercies which now do not seem to be of much consequence, or to make any claim upon your gratitude. Without waiting to lose the sense of God's grace, in order that we may know the value of it, let us bless him who has done such inconceivably great things for us, and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

V. The fifth string that I would touch is THE COMBINATION OF GRACE AND HOLINESS that there is in what God has done for us. "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name." I may not even hint at the peculiar delicacy of Mary's case, but she knew that it was wholly holy and pure. Now, when the Lord has saved you and me, who did not deserve saving, he did a very wonderful act of sovereign grace in making us to differ, but the mercy is that he did it all justly. Nobody can say that it ought not to be done. At the last great day, what God has done in his grace will stand the test of justice; for he has never, in the splendor and lavishness of his love, violated the principles of eternal righteousness, even to save his own elect. "He that is mighty hath done to me great

things; and holy is his name." Sin must be punished: it has been punished in the person of our glorious Substitute. No man can enter into heaven unless he is perfectly pure: they who are redeemed shall take no unclean thing within the gates. Every rule and mandate of the divine empire shall be observed. The Law-maker will not be the law-breaker even to save the sinner; but his law shall be honored as surely as the sinner shall be saved. Sometimes I feel that I could play on that string for an hour or two. Here we have justice magnified in grace, and holiness rejoicing in the salvation of sinners. The attributes of God are like the terrible crystal shining out with its clear white light, which yet may be divided into all the colors of the prism; each different, and all beautiful. The dazzling radiance of God is too glorious for our mortal eyes, but each revelation teaches us more of his beauty and perfectness. In the ruby light of an atoning sacrifice we are enabled to see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Glory be to his name for the power of grace mingled with holiness! My soul doth magnify the Lord for this wonderful salvation, in which every attribute shall have its glory; justice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as might. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Who could have invented such a plan, and who could have carried it out when it was thought of? Only he who came "with dyed garments from Bozrah." "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

VI. The sixth string is one which should be sweet every way. Mary now goes on to touch the string of GOD'S MERCY. "And his mercy is on them that fear him." The saints of old often touched this string in the temple. They often sang it, lifting up the refrain again and again—"His mercy endureth for ever!"

"For his mercy shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure."

Mercy! Sinner, this is the silver bell for you: it is of the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Listen to the heavenly music that calls you to repent and live. God delighteth in mercy. He waiteth to be gracious. Mercy! Saint, this is the golden bell for

you; for you need mercy still. Standing with your foot upon the jasper doorstep of Paradise, with the pearly gate just before you, you will still need mercy to help you over the last step; and when you enter the choir of the redeemed, mercy shall be your perpetual song. In heaven you will chant the praises of the God of grace, whose mercy endureth for ever.

Do you mourn over your own backslidings? God will have mercy upon thee, dear child, though thou hast wandered since thou hast known him. Come back to him this very hour. He would woo thee again. He would press thee to his bosom. Hast thou not often been restored, hast thou not often had thy iniquities put away from thee in the years gone by? If so, again this moment touch thou this string—a child's finger can make it bring forth its music—touch it now. Say, "Yes, concerning mercy, mercy to the very chief of sinners, my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

VII. Time would fail us if we tried to dwell at any length upon those wondrous themes; so we pass to the next string, number seven, GOD'S IMMUTABILITY, because in the verse we have already touched upon, there are two notes. Mary said, "His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation." He that had mercy in the days of Mary, has mercy to-day: "from generation to generation." He is the same God." I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." You that once delighted in the Lord, do not suppose that he has altered. He still invites you to come and delight in him. He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." What a poor foundation we should have for our hope if God could change! But he has confirmed his word by an oath "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The God of my grandfather, the God of my father, is my God this day; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of every believer; he is the same God, and is prepared to do the same, and to be the same to us as to them. Look back into your own experience; have you not found God always the same? Come, protest against him, if you have ever found him to change. Is the mercy-seat altered? Do the promises of God fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Will he be favorable no more? Ay, even "if we

believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself;" and when all things else melt away, this one eternal rock abides; therefore, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." It is a blessed string to touch. If we had time, we would play upon it, and evoke such harmonies as would make the angels want to join us in the chorus.

VIII. The next string which will awaken a responsive echo in your hearts is GOD'S POWER. "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." This string gives us deep bass music, and requires a heavy hand to make it pour forth any melody. What wonders of power God has wrought on the behalf of his people, from the days of Egypt, when the horse and his rider he cast into the Red Sea, even till now! How strong is his arm to defend his people! In those days some of us have been driven to look to that power, for all other help has failed. You know how it was in the dark ages: it seemed as if the darkness of popery could never be removed; but how soon it was gone when God called forth his men to bear witness to his Son! What reason we have to rejoice that he "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"! They thought that they could readily burn up the heretics, and put an end to this gospel of theirs; but they could not do it. And to-day there is a dark conspiracy to stamp out the evangelical faith. First, on the part of some who go after their superstitions, set up the crucifix to hide the cross, and point men to sacraments instead of to the Savior. And then, worse than these, are those who undermine our faith in Holy Scripture, tear from the Book this chapter and that, deny this great truth and the other, and try to bring the inventions of man into the place that ought to be occupied by the truth of God. But the Lord liveth: Jehovah's arm hath not waxed short. Depend upon it, ere many years have passed, he will take up the quarrel of his covenant, and will bring the old banner to the front again. We shall yet rejoice to hear the gospel preached in plainest terms, accentuated by the Holy Ghost himself upon the hearts of his people. Let us touch this string again. The Almighty God is not dead. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

IX. The next string is one that some friends do not like; at least, they do

not say much about it: it is DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. Listen to it. You know how God thunders it out. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God's will is supreme. Whatever the wills of men may be, God will not be driven from the throne, nor will his scepter be made to quiver in his hands; after all the rebellious acts of men and devils, he will be still eternal and supreme, with his kingdom ruling over all. And thus the virgin sings, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." Who can speak the wonders of his sovereign grace? Was it not strange that he should ever have chosen you?

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?  
"'Twas even so, Father,' you ever must sing,  
Because it seem'd good in thy sight."

Is it not strange that the Lord should not take the Kings and mighty ones, but should so order it, that the poor have the gospel preached to them? God is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and he acts like a king. "He giveth not account of any of his matters." But he lets us see right clearly that he has no respect to the greatness and fancied goodness of man; that he does as he pleases; and that he pleases to give his mercy to them that fear him, and bow before him. He dispenses his favors to those who tremble at his presence, who come humbly to his foot, and take his mercy as a free gift; who look to his dear Son because they have nothing else to look to, and, as poor, guilty worms, find in Christ their life, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all. Oh, the splendor of this great King!

X. The tenth string is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." God remembers what he has said. Take those three words, "As he spake." Whatever he said, though it be thousands of years ago, it stands fast for ever and ever. God cannot lie. Beloved, are any of you in trouble? Search the Scriptures till you find a promise that suits your case; and when you get it, do not say, "I hope that this is true." That is an insult to your God. Believe it, believe it up to the



hilt. Do as I have seen boys do in the swimming-bath; take a header, and go right into the stream of God's mercy; dive as deeply as you can; there is no drowning there. These are "waters to swim in"; and the more you can lose yourself in this blessed crystal flood of promised mercy, the better it shall be. You shall rise up out of it as the sheep come from the washing; you shall feel refreshed beyond measure in having cast yourself upon God. When God's promises fail, let us know of it; for some of us have lived so long on those promises, that we do not care to live on anything else; and if they can be proved to be false, we had better give up living altogether. But we delight to know that they are all absolutely true: what God said to our fathers stands good to their children, and will stand good even to the end of time, and to all eternity.

If any of you have not been able to touch even one of those strings, I would bid you get to your knees, and cry to God, and say, "Why is it that I cannot magnify thee, O Lord?" I should not be surprised if you discovered the reason to be that you are so big yourself. He never magnifies God who magnifies himself. Belittle yourself, and begreaten your God. Down with self to the lowest depths, and up, higher and still higher, with your thoughts of God.

Poor sinner, you that have not yet laid hold on God, there is sweet music even for you in the virgin's song. Perhaps you are saying, "I am nothing but a lump of sin and a heap of misery." Very well; leave the lump of sin and the heap of misery, and let Christ be your all-in-all. Give yourself up to Christ. He is a Savior; let him do his own business. If a man sets up to be a lawyer, and I have a case in court, I should not think of giving him the case, and than afterwards go into court, and begin to meddle with it for myself. If I did, he would say, "I must drop the case if you do not let it alone." Sometimes the idea may come into your mind that you will do something towards saving yourself, and have some share in the glory of your salvation. If you do not get rid of that idea, you will be lost. Surrender yourself to Christ, and let him save you; and than afterwards he will work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, while you shall make melody in your heart unto the Lord, and from this harp of ten strings shall proceed such delightful melody that many shall listen with such rapture that they shall go to your Master, and take lessons in this

heavenly music for themselves.

The Lord bless you, beloved, and send you away happy in him!

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## **Harvest Joy**

Thou hast magnified the nation, and increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. - Isaiah 9:3

Notice that I make a correction in the version from which I am reading. The Authorized Version has it, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy." This is not consistent with the connection; the Revised Version has very properly put it, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy." I have not any learning to display; but I think I could show it to you, if this were the proper time, how the passage came to be read with a "not", and I could also prove to you that, in this instance, the Revisers were right in making their alteration.

To-night, there are about eighty-two persons, who have confessed Christ before the church, and have been baptized, who are to be received into our fellowship; and we feel very grateful for this large addition to our members; and all the more so because it is no strange thing; but month by month, all the year round, they continue to come, though, not in such large numbers as at this time. God be thanked for thus blessing us! We cannot allow these occasions to pass over without joying before the Lord as men rejoice when they gather in their sheaves of corn.

To bring out your joy, think of how we should feel if we did not have an increase in the church, where very few are ever added to them. The good

old people seem quite content to be very few. Their notion is that the way to heaven is very narrow, as indeed it is, and that therefore they must not expect many to find their way. I remember a church where the good old deacons used to say of the converts, "Summer them and winter them. Keep them out till we have tried them for a very long time." It came to pass, after the process of "summering and wintering", that a great many of them never came forward at all. Though they were very excellent people, they never summoned courage enough to join such a church. Did you ever hear a farmer say of his wheat, "Summer it and winter it, and then take it into the barn"? No, farmers are not such fools. But these good men were so very wise that they became otherwise; so they said, "Keep the corn out in the field; else you will bring in some poppies, or some corn-flowers, and we do not want them. Keep the converts out of the church till you are sure that there are no hypocrites among them." Well, dear friends, we are not at all of this mind. We try to use every caution, and great prudence; and our friends do not come into this church without experiencing an examination, some of them even think it to be an ordeal; yet I find that the more difficult it is to get into a church, the more people want to come into it; and whenever the barriers are lowered, and you tell people that they may come without any test as to the state of their souls, nobody cares to come. Well, we have taken pains and care, and have sought only to welcome the worthy, that is, those who are trusting in Jesus, yet we have had a great number come. But suppose that we had none. Well, I hope every Christian man and woman here would be troubled about it. I should not wonder if the question arose, "Had we not better put somebody else on the platform?" That somebody who is now here would be the first to say, "If I am doing no good, let somebody else come and try; for it would be sad and sickening business to be fishing for souls, and never catching anything." Last winter, at Menton, I went out in a boat, where I was assured that there were shoals of fish; and I had a line, I should think it was a hundred and fifty feet long, and after waiting hour after hour, and never feeling the fish bite, I gave up the useless occupation. I think every minister is bound to give up the spiritual fishery in any particular place if, after many days' toil, he has caught nothing for Christ. Rachel says, "Give me children, or I die." Christ servant says, "Give me converts, or I die." Indeed, we are dead as far as our ministry is concerned unless God blesses it.

We also feel that we ought to be glad when others are joined to the church, because we look back, with exquisite pleasure, upon our own joining it. I remember the trouble it cost me to join the church. I think I went to see the pastor some four or five days running; he was always too busy to see me, till at last I told him it did not matter, for I want to go to the church-meeting, and propose myself as a member; and then he, all of a sudden, found time to see me, and so I managed to get into the church, and confess my faith in Christ. Oh, dear friends, that was one of the best days' work. I ever did, when I openly declared my faith in Christ, and united myself with his people! I think many here could say the same; they remember when they united with the people of God, and publicly avowed their faith. You do not regret it brethren, do you? I am sure you feel that it was a happy day when you could say,—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done:  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

By the peace of mind which has come to us from joining with the people of God after believing in Christ, we feel glad to see other young soldiers stooping to take up the cross of Christ, and following him, "without the camp, bearing his reproach."

I. Looking at our text, I notice in it, first, A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION. If you look carefully at the passage, you will soon see it: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy."

Observe, first, that conversion must be the Lord's work. The only multiplication of the Church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends: "Thou hast multiplied the nation." If we add to our churches by becoming worldly, by taking in persons who have never been born again; if we add to our churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the life of the worldling, our increase is worth nothing at all; it is a loss rather than a gain. If we add to our churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions, rather than by explaining truth to the understanding; if we add to our churches otherwise than by the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Christ Jesus, the increase

is of no worth whatever. A man picked himself up from the gutter, and rolled up against Mr. Rowland Hill, one night as he went home, and he said, "Mr. Hill, I am pleased to see you, sir. I am one of your converts." Rowland said, "I thought it was very likely you were. You are not one of God's converts, or else you would not be drunk." There is a great lesson in that answer. My converts are no good; Rowland Hill's converts could get drunk; but the converts of the Spirit of God, those are really renewed in the spirit of their mind, by a supernatural operation, these are a real increase to the church of God. "Thou hast multiplied the nation." Pray hard that the Lord may continue to send us converts. He never sends the wrong people. However poor they may be, however illiterate, if they are converted, as they will be if the Lord sends them, they will be the very people that we want. May God send us thousands more!

The text also teaches us, with a word of discrimination, that conversion must be such as the Lord describes in this chapter: "The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." When God brings men to the church, they are the people who have undergone a very remarkable change. They have come out of darkness, palpable, horrible, into light, marvelous and delightful. God sends no other than these. If you are not changed characters, if you are not new creatures in Christ Jesus, if you cannot say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," the church cannot receive you as you are, and God has not sent you. Now, who can turn us from darkness unto light but God? Who can work this great miracle within the heart? Darkness of heart is very hard to move. Who but God can make the eternal light burst through the natural darkness, and turn us from the power of Satan unto God?

Next, conversion must have a distinct relation to Christ. Look down the chapter, just a little way, and you come to this wonderful passage: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We want converts who know this Christ, men and women to whom he is "Wonderful", to whom he has become the "Counselor." We want no additions to the church of those who cannot call him "The mighty God.

The everlasting Father." We want men and women to whom Christ has become "The Prince of Peace." If these are added to us, the church groweth exceedingly. If others are added, they do but increase our burden; they become our weakness; in many cases they become our disgrace. Dear hearers, you know whether you are trusting Christ or not. If you are, come and confess him. If you are not, weep in secret places, and cry to God the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to you as the Wonderful, Counselor, and the mighty God, and then, when you know him as your Saviour, come and join yourself to his people, and God will, in your case, have multiplied the nation.

Once more, about this discrimination, the joy must be such as God gives. The text says, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy." The joy that we ought to have to-night, the joy of any growing church, will be joy such as God gives. That is the kind of joy we desire to have. If anybody wishes to see the church grow that we may excel other churches, that is not the joy that God gives. If we like to see converts because we are glad that our opinions should be spread, God does not give that joy. If we crave converts that we may steal them from other people, God does not give that joy, if it be a joy. I do not think God is the lover of sheep-stealers, and there are plenty such about. We do not desire to increase our numbers by taking Christian people away from other Christian communities. No, the joy which God gives us is clear, unselfish delight in Christ being glorified, in souls being saved, in truths being spread, and in error being baffled. God give us a joy over those who are added to us, which shall be pure, and Christlike, and heavenly! Oh, that he might increase such joy! I think that he has increased it.

Did you ever worship in a place where there were more pews than people? Did you ever go to a church or chapel where the preacher could preach upon anything except the gospel of Christ, where you might hear about anything except the precious blood of Christ? That, the minister would be sure not to mention. Then, I like I see you go grumbling down the aisle after every service, or you sit there, and look up at the pulpit, and long for what you never hear, till the Sabbath becomes more wearisome than any day of the week. Oh, dear! Few people; little to be got; very little to be given; a terrible "starvation camp:, where every man

looks at his fellow, and wonders who is going to die next. Well, now, we ought to thank God that it is not so with us. Look on this company gathered here to-night. Think of the congregation we had this morning; remember the deep attention, and think in how many cases God has blessed the Word to the hearers. I never, personally, felt so weak, or felt as great a burden in preaching; yet I never had so large a blessing; there are more converts than ever. Glory be to God, this is the kind of joy that comes from him, in his Word, in his power, that out of weakness makes his servant strong.

So much by way of discrimination.

II. Now, secondly, notice a WORD OF DESCRIPTION, which is the main part of the text. The joy of the church in receiving converts may be compared to the joy in harvest. In all nations, the time of reaping the corn, and gathering it into the garner, has been regarded as a festival. What is the joy of harvest?

Well, it is a joy which we ought to expect. The husbandman expects a harvest. He says, "It is so many weeks to harvest." He sows his seed with a view to harvest, He turns in a man to clear out the weeds with a view to a harvest. Well, now, every church should be looking out for a spiritual harvest. One said to me, once, "I have preached for several years, and I believe God has blessed the word; but nobody ever comes forward to tell me so." I said to him, "Next Lord's-day, say to the people, 'I shall be in the vestry when the sermon is finished, to see friends who have been converted.' " To his surprise, ten or twelve came in; and he was quite taken aback; but, of course, quite delighted. He had not looked for a harvest, so of course he did not get it. You know the story I tell of my first student, Mr. Medhurst. He went out to preach on Tower Hill, , Sunday after Sunday. He was not then my student; but one of the young men in the church. He came to me, and said, "I have been out preaching now for several months on tower Hill, and I have not seen one conversion." I said to him, rather sharply, "Do you expect God is going to bless you every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh! No, sir; I do not expect him to do that." "Then," I replied, "that is why you do not get a blessing." We ought to expect a blessing. God has said, "My Word shall

not return unto me void;" and it will not. We ought to look for a harvest. He who preaches the gospel with his whole heart, ought to be surprised if he does not hear of conversions; and he ought to begin to say in his heart, "I will know the reason why," and never stop till he has found it out. The joy of the harvest is what we have a right to expect.

The joy of harvest, next, is a joy which has respect for former toil. He is bound to rejoice in a harvest who has sorrowed in ploughing, and in the sowing of the seed, and in watching his crop when it was in the ear, and when frost, and blight, and mildew, threatened to destroy it. Brothers and sisters, many of us here can rejoice with the joy of harvest, because, in those converted to Christ, we see the fruit of our soul's travail. I thank God first, and I thank many of you next, that when I sit to see enquirers, I find that I am very generally the spiritual grandfather of those who come, rather than their father in the faith; for I find that you, whom God gave me in years past are, many of you, diligent in seeking the souls of others. In the case of many of you who join the church, their conversion is due to this sister and to that, to this brother and to that, rather than distinctly to my ministry. I am very glad to have it so. During the last two days I have spoken to two friends, both of whom said to me, "I am your spiritual grandchild." One from America said so this morning. I asked, "How is that?" The answer was, "Mr. So-and-so, whom you brought to Christ, came out to America, and he brought me to Christ." You who have had any part in the conversion of these eighty-two, who are to be received to-night, will rejoice; in proportion as you have sighed, and prayed, and been beaten, and foiled, and disappointed, in that very proportion you will rejoice with the joy of harvest.

But, next, it is a joy which has solid ground to go upon. I do not know of a more joyful occasion than when young men and women, and, for the matter of that, old men and women, too, are brought to confess Christ, and to unite with his people. It is a very joyful thing to attend a wedding; but it is always a speculation as to how it will turn out; but when you come to see a soul yield itself to Christ, there is no speculation about that; you have a blessed certainty. Oh, methinks the angels sing more sweetly than ever as they hear a man, or woman, or child say, "I trust in Jesus; I confess his name." When we know and believe that true faith in Christ



means present salvation, there is a great joy about that. I heard, the other day, of some preachers who say that there is no such thing as present salvation; and though they constantly preach, they tell the people, every now and then, that they must be saved when they come to die; but there is no such thing as being saved now. I should like to present those brethren with a little "Catechism for the Young and Ignorant:", which Mr. Cruden was wont to give away; for, if they are not "young", they certainly must be "ignorant" of the first principles of the faith. You are saved, dear hearer, if you have believed in Christ Jesus. You are saved even now. If you were not, I do not see any reason why we should rejoice over you with the joy of harvest.

Moreover, we believe that, if you have trusted Christ, you will be saved eternally. Angels do not rejoice prematurely over repentant sinners. They never have to say to one another, "Gabriel, Michael, you made a very terrible mistake the other day. You rejoiced in the presence of God over that man who, after all, has gone down to hell. You rang the bells too soon." Angels do not do that. Jesus gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand. Therefore, we feel that the confession of Christ is, in itself, a thing to rejoice over; and the immediate salvation that goes with it, and the eternal salvation that is included in it, warrant us in rejoicing with the joy of the harvest.

Moreover, this is a joy which looks to the future. Men rejoice in the harvest because they remember that, all through the winter, they will feed upon the food which they are now gathering. The poorest man in London has reason to be thankful for a good harvest; for it will help to make food cheaper. We are to enjoy in days to come what we gather in the harvest-time. There are sixteen girls coming from the Orphanage to join the church, and I am rejoicing in my heart over sixteen women who will, I trust, during a long life glorify Christ; sixteen matrons in the church who shall be Deborahs, Dorcasses, and Phoebes, or whoever else you may like to think of among holy women. The boys also who come, however young they may be, and however little they may appear in some men's eyes, we cannot tell to what they will grow. I may be receiving to-night a Livingstone, or a Moffat, or a Williams, or a Whitefield, or a Wesley, or

some other servant of God, who, in some sphere or other, will serve him right nobly.

Beloved, some of us will soon be gone. There are some here who are older than I am, who, in the natural course of things, will soon sleep in the cemetery. Are you not glad to see others coming forward? They will "hold the fort" when you can no longer stand upon its walls; and, on account of this hope of the future, I rejoice with the joy of harvest.

This is a joy which we may join; for, in the harvest, anybody who likes may rejoice. There is the proprietor of the field; he rejoices. How greatly Christ rejoices! There are labourers; they may shout as they bring home the loads; they know what that field of wheat has cost. Let us, who are working for Jesus here, have to joy of harvest. The on-lookers, too, as they go by, see the harvest gathered in, will stop, and even give a shout over the hedge. If you are not yourself saved, you might be glad that other people are. Even if you are not yourself going to heaven, rejoice that others are choosing the blessed road. I invite even you to come, and share with us the joy of harvest. The gleaner, Ruth, over yonder says, "I have stooped many times. I have almost broken my back over the work; and I have only picked up this little handful." I know you, sister; and I am pleased that you should bring even one to Christ. I know you, my brother; and I rejoice with you that you should bring even one child to the Saviour. Though you be but a gleaner, join heartily with us to-night in the joy of the harvest.

Then something happens in our harvest that cannot happen in the common harvest; for the harvested ones rejoice, Sheaves cannot sing, ears of wheat cannot lift up their voices; but in our harvest the happiest of all are those who are called by divine grace. And, while they are happy, and we are happy, and all are happy, the angels hovering over the assembly to-night will mark this the first Sabbath in July, and it shall be a red-letter day even to them, so many shall to-night, for the first time, come to the table of their Lord, and here confess his name.

I have a great deal more to say, but our time is nearly gone. I can only say that this is a joy which has its moderating tone. "Why!" say you, "what is

that?" The farmer says, "I have got that load in very well; but I wonder how it will thresh out." I often think of you who are added to the church, and I think that you are first-rate people, and that I never saw better; but I wonder how you will turn out when you get inside the church. There are members of the church whom I never hear of as doing anything for Christ; they may be working away quietly, but I am afraid that some are not. I know that there are some in this church who are no better than they should be; indeed, that is true of us all; but there are some who are not what they ought to be, as to practical service for Christ. We get many passengers to ride in the coach, but not so many to pull it; plenty of people to eat the fruit, but not so many to plant fresh trees. Yet I say not even this very heavily, or with any great emphasis, for the bulk of the members of this church are earnestly engaged in the service of God, for which I bless his name. Still that is the question concerning the harvest, "How will it thresh out?"

There is another question: How much of it will be found to be real wheat in the last great day? Ah, we may judge our very best, and examine very carefully; but there always will be the goats in the sheep, and the tares with the wheat; and that is the dash of bitterness in our cup of rejoicing. God grant that we may not have many added to us who will deteriorate instead of growing better! How will they stand at the last great day? "Well," says one, "I am glad that you make that remark; I have always been opposed to revivals, because they bring in so many, and many of the converts fall away." Dear friends, do you remember Mr. Fullerton's answer to that? I thought it was as good and as complete as it was humorous. He said that when persons say that they do not like revivals because certain of the converts afterwards turn back, and they are like his countryman, who picked up a sovereign; but when he went with it to the bank, it turned out to be a light sovereign, and he only got eighteen shillings for it. Mark you, he found it, so the eighteen shillings were clear gain. Some time after, he saw another sovereign lying in the road, and he would not pick it up; "for," he said, "I lost two shillings by the one I picked up the other day; I shall not take you up; very likely I should only get eighteen shillings for you." So he passed on, and left it where it was. I cannot imagine an Irishman being so unwise; certainly, no Scotchman would have been; and I think no Englishman. However, that is the style of

unwisdom of a man who says that at a revival, so many come in, and then so many turn out to be bad. Well, but those who remain are a clear gain, and you ought to desire to have a like gain again and again; you will get rich through such losses, if God will continue to give them to you. However, I hope that I shall not have any light sovereigns to-night. Yet, if these converts so not turn out to be twenty shillings in the pound, but only eighteen shillings, I will be greatly rejoiced to have the eighteen shillings, and God shall have all the glory.

I think that I will here pause, though there is another division of my discourse; and, in closing, I will ask four questions.

First, What say we of those who never sow? Well, they will never reap; they will never have the joy of harvest. Am I addressing, in this great assembly, any professing Christians who never sow, never speak a word for Christ, never call at a house, and try to introduce the Saviour's name, never seek to bring children to the Saviour, take no part in the Sunday-school, or any other service for Christ? Do I address some lazy man here, spiritually alive only for himself? Oh, poor soul, I would not like to be you, because I doubt whether you can be spiritually alive at all! Surely, he who lives for himself is dead while he lives; and you will never know the joy of bringing souls to Christ; and when you get to heaven, if you ever do get there, you will never be able to say, "Here am I, Father, and the children thou hast given me." Thou wilt have to abide eternally alone, having brought no fruit unto God in the form of converts from sin. Shake yourselves up, brothers and sisters, from sinful sloth. "Oh!" says one, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, I will tell you your name; it is Cain. You are your brother's murderer; for every professing Christian, who is not his brother's keeper, is his brother's killer; and be you sure that it is so; for you may kill by neglect quite as surely as you may kill by the bow or by the dagger.

Next, What say we to those who have never reaped? Well, that depends. Perhaps you have only just begun to sow. Do not expect to reap before God's time. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." There is a set season for reaping. But, if you have been a very long time sowing, and you have never reaped, may I ask the question, Where do you buy your seed?

If I were to sow my garden year by year, and nothing ever came up, I should change my seeds-man. Perhaps that you have bad seed, my dear friend, and have not sown the gospel pure and undiluted. You have not brought it out in all its fulness. Go to the Word of God, and get "seed for the sower" of a kind that will feed your own soul, for it is "bread for the eater"; when you sow that kind of seed, it will come up.

Next, What shall I say to those who know the Lord, but have never confessed him. What shall I say to you? Well, I do not think that I will say what I think; but I think very seriously about persons who have been converted, and yet never tell the man who was the means of saving them that it has happened. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall confess Christ; the dying thief did not confess him, did he? He was not baptized." No, but he was a dying thief, recollect; and if you are not baptized, I think that you will be a living thief, for you will rob God of his glory, and you will rob his servant also of the comfort which he ought to receive. Our wages are to hear that souls are saved; and, if we do not hear of it, we are robbed of our wages. You muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, if you allow a man to toil and labour, and you get good from his services, and you give him no return by way of encouragement. Come out, you who have hitherto hidden away like cowards! Men or women, if you love Christ, and have never confessed him, come out straight away, and be not ashamed to say, "I am a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb." May the great Captain of our salvation force you to do this right speedily!

Once more, What say we to those who do confess Christ, and who are going to confess him to-night? Well, we say this: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" Beloved, when you do come in, keep your garments unspotted from the world. Come in with a true heart, and a reverent spirit, with this prayer upon your lips, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." May none of you who are to-night gathered into the barn turn out to be mere weeds dried in the sun! The Lord save you, and keep you; and may you remember that the vows of the Lord are upon you; and may you never, in any way, dishonour that great name by which you are henceforth to be named!

God bless every one of this great mass of people! "Believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God save all of us from that fearful doom, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## Harvest Time

Is it not wheat harvest to-day? - 1 Samuel 12:17

I shall not notice the connection; but I shall simply take these words as a motto; and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest field. I shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country Men who were born, trained up, nourished and nurtured among corn-fields, harvests, sowings, and reapings, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits, and think less of these things than rustics do. But I suppose, if it is almost necessary that you should less regard the harvest than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extent. Let us not be forgetful of times and seasons. There is much to be learned from them, and I would refresh your memories by a harvest field. What a wondrous temple this world is; for in truth it is a temple of God's building, wherein men ought to worship him. What a wondrous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened, which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect, and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson, there is not a single wave, or blast of thunder, that has not some lesson to teach to us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple, and as, if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the

temple has a meaning, so when you walk this world, everything about you has a meaning. It is no fanciful idea that there are "sermons in stones"; for there really are sermons in stones, and this world is intended to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who only has the mind, and has the spirit to get these lessons from Nature. Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified, God's beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God's terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God's powerful emotions just opened out that men may hear them. The world is just the materializing of God's thoughts; for the world is a thought in God's eye. He made it first from a thought that came from his own mighty mind, and everything in the majestic temple that he has made, has a meaning.

In this temple there are four evangelists. As we have four great evangelists in the Bible, so there are four evangelists in Nature; and these are the four evangelists of the seasons,—spring, summer, autumn, winter.

First comes spring, and what says it? We look, and we behold that, by the magic touch of spring, insects which seemed to be dead begin to awaken, and seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What says spring? It utters its voice, it says to man, "Though thou sleepest, thou shalt rise again; there is a world in which, in a more glorious state, thou shalt exist; thou art but a seed now, and thou shalt be buried in the dust, and in a little while thou shalt arise." Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes summer. Summer says to man, "Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator; 'he makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good,' he sprinkleth the earth with flowers, he adorneth it with those gems of creation, he maketh it blossom like Eden, and bring forth like the garden of the Lord." Summer utters that; then comes autumn. We shall hear its message. It passes, and forth comes winter, crowned with a coronal of ice, and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man; it points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it says to us, "Man, take heed that thou store up something for thyself; something against the day of wrath; lay up for thyself the fruits of autumn, that thou mayest be able to feed on them in winter." And when the old year expires, its deathknell tells us that man must die;

and when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again.

We are about to let autumn preach. One of these four evangelists comes forth, and it says, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" We are about to take the harvest into consideration in order to learn something from it. May God's most blessed Spirit help his feeble dust and ashes to preach the unsearchable riches of God to your souls' profit!

We shall talk of three joyful harvests and of three sorrowful harvests.

I. First, we shall speak of THREE JOYFUL HARVESTS that there will be.

The first joyful harvest that I will mention is the harvest of the field which Samuel alluded to when he said, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" We cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not meet that these things should be forgotten; we ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, and to have their treasures stored away in the barns, and all the while to remain forgetful of God's mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of ills, is one of the vipers which make their nest in the heart of man, and the creature cannot be slain until divine grace comes there, and sprinkles the blood of the cross upon man's heart. Such vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let me just lead you for a moment to a harvest field. You shall see there a most luxuriant harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, "From the ground I came, I owe myself to the ground, to that I bow my head," just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him. You see the stalks with their heads hanging down, because they are ripe. And it is goodly and precious to see these things.

Now just suppose the contrary. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered; if they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw, very lean and very scanty, what would have become of us? In peace, we might have depended on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency; now, in times of war, Referring to the war in the Crimea. when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth, we can



only say, "Blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what would have been; but God, seeing one door closed, has opened another." Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields in the South of Russia, he has opened another door in our own land. "Thou art my own favored island," says he; "I have loved thee England, with a special love, thou art my favored one, and the enemy shall not crush thee; and lest thou shouldst starve, because provisions are cut off, I will give thee thy barns full at home, and thy fields shall be covered, that thou mayest laugh thine enemy to scorn, and say to him, 'Thou thoughtest thou couldst starve us, and make us perish; but he, who feeds the ravens, has fed his people, and has not deserted his favored land.'" There is not one person who is uninterested in this matter. Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich. There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another; if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next, and the next, and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, "Whatever the price of corn may be, I can live; "but rather bless God who has given you more than enough. Your prayer ought to be, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and remember that, whatever wealth you have, you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth; and sometimes that is a blessed way of living,—when God gives his children the hand-basket portion, instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that he has sent an abundant harvest! O fearful one, lift up thine head! and thou discontented one, be thou abashed, and let thy discontent no more be known! The Jews used to observe the feast of tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the country they always have a "harvest home," and why should not we? I want you all to have one. Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice! for the harvest is come,— "Is it not wheat harvest to-day? "Poor desponding soul, let all your doubts and fears be gone. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure." That is one joyful harvest.

Now, the second joyful harvest is the harvest of every Christian. In one sense, the Christian is the seed; in another, he is a sower. In one sense, he is a seed, sown by God, which is to grow, and ripen, and germinate, till the great harvest time. In another sense, every Christian is a sower sent

into the world to sow good seed and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes, in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat; and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes, and God sometimes suffers his people to fall, so that they sow sins; but the Christian never reaps his sins; Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a decoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment. Yet bear in mind, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin, and he will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste though he does not make us eat the fruits, yet still he will make us grieve and sorrow over our sins. But the Christian, as I have said, should be employed in sowing good seed; and doing so, he shall have a glorious harvest.

In some sense or other, the Christian must be sowing seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed sower; if God calls him to the Sabbath-school, he is a seed sower; whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. I sow seed broadcast all over this immense field; I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground, and they refuse to receive the seed that I sow. I cannot help it if any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others, and my seed falls upon them, and brings forth a little fruit, but by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many who are like the good ground that God has prepared, and when I scatter the seed abroad, it falls on good ground, and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest. Ah! the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted. I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep down to the washing of baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world, and telling what the Lord has done for their souls,—when God's children are edified, and built up, it is worth living for, and worth dying ten thousand deaths for, to be the means of saving one soul. What a joyful harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds, and adds to his church abundantly such as shall be saved! Now I am like a farmer just at this season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down, and I want to get it into the barn for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many, but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want

to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession, and join the church. I want to get them into my Master's granary, and to see Christians added to the church. I see some holding down their heads, and saying, "He means us." So I do. You ought before this to have joined Christ's church; and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in heaven. Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath-school teacher has his harvest. He goes and toils, and he ploughs very stony ground often, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor laboring Sabbath-school teacher, hast thou seen no fruit yet? Dost thou say, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "Cheer up, thou dost labor in a good cause, there must be some to do thy work. Hast thou seen no children converted? Fear not,—

"Though seed lie buried long in dust,  
It shan't deceive your hope,  
The precious grain can ne'er be lost,  
For God insures the crop."

Go on sowing still, and thou shalt have a harvest when thou shalt see children converted. I have known some Sabbath-school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children, who have, one after another, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and to join the church. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember you are only accountable for your labor, and not for your success. Sow still, toil on! "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." God will not allow his Word to be wasted; it shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases. There may to a poor mother, who has often been sad. She has a son and a daughter, and she has been always praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, thy son is an ungainly boy still; he grieves thy heart; still the hot tears scald thy cheeks on account of him. And thou, father, thou hast reprov'd him often; he is a wayward son, and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! O my brethren and sisters, who are parents, you shall have a harvest!

There was a boy once, a very sinful child, who hearkened not to the counsel of his parents; but his mother prayed for him, and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman. Now, fathers and mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the throng of grace, and you shall have a harvest. What thinkest thou, mother, wouldst thou not rejoice to see thy son a minister of the gospel; thy daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not suffer thee to pray, and thy prayers be unheeded.

Young man, thy mother has been wrestling for thee a long time, and she has not won thy soul yet. What thinkest thou? Thou defraudest thy mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground, hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, wouldst thou go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden wouldst thou go and trample it under foot? But by going on in the ways of the reprobate, thou art defrauding thy father and thy mother of their harvest. Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters, who are hardened and unconverted. O God, turn their hearts! for bitter is the doom of that man who goes to hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs, and tramples on those things which God has put in his way,—his mother's prayers and his father's sighs. God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous grace if he does help him.

You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing something. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way; and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst,— if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to heaven. If you live and die a disappointed man in this world, you shall not be disappointed in the next. I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to heaven. They will see their Master, and he will give them a crown, "Lord, what is that crown for?" "That crown is because thou didst give a cup of cold water to one of my disciples." "What! a crown for a cup of cold water?" "Yes," says the

Master, "that is how I pay my servants. First I give them grace to give that cup of water, and then, having given them grace, I give them a crown." "Wonders of grace to God belong." He that soweth liberally shall reap liberally; and he that soweth grudgingly shall reap sparingly. Ah, if there could be grief in heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how little the most of us ever sow! I know I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of you sow! Just add up how much you give to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember, you reap according to what you sow. O my friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain! The soil of heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in heaven, he would say, "I must sow a great many acres of land; "and so let us strive, for the more we sow, the more shall we reap in heaven. Yet remember it is all of grace, and not of debt.

Now, beloved, I must very hastily mention the third joyful harvest. We have had the harvest of the field, and the harvest of the Christian. We are now to have another, and that is the harvest of Christ.

Christ had his sowing times. What bitter sowing times were they! Christ was one who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world! He sowed it with tears; he sowed it with drops of blood; he sowed it with sighs; he sowed it with agony of heart; and at last he sowed himself in the ground, to be the seed of a glorious crop. What a sowing time his was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering, and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on his name, Jehovah swears it; the everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest. He has sown, and he shall reap; he has scattered, and he shall gather in. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." My friends, Christ has begun to reap his harvest. Yea, every soul that is converted is part of his reward; every one who comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay, and set on the King's highway, is a part of Christ's crop. But he is going to reap more yet. There is another harvest coming, in the latter day, when he shall reap armfuls at a time, and gather the sheaves into his

garner. Now, men come to Christ in ones and twos and threes; but, then, they shall come in flocks, so that the church shall say, "Who are these that come in as doves to their windows?"

There shall be a greater harvest when time shall be no more. Turn to the 11th chapter of Revelation, and the 13th verse: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They do not go before them, and win them heaven. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap his field, he comes with a crown on. There are the nations gathered together before that crowned Reaper!

"They come, they come: the exiled bands,  
Where'er they rest or roam  
They heard his voice in distant lands,  
And hastened to their home."

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the crowned Reaper from his throne; he takes his sharp sickle, and see him reap sheaf after sheaf, and he carries them up to the heavenly garner. Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones,—the wheat of the Lord.

Notice again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous; the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered, an angel gathers them; but Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. "He that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle. "O my soul, when thou comest to die, Christ will himself come after thee; when thou art to be cut down he that sits upon the throne will cut thee down with a

very sharp sickle, in order that he may do it as easily as possible. He will be the Reaper himself; no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ the King of saints. Oh, will it not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shrivelled grain of wheat, there, that has been growing somewhere on the headland, and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there too. They will all be gathered in.

"His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of his sheep;  
All that his heavenly Father gave  
His hands securely keep."

II. But now we are obliged to turn to THE THREE SAD HARVESTS. Alas! alas; the world was once like an Eolian harp; every wind that blow upon it gave forth melody; now the strings are all unstrung, and they are full of discord, so that, when we have a strain of joy, we must have the deep bass of grief to come after it.

The first sad harvest is the harvest of death. We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat me down, and had a reverie like this. I have thought: Man, what is he? He grows, and grows, till he comes to his prime; and when he is forty-five, if God spare him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while, and then he goes down the hill; and if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He may die very early. Do we not all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green, he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for hell when they die; the righteous die, but they are always ripe for heaven when they die. That poor thief there, who had not believed in Jesus, perhaps an hour before he died,—he was as ripe as a seventy years saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for hell whenever God pleases to send for them. Oh, that great reaper; he sweeps through the earth, and mows his hundreds and thousands down! It is all still; death

makes no noise about his movements, and he treads with velvet footfall over the earth; that ceaseless mower, none can resist him. He is irresistible, and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down. Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe; he dips his scythe in blood, and then he mows us down with war; then he takes his whetstone of cholera, and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, "More! more! more!" Ceaselessly that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when thou comest to reap me, I cannot resist thee; for I must fall like others;—when thou comest, I shall have nothing to say to thee. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless; and thou must cut me down! But, oh! may I be prepared for thy scythe! May the Lord stand by me, and comfort me, and cheer me; and may I find that death is an angel of life,—that death is the portal of heaven, the vestibule of glory!

There is a second sad harvest, and that is the harvest that the wicked man has to reap. Thus saith the voice of inspiration, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against his body without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, "I have sinned with impunity." Stay, thou young man! go there to that hospital, and see sufferers writhing in their agony. See that staggering, bloated wretch, and I tell thee, stay thy hand! lest thou become like him. Wisdom bids thee stop; for thy steps lead down to hell. If thou enterest into the house of the strange woman, thou shalt reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against his fellows. The man who sins against his fellowcreature shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels, and think they may tread on whom they please; but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others, sins against himself; that is Nature. It is a law in Nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself. Now, you who cause grief to others minds, do not think the grief will end there; you will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against his estate without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch, who hoards up his gold, sins against his gold. It becomes cankered, and from those golden sovereigns he will have to reap a harvest; yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night, and straining his weary eyes to count his gold, that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift. He will reap his harvest



when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the prodigal, that "no man gave unto him,"—none of those that he used to entertain,—and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything unto him. Ah! but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against the Church of Christ. I would not that a man should sin against his body; I would not that a man should sin against his estate; I would not that a man should sin against his fellows; but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ's Church. He that touches one of God's people, touches the apple of his eye. When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, "I would not do so." It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children. You speak ill of God's children, and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment. There is not a single one of God's family whom God does not love, and if you touch one of them, he will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children; and if you touch God's Church, you will have the direst vengeance of all. The hottest flames of hell are for those who touch God's children. Go on, sinner, laugh at religion if thou pleasest; but know that it is the blackest sin in the whole catalogue of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that; and though that is not unpardonable; yet, if not repented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that his elect should be touched, and if you do so, it is the greatest crime you can commit.

The third sad harvest is the harvest of almighty wrath, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the 14th chapter of Revelation, you will see that the vine of the earth was cast into the winepress of the wrath of God; and, after that, the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out, up to the horses' bridles;—a wonderful figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great winepress, in which our bodies are put like grapes; and suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot; that is the idea,—that the wicked shall be cast together, and be trodden under foot until the blood runs out up to the horses' bridles. May God grant, of his sovereign mercy, that you and I may never be reaped in that fearful harvest; but that rather we may be written amongst the saints of the Lord!

You shall have a harvest in due season if you faint not. Sow on, brother;

sow on, sister; and in due time thou shalt reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing, if the seed thou hast sown a long while, has never come up. I was told once: "When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in, a little water over-night, they will grow all the better for it." So, if thou hast been sowing thy seed, put it into tears, and it will make thy seed germinate the better. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Steep your seed in tears and then put it into the ground, and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed; no bird can hold it in its mouth. No worm can eat it, for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears. Go thy way, and when thou weepest most, then it is that thou sowest best. When most cast down, thou are doing best. If thou comest to the prayer-meeting, and has not a word to say, keep on praying; do not give it up, for thou often prayest best when thou thinkest thou prayest worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty grace, you shall reap if you faint not.

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## **Hatred Without Cause**

They hated me without a cause. - John 15:25

It is usually understood, that the quotation our Saviour here refers to is to be found in the 35th Psalm, at the 19th verse, where David says, speaking of himself immediately and of the Saviour prophetically, "Let not them who are mine enemies rejoice over me, neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause." Our Saviour refers to that as being applicable to himself, and thus he really tells us, in effect, that many of the Psalms are Messianic, or refer to the Messiah; and, therefore, Dr. Hawker did not err, when he said he believed the Psalms referred to the Saviour, though he may have carried the truth too far. But it will be a good plan, in reading the Psalms, if we continually look at them as

alluding not so much to David, as to the man of whom Dave was the type, Jesus Christ, David's Lord.

No being was ever more lovely than the Saviour; it would seem almost impossible not to have affection for him. Certainly at first sight it would seem far more difficult to hate him than to love him. And yet, loveable as he was, yea, "altogether lovely," no being so early met with hatred, and no creature ever endured such a continual persecution as he had to suffer. He is no sooner ushered into the world, than the sword of Herod is ready to cut him off, and the innocents of Bethlehem, by their dreadful massacre, gave a sad foretaste of the sufferings which Christ would endure, and of the hatred that men would pour upon his devoted head. From his first moment to the cross, save the temporary lull while he was a child, it seemed as if all the world were in league against him, and all men sought to destroy him. In different ways that hatred displayed itself, sometimes in overt deed, as when they took him to the brow of the hill, and would have cast him down headlong, or when they took up stones again to stone him, because he said that Abraham desired to see his day, and saw it, and was glad. At other times that hatred showed itself in words of slander, such as these,— "He is a drunken man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners;" or in looks of contempt, as when they looked suspiciously at him, because he did eat with publicans and sinners, and sat down to table with unwashed hands. At other times that hatred dwelt entirely in their thoughts, and they thought within themselves, "This man blasphemeth," because he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." But at almost every time there was a hatred towards Christ; and when they took him, and would have made him king, and a shallow fleeting flood of popular applause would have watted him on to an unsteady throne, even then there was a latent hatred towards him, only kept under by loaves and fishes, which only wanted an equal quantity of loaves and fishes offered by the priests, to develop it itself in the cry of "Crucify him, crucify him," instead of the shout of "Hosannah! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." All grades of men hated him. Most men have to meet with some opposition; but then it is frequently a class opposition, and there are other classes who look at them with respect. The demagogue, who is admired by the poor, must expect to be despised by the rich; and he who labours for the aristocracy,

of course meets with the contempt of the many. But here was a man who walked among the people, who loved them, who spoke to rich and poor as though they were (as indeed they are) on one level in his blessed sight: and yet all classes conspired to hate him; the priests cried him down because he spoiled their dogmas; the nobles would put him to death because he spoke of being a king; while the poor, for some reasons best known to themselves, though they admired his eloquence, and frequently would have fallen prostrate in worship before him, on account of the wondrous deeds he did, even these, led by men who ought to have guided them better, conspired to put him to death, and to consummate their guilt by nailing him to the tree, and then wagging their heads, bade him, if he could build a temple in three days, to save himself and come down from the cross. Christ was the hated one, the slandered and scorned; he was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Now, we shall try this morning, first, to justify the Saviour's remarks, that he was hated without a cause; and secondly, to dwell upon the sin of men—that men hated him without a cause; in the third place, to give a lesson or two to Christ's own people, which they may well learn from the fact, that their Saviour was hated without a cause.

I. First, then, beloved, let us JUSTIFY WHAT THE SAVIOUR SAID,—"They hated me without a cause." And we remark, that, apart from the consideration of man's sinfulness, and Christ's purity, there certainly is not cause, whatever to be discovered why the world should have hated him.

First let us regard Christ in his person. Was there anything in Christ's person as a man, when he lived in this world, which had a natural tendency to make any person hate him? Let us remark, that there was an absence of almost everything which excites hatred between man and man. In the first place there was no great rank in Christ to excite envy. It is a well known fact that let a man be ever so good, if he be at all lifted above his fellow-creatures by riches, or by title, though one by one men will respect him, yet the many often speak against him, not so much for what he is, as for his rank and his title. It seems to be natural to men in

the mass to despise nobles; each man, individually, thinks it a wonderful fine thing to know a lord; but put men together, and they will despise lords and bishops, and speak very lightly of principalities and powers. Now Christ had none of the outward circumstances of rank, he had no chariot, no long sleeves, no elevation above his fellows; when he walked abroad there were no heralds to attend him, there was no pomp to do him honor. In fact, one would think that Christ's appearance would naturally have engendered pity. Instead of being lifted above men, he did, in some sense, seem to be below them, for foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. Many a democrat has railed against the archbishop when he has gone by Lambeth palace; but would he curse or despise him if he were told, the archbishop had not where to lay his head, but simply toiled for the truth's sake, and had no reward? The envy naturally excited by rank, station, and such-like, could not have operated in Christ's case; there was nothing in his garb to attract attention; it was the garb of the peasant of Galilee-"of one piece, woven from the top throughout." Nor was there anything in his rank. He might have been the son of an ancient royal family, but its royalty was apparently extinct, and he was only known as the Son of the carpenter. The hated him, then, in that sense, "without a cause."

Many persons seem to have envy excited in them against those who exercise rule or government over them. The very fact of a man having authority over me stirs up my evil passions, and I begin to look at him with suspicion, because he is invested with that authority. Some men naturally fall into the groove, and obey simply because the ruled is made; principalities and powers are established, and they submit themselves for the Lord's sake; but the many, especially in these republican times, seem to have a natural tendency to kick against authority, simply because it is authority. But if authorities and governments were changed every month, I believe that in some countries, in France for instance, there would be revolutions as much under one government as under another; in fact, they hate all government there, and wish to be without law, that each man may do what is right in his own eyes. But this did not operate in Christ's case, he was not a king; he did not assume sway over the multitude. It is true he was Lord over tempests and seas; it is true he could command demons, and, if he pleased, men must have been his

obedient servants; but he did not assume power over them. He marshalled no armies, he promulgated no laws, he made himself no great one in the land; the people did just as they liked, for all the authority he exercised over them. In fact, instead of binding laws upon them which were severe, he seemed to have loosened the rigidity of their system; for when the adulterous woman, who, otherwise, would have been put to death, was brought before him, he said, "Neither do I condemn thee." And he relaxed, to a certain extent, the rigidity of the Sabbatical ordinance, which was in some respects too burthensome, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man." Surely, then, they hated him "without a cause."

Some men make others dislike them because they are proud. I know some men that I should have liked very well if the starch had been left out of them; I should really sympathize with them and admire them if they had the least degree of condescension, but they seem to walk about the world with such a style of pride! They may not be proud—very likely they are not; but, as an old divine said, "When we see a fox's tail sticking out of a hole, we naturally expect the fox is there." And, somehow or other, the human mind cannot bear pride; we always kick against it. But there was nothing of that in our Saviour. How humble he was! Why he stooped to anything. He would wash his disciples' feet; and when he walked about among men, there was no parade about him, as if he would say to them, "See my talent, see my power, see my rank, see my dignity, stand by, I am greater than you." No, he takes his seat there. There is Matthew, the publican, sitting beside him, and he does not think he is hurt by the publican, although he is the worst of sinners; and there is a harlot, he speaks to her; there is another with seven devils, and he casts the devils out of her, and another, who has the leprosy, and he even touches the leper, to show how humble he was, and that there was nothing of pride about him. Oh! could you have seen the Saviour; he was the very paragon of humility! There were none of your forms of etiquette and politeness about him; he had that true politeness which makes itself affable to all men, because it is kind and loving to all. There was no pride in the Saviour, and consequently there was nothing to excite men's anger on that account. Therefore, they hated him "without a cause."

There are others that you cannot help disliking, because they are so snappish, and waspish, and angry; they look as if they were born on some terribly dark stormy day, and as if, in the mixture of their body, no small quantity of vinegar was employed. You could not sit long with them, without feeling that you have to keep your tongue in pretty tight chain; you must not talk freely, or there would be a quarrel, for they would make you an offender for a word. You may say, "Such an one is, no doubt a good man; but really, that temper of his I cannot bear it. And when a man stands prominently before the public, with a nasty sour disposition, one feels inclined to dislike him. But there was nothing of this about our Saviour. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again;" if men spat in his face he said nothing to them; and when they smote him, he did not curse them; he sat still and bore their scorn. He walked through the world, with contempt and infamy constantly poured upon him; but "he answered not a word;" he was never angry. You cannot find, in reading the Saviour's life, that he spake one angry word, save those words of holy wrath which he poured, like scalding oil, upon the head of Pharisaic pride; then, indeed, his wrath did boil, but it was holy wrath. With such a loving, kind, gentle spirit, one would have thought that he would have gone through the world as easily as possible. But, notwithstanding all that, they hated him. Truly, we can say, "they hated him without a cause."

There is another set of people you can scarcely help disliking; they are selfish people. Now, we know some persons who are very excellent in temper, who are extremely honest and upright, but they are so selfish! When you are with them, you feel that they are just friends to you for what they can get out of you; and when you have served their turn, they will just lay you aside, and endeavour to find another. In trying to do good, their good deed has an ulterior object, but, somehow or other, they are always found out; and no man in the world gets a greater share of public odium than the man who lives a selfish life. Among the most miserable men in the universe, kicked about the world like a football, is the selfish miser. But in Christ there was nothing selfish; whatever he did, he did for others. He had a marvellous power of working miracles, but he would not even change a stone into bread for himself; he reserved his miraculous power for others; he did not seem to have a particle of self in his whole nature. In fact, the description of his life might be written very

briefly: "he saved others, himself he did not save." He walked about; he touched the poorest, the meanest, and those who were the most sick; he cared not what men might say of him; he seemed to have no regard for fame, or dignity, or ease, or honor. Neither his bodily nor his mental comforts were in the least regarded by him. Self-sacrifice was the life of Christ; but he did it with such an ease that it seemed no sacrifice. Ah! beloved, in that sense certainly they hated Christ without a cause; for there was nothing in Christ to excite their hatred—in fact, there was everything, on the other hand, to bind the whole world to love and reverence a character so eminently unselfish.

Another sort of people there are that I do not like, viz., the hypocritical; nay, I think I could even live with the selfish man, if I knew him to be selfish; but the hypocrite, do not let him come anywhere near where I am. Let a public man be a hypocrite once, and the world will scarcely trust him again; they will hate him. But Christ was, in this particular, free from any blame; and if they hated him, they hated him not for that, for there never was a more unvarnished man than Christ. He was called, you know, the child Jesus; because as a child speaks itself out, and has no reserve, and no craftiness, even so was it with Jesus; he had no affectation, no deceit. There was no change about him; he was "without variableness or shadow of turning." Whatever the world may say of Christ, they never said they believed he was a hypocrite; and among all the slanders they brought against him, they never disputed his sincerity. Had they been able to show that he really had been imposing upon them, they might have had some grounds for hating him; but he lived in the sunlight of sincerity and walked on the very mountain-top of continual observation. He could not be a hypocrite, and men knew he could not; and yet men hated him. Verily, my friends, if you survey the character of Christ, in all its loveliness, in all its benevolence, in all its sincerity, in all its self-devotion, in all intense eagerness to benefit man, you must say, indeed, "They hated him without a cause." there was nothing in Christ's person to lead men to hate him.

In the next place, was there anything in Christ's errand which could make people hate him? If they had asked him, for what reason have you come from heaven? would there have been anything in his answer likely to



excite their indignation and hatred? I trow not. For what purpose did he come? He came, first of all, to explain mysteries—to tell them what was meant by the sacrificial lamb, what was the significance of the scape-goat, what was intended by the ark, the brazen serpent, and the pot of manna; he came to rend the veil of the holy of holies, and to show men secrets they had never seen before. Should they have hated one who lifted the veil of mystery, and made dark things light, and expounded riddles? Should they have hated him who taught them what Abraham desired to see, and what prophets and kings had longed to know, but died without a knowledge of? Was there anything in that to make them hate him? What else did he come for? He came on earth to reclaim the wanderer; and is there anything in that that should make men hate Christ? If he came to reform the drunkard, to reclaim the harlot, and gather in the publicans and sinners, and bring prodigals to their father's house again, sure that is an object with which every philanthropist should agree; it is that for which our governments are formed and fashioned, to bring men to a better state; and if Christ came for that purpose, was there anything in that to make men hate him? For what else did he come? He came to heal the diseases of the body; is that a legitimate object of hatred? Shall I hate the physician who goes about gratuitously healing all manner of diseases? Are deaf ears unstopped, are mouths opened, are the dead raised, are the blind made to see, and widows blest with their sons? Are these causes why a man should be obnoxious? Surely, he might well say, "For which of these works do ye stone me? If I have done good works wherefore speak ye against me?" But none of these works were the cause of men's hatred; they hated him without a cause. And he came on earth to die, that sinners might not die? Was that a cause of hatred? Ought I to hate the Saviour, because he came to quench the flames of hell for me? Should I despise him who allowed his father's flaming sword to be quenched in his own vital blood? Shall I look with indignation upon the substitute who takes my sin and griefs upon him, and carries my sorrows? Shall I hate and despise the man who loved me better than he loved himself—who loved me so much that he visited the gloomy grave for my salvation? Are these the causes of hatred? Surely his errand was one that ought to have made us sing his praise for ever, and join the harps of angels in their rapturous songs. "They hated me without a cause."

But once more: was there anything in Christ's doctrine that should have made us hate him? No, we answer; there was nothing in his doctrine that should have excited men's hatred. Take his preceptive doctrines. Did he not teach us to do to others as we would they should do to us? Was he not also the exponent of everything lovely and honorable, and of good report? And was not his teaching the very essence of virtue, so that if virtue's self had written it, it could not have written such a perfect code of lovely morals, and excellent virtues. Was it the ethical part of his doctrines that men hated? He taught that rich and poor must stand on one level; he taught that his gospel was not to be confined to one particular nation, but was to be gloriously expansive, so as to cover the world? This perhaps, was one principal reason of their hating him; but surely there was no justifiable cause for their indignation in this. There was nothing in Christ to lead men to hate him. "They hated him without a cause."

II. And now, in the second place, I come to dwell on MAN'S SIN, that he should have hated the Saviour without a cause. Ah! beloved, I will not tell you of man's adulteries, and fornications, and murders, and poisonings, and sodomies. I will not tell you of man's wars, and bloodsheds, and cruelties, and rebellions; If I want to tell you man's sin, I must tell you that man is a deicide—that he put to death his God, and slew his Saviour; and when I have told you that, I have given you the essence of all sin, the master-piece of crime, the very pinnacle and climax of the terrific pyramid of mortal guilt. Man outdid himself when he put his Saviour to death, and sin did out-Herod Herod when it slew the Lord of the universe, the lover of the race of man, who came on earth to die. Never does sin appear so exceedingly sinful as when we see it pointed at the person of Christ, whom it hated without a cause. In every other case, when man has hated goodness, there have always been some extenuating circumstances. We never do see goodness in this world without alloy; however great may be any man's goodness, there is always some peg whereon we may hang a censure; however excellent a man may be, there is always some fault which may diminish our admiration of our love. But in the Saviour there was nothing of this. There was nothing that could blot the picture; holiness stood out to the very life; there was holiness—only holiness. Let a man hate Whitfield, one of the holiest men that ever lived, he would tell you, he did not hate his goodness, but he hated his

ranting preaching, and the extraordinary anecdotes he told; or he would pull out something that dropped from his lips, and hold it up to derision. But in Christ's case men could not do that; for though they sought for false witnesses, yet their witnesses agreed not together. There was nothing in him but holiness: and any person with half an eye can see, that the thing men hated was simply that Christ was perfect; they could not have hated him for anything else. And thus you see the abominable, detestable evil of the human heart—that man hates goodness simply because it is such. It is not true that we Christian people are hated because of our infirmities; men make our infirmities a nail whereon to hang their laughter; but if we were not Christians they would not hate our infirmities. They hold our inconsistencies up to ridicule; but I do not believe our inconsistencies are what they care about; we might be as inconsistent as all the rest of the world if we did not profess religion, of if they did not think we had any. But because the Saviour had no inconsistencies or infirmities, men were stripped of all their excuses for hating him, and it came out that man naturally hates goodness, because he is so evil that he cannot but detest it.

And now let me appeal to every sinner present, and ask him whether he ever had any cause for hating Christ. But some one says, "I do not hate him; if he were to come to my house I would love him very much." But it is very remarkable that Christ lives next door to you, in the person of poor Betty there. She goes to such-and-such a chapel, and you say she is nothing but a poor canting Methodist. Why don't you like Betty? She is one of Christ's members, and "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." You say you do not hate Christ. Now, look across the chapel. Don't you know a man, a member of this place, a very holy man, but somehow or other you cannot bear him, because he told you of your faults once. Ah! sir, if you loved Christ you would love his members. What! tell me you love my head, but you do not love my hands? My dear fellow, you cannot cut my head off and let me be the same person. If you love Christ the head, you must love his members. But you say, "I do love his people." Very well, then you have passed from death unto life, if you love the brethren. But you say, "I am not sure that I am a changed character, still, I am not aware that there is any opposition in my heart to Christ and his gospel." You may not be aware of it, but it is

your not being aware of it that makes you case all the more sad. Perhaps if you knew it, and wept over it, you would come to Christ; but since you do not know it and do not feel it, that is a proof of your hostility. Now come! I must suppose you to be hostile to Christ, unless you love him; for I know there are only two opinions of him. You must either hate him or love him. As for indifference with regard to Christ, it is just a clear impossibility. A man might as well say, "I am indifferent towards honesty." Why, then he is dishonest, is he not? You are indifferent to Christ? Then you hate him. And why is it that you hate him? Many a time you have been wooed by the gospel; you have resisted appeals, many of them; come, now, for which of Christ's works do you hate him? Have I a persecutor here? Sinner! for what dost thou hate Christ? Dost thou curse him? Tell me what he has done, that thou shouldst be angry with him. Point to a single fault of his in his carriage towards thee. has Christ ever hurt thee? "Oh!" says one, "he has taken my wife and made her one of his children, and she has been baptized and comes to chapel, and I cannot bear that." Ah! sinner, is that why thou hatest Christ? Wouldst thou have hated Christ if he had snatched thy wife from the flames, if he had saved her from going down to death. No, thou wouldst love him. And he has saved thy wife's soul. Ah! if he never saves thee; if thou lovest thy wife, thou wilt have enough cause to love him, to think he has been so good to thee. I tell thee, if thou hatest Christ, thou not only hatest him without a cause, but thou hatest him when thou hast simple cause to love him. Come, poor sinner, what hast thou got by hating Christ? Thou hast stings of conscience. Many a sinner, by hating Christ, has been locked up in jail, has a ragged coat, a diseased body, a nasty filthy house, with broken windows, a poor wife, nearly beaten to death, and children that scamper out of the way as soon as father comes home. What hast thou got by hating Christ? Oh! if thou wert to estimate thy gains, thou wouldst find that getting Christ would be a gain, but that hating him is a dead loss to thee. Now, if you hate Christ and Christ's religion, I tell you that you hate Christ without a cause; and let me give you one solemn warning, which is this, that if you keep on hating Christ till you die, you will not hurt Christ by it, but you will hurt yourself most awfully. Oh! may God deliver you from being haters of Christ! There is nothing to get by it, but everything to lose by it. For what cause do you hate Christ, sinner? For what cause do you hate Christ, persecutor? For what cause do you hate Christ, ye

carnal, ungodly men? What do you hate Christ's gospel for? His ministers —what hurt have they done you? What hurt can they do you, when they long to do you all the good in the world? Why is it you hate Christ? AH! it is only because you are so desperately set on mischief—because the poison of asps is under your lips, and your throat is an open sepulchre. Otherwise, ye would love Christ. They hated him "without a cause."

And now, Christian men, I must preach at you for just a moment. Sure ye have great reason to love Christ now, for ye once hated him without a cause. Did ye ever treat a friend ill, and did not know it? It has been the misfortune of most of us to do it sometimes. We had some suspicion that a friend had done us an injury; we quarrelled with him for weeks, and he had not done it at all. What he had done was only to warn us. AH! there are never tears like those we shed when we have injured a friend. And should we not weep when we have injured the Saviour? Did he not come to my door one cold damp night, and I shut my door against him? Oh! I have done what I cannot undo; I have slighted my Lord, I have insulted my friend, I have thrown dishonors upon him whom I admire. Shall I not weep for him? Oh! shall I not spend my very life for him? for my sins, my own treachery spilled his blood. Monuments, ah! monuments I will build; where'er I live, where'er I go. I'll pile up monuments of praise, that his name may be spread; and where'er I wander, I'll tell what he did, with many a tear, that I so long have ill-treated him and so fearfully misunderstood him. We hated him without a cause; therefore, let us love him.

### III. TWO LESSONS TO THE SAINTS.

In the first place, if your Master was hated without a cause, do not you expect to get off very easily in this world. If your Master was subject to all this contempt and all this pain, do you suppose you will always ride through this world in a chariot? If you do, you will be marvellously mistaken. As your Master was persecuted, you must expect to be the same. Some of you pity us when we are persecuted and despised. Ah! save your pity, keep it for those of whom the world speaks well; keep it for those against whom the woe is pronounced. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." Save your pity for earth's favorites; save your pity

for this world's lords, that are applauded by all men. We ask not for your pity; nay, sirs, in all these things we rejoice, and "glory in tribulations also, knowing that the things which happen unto us, happen for the furtherance of the gospel;" and we count it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations, for we rejoice that the name of Christ is known and his kingdom extended.

The other lesson is, take care, if the world does hate you, that it hates you without a cause. If the world is to oppose you, it is of no use making the world oppose you. This world is bitter enough, without my putting vinegar in it. Some people seem to fancy the world will persecute them; therefore, they put themselves into a fighting posture, as if they invited persecutions. Now, I do not see any good in doing that. Do not try and make other people dislike you. Really, the opposition some people meet with is not for righteousness' sake, but for their own sin's sake, or their own nasty temper's sake. Many a Christian lives in a house—a Christian servant girl perhaps; she says she is persecuted for righteousness' sake. But she is of a bad disposition; she sometimes speaks sharp, and then her mistress reproves her. That is not being persecuted for righteousness' sake. There is another, a merchant in the city, perhaps; he is not looked upon with much esteem. He says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake; whereas, it is because he did not keep a bargain sometime ago. Another man says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake; but he goes about assuming authority over everybody, and now and then persons turn round and upbraid him. Look to it, Christian people, that if you are persecuted, it is for righteousness' sake; for if you get any persecution yourself you must keep it yourself. The persecutions you bring on yourself for your own sins, Christ has nothing to do with them; they are chastisements on you. They hated Christ without a cause; then fear not to be hated. They hated Christ without a cause; then court not to be hated, and give the world no cause for it.

And now may you who hate Christ love him; Oh! that he would bring himself to you now! Oh! that he would show himself to you! And then sure you must love him at once. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus will be sure to love him and he that loveth him shall be saved. Oh! that God would give you faith, and give you love, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## Healing For The Wounded

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. - Psalm 147:3

The next verse finely declares the power of God. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them by their names." Perhaps there is nothing which gives us a nobler view of the greatness of God than a contemplation of the starry heavens. When by night we lift up our eyes and behold him who hath created all these things; when we remember that he bringeth out their host by number, calleth them all by their names, and that by the greatness of his power not one falleth, then indeed we adore a mighty God, and our soul naturally falls prostrate in reverential awe before the throne of him who leads the host of heaven, and marshals the stars in their armies. But the Psalmist has here placed another fact side by side with this wondrous act of God; he declares that the same God who leadeth the stars, who telleth the number of them, and calleth them by their names, healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. The next time you rise to some idea of God, by viewing the starry floor of his magnificent temple above, strive to compel your contemplation to this thought, that the same mighty hand which rolls the stars along, puts liniments around the wounded heart; that the same being who spoke worlds into existence, and now impels those ponderous globes through their orbits, does in his mercy cheer the wounded, and heal the broken in heart.

We will not delay you by a preface, but will come at once to the two thoughts: first, here is a great ill - a broken heart; and secondly, a great mercy - "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Man is a double being: he is composed of body and soul, and each of the

portions of man may receive injury and hurt. The wounds of the body are extremely painful, and if they amount to a breaking of the frame the torture is singularly exquisite. Yet God has in his mercy provided means whereby wounds may be healed and injuries repaired. The soldier who retires from the battle-field, knows that he shall find a hand to extricate the shot, and certain ointments and liniments to heal his wounds. We very speedily care for bodily diseases; they are too painful to let us slumber in silence: and they soon urge us to seek a physician or a surgeon for our healing. Oh, if we were as much alive to the more serious wounds of our inner man; if we were as deeply sensible of spiritual injuries, how earnestly should we cry to "the Beloved Physician," and how soon should we prove his power to save. Stabbed in the most vital part by the hand of our original parent, and from head to foot disabled by our own sin, we yet remain insensible as steel, careless and unmoved, because, though our wounds are known they are not felt. We should count that soldier foolish, who would be more anxious to repair a broken helmet than an injured limb. Are not we even more to be condemned, when we give precedence to the perishing fabric of the body, and neglect the immortal soul? You, however, who have broken hearts, can no longer be insensible; you have felt too acutely to slumber in indifference. Your bleeding spirit cries for consolation: may my glorious Master give me a word in season for you. We intend to address you upon the important subject of broken hearts, and the great healing provided for them.

I. Let us commence with THE GREAT ILL - a broken heart. What is it? We reply, there are several forms of a broken heart. Some are what we shall call naturally broken, and some are spiritually so. We will occupy a moment by mentioning certain forms of this evil, naturally considered; and verily our task would be a dreary one, if we were called upon to witness one tithe of the misery endured by those who suffer from a broken heart.

There have been hearts broken by desertion. A wife has been neglected by her husband who was once the subject of her attachment, and whom even now she tenderly loves. Scorned and despised by the man who once lavished upon her every token of his affection, she has known what a broken heart means. A friend is forsaken by one upon whom he leaned, to



whose very soul he was knit, so that their two hearts had grown into one; and he feels that his heart is broken, for the other half of himself is severed from him. When Ahithophel forsakes David, when the kind friend unto whom we have always told our sorrows betrays our confidence, the consequence may possibly be a broken heart. The desertion of a man by his fellows, the ingratitude of children to their parents, the unkindness of parents to their children, the betrayal of secrets by a comrade, the changeableness and fickleness of friends, with other modes of desertion which happen in this world, have brought about broken hearts. We know not a more fruitful source of broken hearts than disappointment in the objects of our affections - to find that we have been deceived where we have placed our confidence. It is not simply that we leaned upon a broken reed, and the reed has snapped - that were bad enough - but in the fall we fell upon a thorn which pierced our hearts to its center. Many have there been who have gone to their graves, not smitten by disease, not slain by the sword, but with a far direr wound that the sword could ever give, a more desperate death than poison could ever cause. May you never know such agony.

We have also seen hearts broken by bereavement. We have known tender wives who have laid their husbands in the tomb, and who have stood by the grave-side until their very heart did break for solitary anguish. We have seen parents bereaved of their beloved offspring one after another; and when they have been called to hear the solemn words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," over the last of their children, they have turned away from the grave, bidding adieu to joy, longing for death, and abhorring life. To such the world becomes a prison, cheerless, cold, unutterably miserable. The owl and bittern seem alone to sympathize with them, an aught of joy in the wide world appears to be but intended as a mockery to their misery. Divine grace, however, can sustain them even here.

How frequently might this be supposed to occur to our brave countrymen engaged in the present war. Do not they feel, and feel acutely, the loss of their comrades? You will perhaps imagine that the slaughter and death around them prevent the tender feelings of nature. You are enough mistaken, if so you dream. The soldier's heart may never know fear, but it

has not forgotten sympathy. The fearful struggle around renders it impossible to pay the usual court and homage at the gates of sorrow, but there is more of real grief oftentimes in the hurried midnight funeral than in the flaunting pageantry of your pompous processions. Were it in our power to walk among the tents, we should find abundant need to use the words of our text by way of cordial to many a warrior who has seen all his chosen companions fall before the destroyer.

Oh, ye mourners! seek ye a balm for your wounds - let me proclaim it unto you. Ye are not ignorant of it, I trust, but let me apply that in which you already place your confidence. The God of heaven knows your sorrows, repair you to his throne, and tell your simple tale of woe. Then cast your burden on him, he will bear it - open your heart before him, he will heal it. Think not that you are beyond hope. You would be if there were no God of love and pity; but while Jehovah lives, the mourner need not despair.

Penury has also contributed its share to the number of the army of misery. Pinching want, a noble desire to walk erect, without the crutch of charity, and inability to obtain employment, have at times driven men to desperate measures. Many a goodly cedar hath withered for lack of moisture, and so hath many a man pined away beneath the deprivations of extreme poverty. Those who are blessed with sufficiency can scarcely guess the pain endured by the sons of want, especially if they have once been rich. Yet, oh! child of suffering, be thou patient, God has not passed thee over in his providence. Feeder of sparrows, he will also furnish you with what you need. Sit not down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up arms against a sea of troubles, and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. There is One who careth for you. One eye is fixed on you, even in the home of your destitution, one heart beats with pity for your woes, and a hand omnipotent shall yet stretch you out the needed help. The darkest cloud shall yet scatter itself in its season, the blackest gloom shall have its morning. He, if thou art one of his family, with bands of grace will bind up thy wounds, and heal thy broken heart.

Multiplied also are the cares where disappointment and defeat have crushed the spirits. The soldier fighting for his country may see the ranks broken, but he will not be broken in heart, so long as there remains a

single hope for victory. His comrade reels behind him, and he himself is wounded, but with a shout he cries, "On! on!" and scales the ramparts. Sword in hand, still he goes, carrying terror among the foe, himself sustained by the prospect of victory. But let him once hear the shout of defeat where he hoped for triumph; let him know that the banner is stained in the earth, that the eagle has been snatched from the standard; let him once hear it said, "They fly, they fly!" let him see the officers and soldiers flying in confusion; let him be well assured that the most heroic courage and the most desperate valor are of no avail, then his heart bursteth under a sense of dishonor, and he is almost content to die because the honor of his country has been tarnished, and her glory has been stained in the dust. Of this, the soldiers of Britain know but little - may they speedily carve out a peace for us with their victorious swords! Truly, in the great conflict of life we can bear any thing but defeat. Toils on toils would we endure to climb a summit, but if we must die ere we reach it, that were a brokenness of heart indeed. To accomplish the object on which we have set our minds, we would spend our very heart's blood; but once let us see that our life's purpose is not to be accomplished; let us, when we hope to grasp the crown, see that it is withdrawn, or other hands have seized it, then cometh brokenness of heart. But let us remember, whether we have been broken in heart by penury or by defeat, that there is a hand which "bindeth up the broken in heart, and healeth all their wounds;" that even these natural breakings are regarded by Jehovah, who, in the plenitude of his mercy, giveth a balm for every wound to every one of his people. We need not ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" There is a balm, there is a physician who can heal all these natural wounds, who can give joy to the troubled countenance, take the furrow from the brow, wipe the tear from the eye, remove the agitation from the bosom, and calm the heart now swelling with grief; for he "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

But all that we have mentioned of woe and sorrow which the natural heart endures, is not sufficient to explain our text. The heart broken, not by distress or disappointment, but on account of sin, is the heart which God peculiarly delights to heal. All other sufferings may find a fearful center in one breast, and yet the subject of them may be unpardoned and unsaved; but if the heart be broken by the Holy Ghost for sin, salvation

will be its ultimate issue, and heaven its result. At the time of regeneration, the soul is subject to an inward work, causing at the time considerable suffering. This suffering does not continue after the soul has learned the preciousness of a Saviour's blood; but while it lasts it produces an effect which is never forgotten in after life. Let none suppose that the pains we are about to describe are the constant companions of an heir of heaven during his entire existence. They are like the torture of a great drunkard at the time of his reformation, rendered needful, not by the reformation, but by his old habits. So this broken heart is felt at the time of that change of which the Bible speaks, when it says: "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." The fruit of the Spirit is afterwards joy and peace; but for a season we must, if saved, endure much mental agony.

Are any of you at the present moment disturbed in mind, and vexed in spirit, because you have violated the commands of God? And are you anxious to know whether these feelings are tokens of genuine brokenness and contrition? Hear me, then, while I briefly furnish you with tests whereby you may discern the truth and value of your repentance.

1. We can not conceive it possible that you are broken in heart if the pleasures of the world are your delight. We may consent to call you amiable, estimable, and honorable, even should you mix somewhat in the amusements of life; but it would be a treason to your common sense to tell you that such things are consistent with a broken heart. Will any venture to assert that you gay reveler has a broken heart? Would he not consider it an insult should you suggest it? Does the libidinous song now defiling the ear proceed from the lips of a broken-hearted sinner? Can the fountain, when filled with sorrow, send forth such streams as these? No, my friends; the wanton, the libidinous, the rioting, and the profane, are too wise to lay claim to the title of broken-hearted persons, seeing that their claim would be palpably absurd. They scorn the name, as mean and paltry, unworthy of a man who loves free living, and counts religion cant.

But should there be one of you so entirely deceived by the evil spirit as to think yourself a partaker in the promises, while you are living in the lusts of the flesh, let me solemnly warn you of your error. He who sincerely repents of sin will hate it, and find no pleasure in it; and during the

season when his heart is broken, he will loathe, even to detestation, the very approach of evil. The song of mirth will then be as a dirge in his ear. "As he that poureth vinegar upon niter, so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart." If the man who makes merry with sin be broken-hearted, he must be a prince of hypocrites, for he feigns to be worse than he is. We know right well that the wounded spirit requires other cordials than this world can afford. A soul disturbed by guilt must be lulled to a peaceful rest by other music than carnal pleasures can afford it. The tavern, the house of vice, and the society of the profligate, are no more to be endured by a contrite soul than the jostling of a crowd by a wounded man.

2. Again, we will not for one moment allow that a self-righteous man can have a broken heart. Ask him to pray, and he thanks God that he is every way correct. What need has he to weep because of the iniquity of his life? for he firmly believes himself to be well-deserving, and far enough removed from guilt. He has attended his religious duties; he is exceedingly strict in the form of his devotions; or if he cares not for such things, he is, at any rate, quite as good as those who do. He was never in bondage to any man, but can look to heaven without a tear for his sin. Do not conceive that I am painting an imaginary case, for there are unfortunately too many of these proud, self-exalting men. Will they be angry with me when I tell them that they are no nearer heaven than those whom we reprov'd a few moments ago? or will they not be equally moved to wrath if I were so much as to hint that they need to be broken in heart for their sin? Nevertheless, such is the case; and Pharisees shall one day learn with terror, that self-righteousness is hateful to God.

But what is a broken heart? I say, first, that a broken heart implies a very deep and poignant sorrow on account of sin. A heart broken - conceive of that. If you could look within and see every thing going on in this great mystery called man, you would marvel at the wonders thereof; but how much more astonished would you be to see its heart not merely divided in twain, but split into atoms. You would exclaim, "What misery must have done this! What a heavy blow must have fallen here!" By nature the heart is of one solid piece, hard as a nether millstone; but when God smites it, it is broken to pieces in deep suffering. Some will understand me when I describe the state of the man who is feeling a sorrow for sin. In the

morning he bends his knee in prayer, but he feels afraid to pray. He thinks it is blasphemy for him to venture near God's throne; and when he does pray at all, he rises with the thought: "God can not hear me, for he heareth not sinners." He goes about his business, and is, perhaps, a little diverted; but at every interval the same black thoughts roll upon him: "Thou art condemned already." Mark his person and appearance. A melancholy has rested upon him. At night he goes home, but there is little enjoyment for him in the household. He may smile, but his smile ill conceals the grief which lurks underneath. When again he bends the knee, he fears the shadows of the night; he dreads to be on his bed, lest it should be his tomb; and if he lies awake, he thinks of death, the second death, damnation, and destruction; or if he dreams, he dreams of demons, and flames of hell. He wakes again, and almost feels the torture of which he dreamed. He wishes in the morning it were evening, and at evening it were light. "I loathe my daily food," says he: "I care for nothing; for I have not Christ. I have not mercy, I have not peace." He has set off running on the road to heaven, and he puts his fingers in his ears, and will hear of nothing else. Tell him of a ball or concert! - it is nothing to him. He can enjoy nothing. You might put him in a heaven, and it would be a hell to him. Not the chants of the redeemed, not the hallelujahs of the glorified, not the hymns of flaming cherubs, would charm woe out of this man, so long as he is the subject of a broken heart. Now, I do not say that all must have the same amount of suffering before they arrive at heaven. I am speaking of some who have this especial misery of heart on account of sin. They are utterly miserable. As Bunyan has said: "They are considerably tumbled up and down in their souls." And conceive, that "as the Lord their God liveth, there is but a step between themselves and eternal death." Oh, blessings on the Lord forever! if any of you are in that condition, here is the mercy! Though this wound be not provided for in earthly pharmacy, though there be found no physician who can heal it, yet "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." It is a blessing to have a broken heart at all.

Again, when a man has a broken heart, he not only feels sorrow for sin, but he feel himself utterly unable to get rid of it. He who believes himself able to save himself has never known the meaning of a broken heart. Those who imagine that reformation can atone for the past, or secure

righteousness for the future, are not yet savingly brought to know themselves. No, my friends, we must be humbled in the dust, and made to look for all in Christ, or else we shall be deceived after all. But are you driven out of yourself; are you like the wounded soldier crying for some one else to carry you to the hospital of mercy, and longing for the aid of a mightier than yourself? then be of good cheer, there shall be found a great deliverance for you. So long as you trust in ceremonies, prayers, or good works, you shall not find eternal grace; but when stripped of all strength and power, you shall gain a glorious salvation in the Lord Jesus. If morality can join the pieces of a broken heart, the cement shall soon cease to bind, and the man shall again be as vile as ever. We must have a new heart and a right spirit, or vain will be all our hopes.

Need I give any other description of the character I desire to comfort. I trust you are discovered. Oh! my poor brother, I grieve to see thee in distress, but there is pardon through Jesus - there is forgiveness even for thee. What though your sins lie like a millstone on your shoulder, they shall not sink you down to hell. Arise! He, my gracious Lord, calleth thee. Throw thyself at his feet, and lose thy griefs in his loving and cheering words. Thou art saved if thou canst say,

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

II. We have spoken a long time on the great ill of a broken heart; our second thought will be the GREAT MERCY - "He healeth the broken in heart."

First, he only does it. Men may alleviate suffering, they may console the afflicted and cheer the distressed; but they can not heal the broken in heart, nor bind up their wounds. It is not human eloquence, or mortal wisdom; it is not the oration of an Apollos, nor the wondrous words of a prince of preachers; it is the "still small voice " of God which alone confers the "peace which passeth all understanding." The binding of the heart is a thing done immediately by God, oftentimes without any instrumentality whatever; and when instrumentality is used, it is always

in such a way that the man does not extol the instrument, but renders grateful homage to God. In breaking hearts, God uses man continually; repeated fiery sermons, and terrible denunciations do break men's hearts; but you will bear me witness when your hearts were healed God only did it. You value the minister that broke you heart; but it is not often that we ascribe the healing to any instrumentality whatever. The act of justification is generally apart from all means: God only does it. I know not the man who uttered the words that were the means of relieving my heart: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." I do not recollect what he said in the sermon, and I am sure I do not care to know. I found Jesus there and then, and that was enough for me. When you get your wounds healed, even under a minister, it seems as if it were not the minister who spoke; you never heard him speak like it in all you life before. You say, "I have often heard him with pleasure, but he has outdone himself; before, he spoke to my ear, but now, to my heart. We are some of us rejoicing in the liberty of Christ, and walking in all the joy of the Spirit; but it is to God we owe our deliverance, and we are grateful neither to man nor book, so much as to the great Physician who has taken pity on us. O that Jesus would walk through this Bethesda now. O, poor, sick dying man! does guilt weigh heavy on thy soul, turn not to any helper, save to him that sitteth on the throne.

Then he only can do it. I defy any of my brethren to bind up a broken heart. I have often labored to do it, but could never effect it. I have said a word to console the mourner, but I have felt that I have done but little, or have perhaps put the wrong mixture in the cup. He only can do it. Some of you seek mercy through baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or regular attendance at the house of prayer. Some of you, again, have certain forms and observances to which you attach saving value. As the Lord liveth, none of these things bind up the broken in heart apart from the Holy Spirit; they are empty wind and air; you may have them and be lost. You can have no peace and comfort unless you have immediate dealings with God, who alone, as the great Physician, healeth the broken in heart. Ah! there are some of you who go to your ministers with broken hearts, and say, "What shall I do?" I have heard of a preacher who told his anxious hearer, "You are getting melancholy; you had better go to such and such a place of amusement; you are getting too dreary and melancholy by half."



O, to think of a nurse in a hospital administering poison, when she ought to be giving the true medicine! If he deserves to be hung who mixes poison with his drugs, how much more guilty is that man who tells a soul to seek for happiness where there is none, who sends it to a carnal world for joy, when there is none to be found except in God.

Then again, God only may do it. Suppose we could heal your broken heart, it would be good for nothing. I do beseech the Lord that I may never get a broken heart healed, except it is by God. A truly-convinced sinner will always rather keep his heart broken than have it healed wrongly. I ask you, who are suffering, whether you would not rather keep your broken heart as it is, than allow a bad physician to cure it for you, and so deceive you, and send you to hell at last? I know your cry is, "Lord, let me know the worst of my case; use the lancet; do not be afraid of hurting me; let me feel it all; cut the proud-flesh away rather than let it remain." But there are not a few who get their wounds glossed over by some pretended good works or duties. O, my hearer, let no man deceive you! Be not content with a name to live while you are really dead. Bad money may pass on earth, but genuine gold alone will be received in heaven. Can you abide the fire?

In vain your presumption when God shall come to examine you; you will not pass muster unless you have had a real healing from his hand. It is easy enough to get religious notions and fancy yourself safe, but a real saving work is the work of God, and God alone. Seek not to the priest; he may console, but it is by deluding you. Seek not to your own self; for you may soothe yourself into the sleep of perdition. See that thine heart be washed in the blood of Jesus; be careful that the Holy Spirit has his temple in it; and may God, of his great and sovereign grace, look to thee that thou deceivest not thyself.

But next, God will do it. That is a sweet thought. "He healeth the broken in heart;" he WILL do it. Nobody else can; nobody else may; but he WILL. Is thy heart broken? He WILL heal it; he is sure to heal it; for it is written - and it can never be altered, for what was true three thousand years ago, is true now - "he healeth the broken in heart." Did Saul of Tarsus rejoice after three days of blindness? Yes, and you shall be delivered also. O, it is a theme for eternal gratitude, that the same God

who in his loftiness and omnipotence stooped down in olden times to soothe, cherish, relieve, and bless the mourner, is even now taking his journeys of mercy among the penitent sons of men. O, I beseech him to come where thou art sitting, and put his hand inside thy soul, and if he finds there a broken heart to bind it up. Poor sinner, breathe thy wish to him; let thy sigh come before him, for "he healeth the broken in heart." There thou liest wounded on the plain. "Is there no physician?" thou criest; "is there none?" Around thee lie thy fellow-sufferers, but they are helpless as thyself. Thy mournful cry cometh back without an answer, and space alone hears thy groan. Ah! the battle-field of sin has one kind visitor; it is not abandoned to the vultures of remorse and despair. I hear footsteps approaching; they are the gentle footsteps of Jehovah. In his hands there are no thunders, in his eyes no anger, on his lips no threatening. See how he bows himself over the mangled heart! Hear how he speaks! "Come, now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And if the patient dreads to look in the face of the mighty being who addresses him, the same loving mouth whispers, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my names sake." See how he washes every wound with sacred water from the side of Jesus; mark how he spreads the ointment of forgiving grace, and binds around each wound the fair white linen, which is the righteousness of saints. Doth the mourner faint under the operation? he puts a cordial to his lips, exclaiming, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Yes, it is true - most true - neither dream nor fiction, "HE HEALETH THE BROKEN IN HEART, AND BINDETH UP THEIR WOUNDS."

How condescending is the Lord of heaven, thus to visit poor forlorn man. The queen has kindly visited the hospitals of our soldiers to cheer, by her royal words, her loyal defenders, by this she has done herself honor, and her soldiers love her for it. But when the God of the whole earth, the infinite Creator, stoops to become a servant to his own creatures, can you conceive the majestic condescension which bows itself in mercy over the miserable heart, and with loving finger closes the gaping wounds of the spirit. Oh, sin-sick sinner! the King of heaven will not despise thee, but thou too shalt find him thy Comforter, who healeth all thy diseases. Mark,

moreover, how tenderly he does it. You remember that passage in the Psalms: "Loving kindness and tender mercies." God's mercies are "tender mercies;" when he undertakes to bind up the broken in heart, he always uses the softest liniment. He is not like your army surgeon, who hurries along and says "A leg off here, an arm off there;" but he comes gently and sympathizingly. He does not use roughness with us; but with downy fingers he putteth the wound together, and layeth the plaster on; yea, he doth it in such a soft and winning way, that we are full of wonder to think he could be so kind to such unworthy ones.

Then he does it securely, so that the wound can not open again. If he puts on his plaster, it is heaven's court-plaster, and it never fails. If he heals, he heals effectually. No man who is once saved of God shall ever be lost. If we receive mercy by faith, we shall never lose it. When God heals once, he heals forever. Although some who teach false doctrine do assert that children of God may be lost, they have no warrant in Scripture, nor in experience, for we know that he keepeth the saints. He who is once forgiven, can not be punished. He who is once regenerated, can not perish. He who is once healed, shall never find his soul sick unto death. Blessings on his name, some of us have felt his skill, and known his mighty power; and were our hearts broken now, we would not stop a moment, but go at once to his feet, and we would cry, "O thou that bindest the broken in heart, bind ours; thou that healest wounds, heal ours, we beseech thee."

And now, my hearers and readers, a parting word with you. Are you careless and ungodly? Permit your friend to speak with you. Is it true that after death there is a judgment? Do you believe that when you die, you will be called to stand before the bar of God? Do you know that there is a hell of eternal flame appointed for the wicked? Yes - you know and believe all this - and yet you are going down to hell thoughtless and unconcerned - you are living in constant and fearful jeopardy of your lives - without a friend on the other side the grave. Ah, how changed will your note be soon! You have turned away from rebuke, you have laughed at warning, but laughter will then give place to sighs, and your singing to yells of agony. Bethink thee, oh my brother man, ere thou dost again peril thy life. What wilt thou do if thy soul is required of thee? Canst thou

endure the terrors of the Almighty? Canst thou dwell in everlasting burnings? Were thy bones of iron, and thy ribs of brass, the sight of the coming judgment would make thee tremble; forbear then to mock at religion, cease to blaspheme you Maker, for remember, you will soon meet him face to face, and how will you then account for your insults heaped upon his patient person? May the Lord yet humble thee before him.

But I am seeking the distressed one, and I am impatient to be the means of his comfort. It may be my words are now sounding in the ear of my weary wounded fellow-countrymen. You have been long time tossing on the bed of languishing, and the time for thought had been blessed to your soul by God. You are now feeling the guilt of your life, and are lamenting the sins of your conduct. You fear there is no hope of pardon, no prospect of forgiveness, and you tremble lest death should lead your guilty soul unforgiven before its Maker. Hear, then, the word of God. Thy pains for sins are God's work in thy soul. He woundeth thee that thou mayest seek him. He would not have showed thee thy sin if he did not intend to pardon. Thou art now a sinner, and Jesus came to save sinners, therefore he came to save thee; yea, he is saving thee now. These strivings of soul are the work of his mercy; there is love in every blow, and grace in every stripe. Believe, O troubled one, that he is able to save thee unto the uttermost, and thou shalt not believe in vain. Now, in the silence of your agony, look unto him who by his stripes healeth thee. Jesus Christ has suffered the penalty of thy sins, and has endured the wrath of God on thy behalf. See you, yonder crucified Man on Calvary, and mark thee that those drops of blood are falling for thee, those nailed hands are pierced for thee, and that opened side contains a heart within it, full of love to thee.

"None but Jesus! none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good!"

It is simple reliance on him which saves. The negro said, "Massa, I fall flat on de promise;" so if you fall flat on the promise of Jesus, you shall not find him fail you; he will bind up your heart, and make an end to the days of your mourning. We shall meet in heaven one day, to sing hallelujah to the condescending Lord; till then, may the God of all grace be our helper.

Amen.

"The mighty God will not despise  
The contrite heart for sacrifice;  
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,  
Rises accepted to the throne.

He meets, with tokens of his grace,  
The trembling lip, the blushing face;  
His bowels yearn when sinners pray;  
And mercy bears their sins away.

When filled with grief, o'erwhelmed with shame;  
He, pitying, heals their broken frame;  
He hears their sad complaints, and spies  
His image in their weeping eyes."

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## **Hearken And Look; Or, Encouragement For Believers**

Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. - Isaiah 51:2-3

The second verse contains my actual text. It is the argument by which faith is led to look for the blessings promised in the third verse.

It is habitual with some persons to spy out the dark side of every question or fact: they fix their eyes upon the "waste places," and they study them till they know every ruin, and are familiar with the dragons and the owls. They sigh most dolorously that the former times were better than these, and that we have fallen upon most degenerate days. They speak of "shooting Niagara," and of all sorts of frightful things. I am afraid that a measure of this tendency to write bitter things dwells in almost all of us at this present season, for certain discouraging facts which cannot be ignored are pressing heavily upon men's spirits. The habit of looking continually towards the wildernesses is injurious because it greatly discourages; and anything that discourages an earnest worker is a serious leakage for his strength. Perhaps a worse result than honest discouragement comes of depressing views, for they often afford an apology for indifference and inaction. The smallest peg suffices to hang an excuse upon when we are anxious to escape from the stern service of faith. "I pray thee have me excused," is a request which was supported in the parable by the flimsiest of pretences, and discouragement makes one of the same sort. The sluggard's argument is on this wise,—"I will not attempt the work, for it is far too heavy for my poor strength. I fear the times are ill adapted to any special effort; indeed, I am not quite certain that success will ever attend the general work." It is therefore a dreadful

thing when the Christian church begins to be discouraged, and means must be used to stay the evil. Such means we would use this day. Lo, we lift the standard of the divine promise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," sounds out like a silver trumpet in the front of the host. Be encouraged, O ye of the faint heart; there are no more difficulties now than there were of old. The cause is no more in jeopardy than it was a thousand years ago. The result, the end, the consummation of all things is absolutely certain: it is in his hand who cannot fail, therefore be of good courage, and in waiting upon the Lord renew your strength.

Remember, ye that are cast down, that there are other voices besides those of the bittern and owl from the "waste places." My text has near to it twice, nay, three times, "HEARKEN TO ME." You have listened long enough to dreary suggestions from within, to gloomy prophecies from desponding friends, to the taunts of foes, and to the horrible whisperings of Satan: now hearken to him who promises to make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord.

O ye whose eyes are quick to discover evil, there are other sights in the world besides waste places and deserts, and hence my text hath near to it twice over the exhortation, "LOOK"—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn"; "Look unto Abraham your father." Why should your eyes for ever ache over desolations? Probably you have seen as much in the wilderness as you are ever likely to see there. It does not take long to discover all the treasures and comforts of the burning sand; you have probably discovered them all by now. As for the discomforts and wants of the desert, you are perhaps as well acquainted with them as you need to be. Gaze no longer at the thirsty land and the burning sky; turn your eye where the finger of the Lord points by his word. If we enquire what it is that the Lord would have us observe, he answers, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you"; for there we may find comfort. O for the presence of the Holy Spirit, that the word may be full of the dew of heaven to refresh our souls.

I. We shall first look towards Abraham that we may see in him THE ORIGINAL OF GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE, the foundation stone, as it were, of the dispensation by which God blessed the former ages. In Judah

was God known, his name was great in Israel: let us look to the rock whence Israel and Judah were hewn.

We observe, first, that the founder of God's first people was called out of a heathen family. "Your fathers," says Joshua, "dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and they served other gods." Abraham, the founder of the great system in which God was pleased to reveal himself for so long a time, and to whose seed the oracles of God were committed, was a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, the city of the moon-god. We cannot tell to what extent he was actually engrossed in the superstition of his fathers, but it is certain that the family was years afterwards tainted with idolatry; for in Jacob's day the teraph was still venerated, and Rachel stole her father's images. Abraham, therefore, was called out from the place of his birth, and from the household to which he belonged, that in a separated condition, as a worshipper of the one God, he might keep the truth alive in the world. Recollect, then, that the first man from whom sprang that wondrous nation which God hath not even yet cast away was originally himself an idolater, and had to be called out of his sinful state by effectual grace. Why, then, might not the Lord, if the cause of truth were this day reduced to its utmost extremity, again raise up a church out of one man? If an almost universal apostasy should hide the divine light, could he not kindle a torch among the heathen, and by its light illuminate the earth again? He could call out another Abraham, and bless him and increase him, and achieve the whole of his eternal purposes if all of us should sleep in the dust, and the visibly organised church of to-day should pass away as the snow of winter at the advent of spring. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is he not able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham? As to anything like discouragement, it ought to vanish at the thought that not only out of your Sunday-schools, your colleges, and your pulpits can God raise up leaders for his church, but he can find them in the very centre of heathenism. Where Satan's seat is, even there can the Lord raise up advocates for his cause. The thick darkness of superstition shall not prevent the chosen one from seeing the light, neither shall the bondage of sin hold back the captive from finding freedom and proclaiming it to others.

"Ah," you say, "but men are not called now, as Abraham was, by



miraculous calls from heaven." I reply,—The statement may be true; but God's visible means of calling men are now so many that there can seldom be need of miracle. The Lord can by his Spirit make one of the millions of Bibles scattered over the world to be as powerful a means of call as though he had sent an angel from heaven; yea, a solitary leaf of a printed tract, if wafted by the wind, or carried by the wave, may be borne where God shall bless it to the calling forth of a champion ordained of old to do great exploits. Where ordinary means are so plentiful wisdom resorts not to signs and wonders. Miracles were of admirable use while they were necessary; but now that they are no longer required the prudence of God forbids an extravagant display of the supernatural. Now that the word of God is scattered "thick as leaves in Valambrosa" everywhere by willing and ready hands, what need can there be of voices of the day or visions of the night? The same Spirit who called Abraham by a supernatural voice can call others by the word of truth. Instead of regarding it as a prodigy that a man should be unexpectedly called out from among the heathen I look for it, and shall not be surprised to hear that in the remoter provinces of China, or in the centre of Thibet, or in the recesses of Africa men have been raised up to found churches for our Lord Jesus. God can through the printed page or by hints and rumours passed from hand to hand convey enough instruction to call out more Abrahams and bless them, and increase his kingdom by them. "Omnipotence hath servants everywhere." Let us never dream that the God of Abraham is short of means for calling out chosen men to build up his church. Surely Christian people should never doubt the power of God to raise up lights in dark places when we remember that the greatest preacher of the gospel, namely, the apostle Paul, was drafted into the army of Christ from the ranks of his direst foes. The proud Pharisee, a fanatic of the fanatics, embittered against Christ, and persecuting his people, became the earnest advocate of Christ Jesus. Aforetime his breath was threatening and slaughter, yet on the road to Damascus he was conquered and transformed. As a lion roareth over his prey, so did Paul rejoice that the saints in Damascus were now in his power; but the Lord struck him down, and turned the lion to a lamb, and henceforth where sin abounded grace did much more abound. First in the ranks of Christian heroes stands the man who called himself the chief of sinners because he persecuted the church of God. My brethren, as Luther came from among

the monks, so out of Rome, yea, from the Vatican itself, can God, if he wills, call another Luther. The darkness of the times cannot forbid it, for God is Light. The weakness of the church cannot hinder it, for all power belongeth unto God. There may not be among us to-day one whom God will so greatly honour as to make him a spiritual father of nations; but there may be such a one in the courts of Whitechapel or in the rookeries of St. Giles. The Christ, who was himself called the Galilean, despises no place or people. Our king is not particular as to the mine from which he digs his gold. The great seeker of precious souls full often finds his purest pearls in the deepest and the blackest waters. Take this, then, for encouragement, ye who tremble for the ark of God: he can build up a spiritual house for himself out of dark quarries, and find cedars for his temple in forests untraversed by the feet of missionaries.

"Ah," say you, "but Abraham was naturally a man of noble mould. Where do you find such a princely spirit as his?" I answer, Who made him? He that made him can make another like him. There is a grace of God which goes before what we are accustomed to call saving grace: I mean a grace of God which, in the creating of the nature, makes it a fit instrument for the grace which is after to be bestowed. By such sovereign favour one man is from his birth endowed with a superior mind and character, being adorned, even as a natural man, with much that is excellent in its own order. How often do you see among certain men of the world a generosity, honesty, open-heartedness, and nobility of disposition which are not grace, but which mark men out as fit to be leaders in all that is good when grace calls them into the divine service? The Lord can just as soon make a man after the type of Abraham as after any other type; and doubtless he has such in store even now, to whom his call will yet come. We may expect to see men of strong convictions converted into believers who "stagger not at the promise through unbelief." From among priests and pagans we may hope that the Lord will raise up pillars for his church. Is not this hope encouraged in your breasts as you "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you"?

Look again and observe that Abraham was but one man. Do not be startled at the sound which seems to have such terrors for certain brethren. I have heard the cant of those who object to a "one-man

ministry," a ministry to which all the while they usually submit in their own meetings; but to my ear there is music, and not terror, in the term "a one-man ministry." I bless God that all my hope of salvation hangs upon the divine ministry of the One Man. Is not Christ, as the servant of God, the very pattern of all ministries which are of God? Working out the Father's eternal purpose by a life which was necessarily unique in many points, he trod the wine-press alone; in this, however, he causes many of his people to have fellowship with him, even as in the case of Paul, who says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." I am bold also to say that the Lord has as a rule wrought more nobly by one man than by bands and corporations of men. He in whose seed all nations are blessed was but one. "I called him," saith he, "alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Nor is this a solitary instance. When the earth was utterly corrupt God conserved the race by a solitary preacher of righteousness, who prepared an ark for the saving of his house. See how one Joseph saved whole nations from famine, and one Moses brought out a race from bondage. Who was there to keep Israel right when Moses fell on sleep but the one man Joshua? What were the prosperous times in the era of the Judges but days when one man was to the front as a leader? When all the rest hid away in dens and caves, some Barak or Gideon, or Jephthah, or Samson came boldly forward and delivered Israel. One man, standing like a figure at the head of many ciphers, soon headed victorious thousands, through faith in God. What was there but one man in the days of David? The Philistines had still triumphed over the land if the one lad had not brought back Goliath's head, and if the one man had not again and again smitten the uncircumcised in the name of the Lord. Beloved, if we should ever be reduced, as we shall not be, to one man, yet by one man will God preserve his church, and work out his great purposes. I hope we shall never go into our chamber, and shut to the door, and cry with Elias, "I only am left, and they seek my life!" No, my brother, there are more faithful men in this world than you. The Lord has yet reserved to himself his thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal. We are this day, not one man, but many, and we all desire to live for the glory of God, and for the spread of his gospel; but if our hosts were so diminished that we could be numbered by a little child upon his fingers, still there would be no excuse for dismay, for the God of Abraham still liveth, even he who created a people to his praise by one man, of whom he says, "I

called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him."

Think, my brethren, of the power for good or evil which may be enshrined in a single human life. What mischievous results may come of one man! One sinner destroyeth much good, and if there were but one person left who had knowledge of the ways of vice and the words of blasphemy that one man would suffice to infect the race with his abominations. If evil be so mighty, is not good with God in it quite as powerful? We may rightly measure quantities in reference to many things, but with others it is absurd. It would be ridiculous to measure the power of fire by the quantity which burns on our hearth. Give us fit materials and a single match, and you shall see what fire can do. If ordinary fire, that may so readily be extinguished, is thus powerful, who shall venture to measure the power of the fire from heaven, which neither men nor devils can quench, the fire which fell at Pentecost, and burns among us still. Ye carry fire, ye servants of God; ye work with a heaven-sent force of boundless energy. Why, therefore, should you despair? If all the lights in the world were put out except a solitary lamp, there is enough fire in one wick to kindle all the lamps in the universe. What inch of ground remains for despair to stand upon?

Furthermore, we are bound to notice that this one man was a lone man. He had not only to do the work of God, but he had nobody to help him. "I called him alone." True, he was attended by Lot—a poor miserable lot he was, costing his noble uncle more trouble than he ever brought him profit. How little did he maintain or adorn the righteousness which, nevertheless, had saved him; true type of many a feeble professor in these days. Abraham was not backed by any society when he crossed the Euphrates and afterwards traversed the desert to sojourn in Canaan as a pilgrim and a stranger. If ever man was fairly cut adrift and cast upon the Lord it was the great father of the faithful. He certainly found no patronage in his onward course save the all-sufficient patronage of the Lord his God. When he came near to kings it was a source of trouble to him; it led to contention, and once to war; or else he felt bound to refuse their offers of gifts, and say as he did to the king of Sodom, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." "That same

boastful sentence might be uttered by the State concerning some churches that I know of, but not concerning us: may God preserve us, my brethren, from every desire to come under obligations to earthly sovereignties, lest, becoming indebted to them, we should be bound to render suit and service at their bidding, such service being already due to "another king, one Jesus."

Abraham had no prestige of parentage, rank, or title. If you had looked at the stately patriarch when he trod the plains of Mamre you would have seen about him a presence, a calm dignity, a truly regal manner; but that came to him solely through his faith in God and his communion with heaven. Abraham was distinguished from other men only by the grace of God. What grander difference can there be than that which is established by the existence of faith in the heart? Thus Abraham was in the fullest sense a lone man, unsupported by any of those outward distinctions which enable some men to do more than others.

The fulfilment of his calling rested on his loneliness; for he must get away from his kindred, and wander up and down with his flocks, even as the church of God now does, dwelling in a strange land, and feeding her flock apart. When he was alone God blessed Abraham,—"I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." The blessing did not come to him in Charran while he still had some connection with the old stock; he was not yet become thoroughly nonconformist, but held in some small degree to the old house at home, and till the last link was snapped the blessing could not come. And now, my brother, if in the town or district where you live you seem to lose all your helpers; if they die one by one, and it seems as if nobody would be left to you; if even the prayer-meeting fails for want of earnest, pleading men, still persevere, for it is the lone man that God will bless. "He setteth the solitary in families." In your present forlorn condition you are learning sympathy with that lone man in Gethsemane, with that lone man upon the cross, who there vanquished all your foes. Remember that your enemies are thus beaten before you encounter them, and therefore you may readily overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Oh, be not afraid. Thus saith the Lord—"I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Grasp that, ye that dwell remote from human sympathy. Oh that our missionaries abroad may feel the rich comfort of

this fact; for they full often, like lone sentinels, keep watch with eyes that long to see a friend. They are separated from intercourse with brethren, they miss the friendships which tend to comfort and confirm, but it is God that calls them alone, and he will bless them and increase them. The purer churches of to-day, standing alone as they do, because they dare not make unholy alliances with any,—standing alone, I say, in simple trust in the living Lord—ought not to be afraid with any amazement, but attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.

Once more, I cannot help asking your attention to the fact that Abraham was not only a man called from heathendom, one man, and a lone man; but he was a man who had to be stripped yet further. The blessing was—"Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee," but the manifest fulfilment of it was not by-and-by. As we have already seen, he must come away from his kindred and his father's house, and he must dwell in Palestine till the promised seed was born. But how long he waited for the expected heir! Twenty, yes, almost thirty years rolled away, and the man Abraham was ninety years old and nine. He is very old; and yet he is to be blessed with a son. He must number the full tale of a hundred years before Isaac can be born. This promised child was to be according to promise, and therefore it could not be born till nature was recognised as spent. As for Sarah—it was not possible that she should become a mother at her advanced age, and yet it must be so, for God had said it.

The believing pair had waited on till in an evil hour Sarah suggested a desperate attempt to fulfil the promise, in which she still firmly believed. That artifice broke down; it was a part of the divine plan that it should do so. The covenant promise was not to the seed after the flesh. When that scheme had been set aside, the Lord in his own time fulfilled his word.

Joy! joy! in the house of Abraham and Sarah. What a feast there was that Isaac was born, filling the house with laughter. But he must die! "Get thee up," said God, "and take thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." The grand old man will do it. He will get up early in the morning, and the father and the son will journey together silently; for the

aged heart is too full to talk. He believes God, and is sure that even if he should actually slay his son at God's command the promise would somehow be kept. Abraham could not tell how, but it was no business of his to tell how; he was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform. God had said to him "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead, or in some other way achieve the promise. Thus he grasped the resurrection. He laid hold on a truth which was deeper than he knew of: by his faith he realised resurrection for Isaac though as yet the Lord Jesus had not shown the way by his own rising from the dead. What a stripping Abraham had endured! Who can describe what would have been the wretchedness of that aged parent if it had not been for his faith! Men intensely love the children of their old age. See how a grandchild is fondled by his grandsire, and thus must Isaac have been loved of Abraham and yet he must die by his father's own hand. Oh, most miserable among the miserable must he have been who stood there on Mount Moriah, called to such a duty, his heart breaking while his soul obeyed. Such, doubtless, would have been the case had not faith been his stay. Look, then, to Abraham your father, and say is he not the greatest of men, the grandest human representative of the great Father God himself, who in the fullness of time spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all? Likeliest to God among mortal men art thou Abraham, and therefore well mightest thou be his friend! In thy trial brought to such a stripping we may yet envy thee as we hear the Lord saying, "Now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Now, if in all these trials Abraham was yet blessed, and God's purposes were accomplished in him, can we not believe that the same God can work by us also, despite our downcastings and humiliations? When we are utterly broken and crushed may not the Lord's strength be made perfect in our weakness? Let us not question the promise because of our personal deadness and inability, but believe God without wavering, for he hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Now, brothers and sisters, here is the sum and substance of this first head of my discourse: in looking to the rock whence we are hewn, we have to see the Lord working the greatest results from apparently inadequate causes. This teaches us to cease from calculating means, possibilities, and

probabilities, for we have to deal with God, with whom all things are possible. Almighty God can assuredly do whatever he says he will do. Who is to hinder him? Let the voice ring out over all the earth, and let it be heard in hell itself—who shall stay the arm of God when he wills to achieve a thing? He fears no opposition, and he needs no help. Of what did he make the world? With whom took he counsel? Who instructed him? And, if all the things that are have been spoken into existence by God alone, by his mere word, can he not yet build up his church, even if on her earthly side there should seem to be no material with which to raise her walls? Consider creation and remark what God hath wrought. See how all the millions of mankind have sprung from a single pair, because God blessed them in the beginning. But I must not multiply illustrations from nature or from history, for they rise spontaneously before your own minds. Refresh your faith by a reference to our own island history. If you would firmly believe in the conversion of the heathen remember what your fathers were when bloody rites were performed in the oak woods or amid the huge monoliths of Stonehenge. The Druidic system was as cruel and degrading as any that now curses a savage people; but the heralds of Jesus conquered. Where are the gods of the Druids now? Who reverences the golden sickle and the sacred oak? The thing is gone, as though it never had been. Why, then, should not other evil idolatries pass away? Look again at the triumph of Protestantism in this country. What was it at first? A thing utterly despised and hunted down. The stakes of Smithfield cannot be forgotten by those who dwell so near the spot. Yet, despite all, the gospel of God triumphed, and rood, and pyx, and image were broken in contempt. Let the days of the Puritans, the palmy days when God was known in England, tell how thoroughly Bible truth won the victory. Why not again? Why not everywhere? If you desire another illustration, look at our own body of Christians? History has hitherto been written by our enemies, who never would have kept a single fact about us upon the record if they could have helped it, and yet it leaks out every now and then that certain poor people called Anabaptists were brought up for condemnation. From the days of Henry II. to those of Elizabeth we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated of all men for the truth's sake which was in them. We read of poor men and women, with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold, and anon of others who



were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism. Long before your Protestants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." No sooner did the visible church begin to depart from the gospel than these men arose to keep fast by the good old way. The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men's ears with holy Scripture, and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor, persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet here we are, blessed and multiplied; and Newington sees other scenes from Sabbath to Sabbath. As I think of your numbers and efforts, I can only say in wonder—What a growth! As I think of the multitudes of our brethren in America, I may well say, What hath God wrought? Our history forbids discouragement. Never cause more hopeless once; none more hopeful to-day! It matters little what may yet happen, the cause is safe. What if all our Baptist organisations expire! What if but one man should be left faithful to the old banner, our Captain would yet triumph gloriously, for he saveth not by many nor by few. Though all else faileth, the Lord shall reign for ever and ever. This is the lesson which, I pray, we may all of us learn, and then, by faith, go forth to act upon it.

II. With great brevity, I shall dwell for a moment upon the second point, namely—THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS CHOSEN MAN. The text says, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you," and it must mean,—consider him and see what he was, that you may learn from him. You perceive at once that his grand characteristic was his faith. In this faith many other most brilliant qualities are comprehended, but his faith lay at the bottom of all. Here is his epitaph:—"Abraham believed God." That was a mainspring of all his acts, the glory of his life, "Abraham believed God." The men that God will work by, whatever else they have not, must have faith in God. Though it is to be desired that the believer should have every mental and moral qualification, yet it is astounding how, if there be real faith, a multitude of imperfections are swallowed up, and the man is still a power. I would mention Samson as an extreme case. He was the feeblest of men, and the

least fitted to be a judge in Israel; but oh, what faith! And what wonders it achieved! A thousand men! He is like a child in his belief that God is with him. He never calculates at all; it is all the same to him whether there are a thousand or one. He flings himself upon the host, and has slain them before we can realise the deadly odds. A sword; no, he has no sword: an old jawbone of an ass is quite enough for an arm which God strengthens. See how he smites them, hip and thigh, till they lie in heaps before him. I do not suppose that it would have signified to Samson if there had been a million Philistines: with a thousand to one, a man is so thoroughly outnumbered that numbers cease to count. Here was an impossibility before him, and what could be worse. Brethren, when you do get off your feet, and must swim, you may as well have fifty fathoms of water beneath you as not, for you can but drown. In the case of faith, drowning is out of the question, and swimming is good in deep water, for there is no fear of striking against a rock. Faith glories in difficulties and infirmities, because the power of God doth rest upon her. If the work is barely possible to her strength faith hardly likes it; but she gets into her sphere when in trials far beyond human strength she laughs at impossibility, and cries, "It shall be done."

Abraham's faith was such that it led him to obedience. He was called to go out, and he went, not knowing whither he went. His faith through grace led him to perseverance; for once in God's way he did not leave it, but still abode a sojourner with God. His faith led him to expectancy; he looked for the promised seed, and not only for an Isaac but for the Messiah. So clear was the vision of his expectancy that before his eyes Christ was set forth, visibly. Did not the Saviour, who knew all things, say, "Abraham saw my day; he saw it, and was glad"?

The like faith also dwelt in the breast of Sarah; and, as we are told in the text to look to Sarah as well as Abraham, let us not fail to do so. The faith of Sarah was not little when she left home with her husband; forsaking her kith and kin from love to God, and to him whom she called "lord." She acted as if she had said to the great patriarch, "Where thou goest I will go; where thou dwellest I will dwell, for thy God is my God." Nor did the trial of her faith end with the moving, she had to take up with tent-life and all its inconveniences. It is the woman that knows the discomfort of

domestic life under such circumstances. We never hear that she complained for a moment, though the cold of winter and the heat of summer are neither of them warded off by a tent. How readily she entertained her husband's guests. Though they might drop in at most unseasonable hours, or call her to bake bread in the heat of the day, she was glad to welcome strangers, for like her husband she was given to hospitality. I saw you smile, dear friends, when I mentioned domestic matters; but to me it is the solemnity of faith that men and women can not only pray and sing, but can put up with household discomforts out of obedience to God. Certain people look upon faith as a fine, airy, sentimental thing with which to roam among the stars, anticipate millenniums, and enjoy yourself in lofty contemplation. I believe far more in a faith which, whether it eats or drinks, does all to the glory of God; faith which like Sarah dwells in the tent and works there; faith which is cheerful over a scanty meal and drives away the fear of want; faith which can come down in life from the mansion to the cottage, if providence so decrees. From Abraham's comfortable home at Ur to his gipsy wanderings in Palestine the change must have been great, but Abraham may not have felt it one half as much as Sarah, for men can rough it and live out of doors, but the housewife knows all about it, and great was her Faith that she never raised a question about the propriety of her husband's course of life: and though she laughed when she was told that she should bear a son, yet remember that in the eleventh of Hebrews it is written—"Through faith also Sarah herself received strength." She was the mother of Isaac, not in the power of the flesh, but through the energy of faith, therefore look at her as the text bids you.

Christian men and Christian women, mark well this fact—that the characteristic of the person whom God will bless is that he believes and acts upon his belief. Without faith it is impossible to please God; but the man of faith is God's man. And why is this? I answer, because faith is the only faculty of our spirit which can grasp God's ideal. The greatest man, without faith, cannot tread in the divine footsteps. The ideas of God are as high above us as the heavens are above the earth: and therefore it is not by any fancied vastness of our feeble minds that we can ever rise into fellowship with God. Faith in the sight of God's thought whispers to herself—"I cannot understand this great thing, nor need I wish to do so.

What is my understanding? Perhaps I trust to it too much already. I am called to do what God bids me, without knowing why, and I am glad it is so, for now I can worship him by bowing before his sovereign will." There is a capacity about faith for grasping divine promises and purposes, a width, a breadth, a height, a depth, which can hold the infinite truth as no other power can do. Love alone can rival it, for it embraces the infinite God himself. With the far-reaching plans and promises of God faith alone is fit to deal; carnal reason is altogether out of the lists.

Faith, too, has a great power of reception, and therein lies much of her adaptation to the divine purpose. Self-confidence, courage, resolution, cool reasoning, whatever else they are good at, are bad at humbly receiving. Those vessels which are full already are of no use as receivers; but faith presents her emptiness to God, and opens her mouth that God may fill it. Mercy needs not a jewel, but a casket into which to put her gems, and faith is exactly what she wants.

Then, again, faith always uses the strength that God gives her. Pride would vapour with it, and doubt would evaporate it; but faith is practical, and economically uses the talent entrusted to her. Faith has already spent all her own strength, and she so yearns to achieve her purposes that she uses all the power that God will lend her. Faith eats her manna and leaves not a morsel for worms to breed in.

Faith, too, can wait the Lord's time and place. When faith is weak men are in a dreadful hurry, but strong faith does not judge the Lord to be slack concerning his promise. As God achieves his purpose with infinite leisure, he loves a faith that is patient and looks not for its reward this day or the next. "He that believeth shall not make haste": that is to say, he shall not be ashamed or confounded by present trials so as to rush upon unbelieving actions. Faith leaves times and seasons with God to whom they belong.

God loveth faith and blesseth it too, because it giveth him all the glory. The true believer will not allow a trace of self-glory to linger on his hands. "Where is boasting then?" was a question once asked in the house of faith, and the searchers examined every nook and corner in every

chamber to find it, but they found it not. Then they said to faith, "Where is boasting?" She answered, "I shut him out." "It is excluded," shut out, and the door fastened in its face. You do not believe God if you boast of what you are doing: least of all do you believe if you pride yourself in your faith, for faith is not mistrustful of her God but of herself. Faith looks to God to keep her alive as well as to fulfil the promise that he has made to her. This then is the kind of faith which was characteristic of Abraham, and the question is, have we got it? Have we so much of it that God can largely bless us? The comfort is that, if we have it not, the author of faith can give it to us, and if we have it in scant measure he can increase our faith.

Is not this a solid reason why you and I should take heart? You who do not believe that missions will succeed; you who readily become discouraged and discourage others; I beg you go home and seek more faith. We cannot go down to the battle with such soldiers as you; you do but encumber the host. The men that lapped are the only ones that Gideon will take to war. Send the fearful ones to the rear and let them take care of the baggage, so that when the battle is won they may have a share of the spoil, according to David's law. For actual service and warfare we must have men of faith. Cromwell found that when his men came dressed in all sorts of suits and colours they were apt to injure one another in the melee, and so he put them all in uniform. The uniform of the Prince Immanuel is faith: no man may call himself a soldier of the cross who hath it not. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith. Brother ministers, let us take heed lest we be found qualified for our ministry in all respects except this one. You have learning, eloquence, industry, honesty, but do you so believe in God as to expect his word to act divinely on men's hearts. Do you preach believingly? Do you pray believingly? I leave the question with you.

III. I have shown you, dear friends, that God effected his purpose, and raised up a chosen nation out of one man, whose chief characteristic was his faith: and now I want you to notice OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THAT ONE MAN. I dwelt upon that while reading the chapter (Romans 4.) There is a relation between us and Abraham even as Paul assures us in the epistle to the Galatians, "Know ye therefore that they which are of

faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Something, surely, is expected of the children of such a man as Abraham. O, for shame, thou unbelieving one! Is Abraham thy father? Art thou one of the faithful seed? Great mountains are often succeeded by low valleys. Perhaps that is the case with you; but it should not be so. The natural seed were cut off because they had no faith, let not those who are grafted in, think to do without it. It is by faith that you are a son at all. You disprove your pedigree if you tolerate unbelief. Oh! let nobody find fault with Abraham through you, and surely they may do so if they find you staggering. That staggering is a shocking business: staggering at God's promises is terrible. Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief. May we never dishonour the right noble grace of faith, but so believe that all men may know Abraham's God to be our God. O for abounding spiritual life, for the God of Abraham is not the God of the dead but of the living; and we can only live unto God by faith.

Brethren, because we are the seed of Abraham, the apostle declares that the blessing of Abraham has come upon us also. I pray that all the friends and labourers in our Missionary Society may grasp the blessing of Abraham. What is it? It is a covenant favour that belongs to all who are the servants of God by faith. Here is the substance of it: "Surely blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee." That is the grand old covenant promise and it belongs to the church. Note that the blessing is attended with multiplying. Some friends are afraid of statistics which represent the increase of the churches; I am far more afraid of those statistics which will show that we do not increase as we could wish. The blessing of the church is the increase of the church. The two go together: "Blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee." How much are Christians to be multiplied in the world? At the present moment we do not seem to be increasing as fast as the population. I am afraid that the number of converted persons relatively to the population is scarcely as great as it was thirty years ago; we long to be multiplied at a very different rate from this—and we shall be if we have faith in our God. Hear ye the covenant word: "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are lines from the covenant, which is sure to all the seed

and can never be broken. We have been called and blessed, and it is of necessity that we increase also. We are bound to increase; we are destined to overrun the nations; the Hittites, the Hivites, the Amorites, of Popery, Mahometanism, and Idolatry are in the land, but their false systems are utterly to perish. Jesus at the head of his people shall drive them out—I mean not the men, but their evil beliefs. They may take notice to quit, for he is coming before whom all men must bow. O that ere he himself shall appear his spiritual presence in the midst of his church might suffice for victory, that all mankind might call him blessed. We are bound to increase, till the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for us, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Upon the church in her vigour shall yet descend the blessings of the tribes of Joseph. "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." The success of truth is the battle of the Lord, and the increase of his church is according to his own promise, therefore in quietness we may possess our souls.

IV. Last of all consider for a minute OUR POSITION BEFORE ABRAHAM'S GOD. Do not let anything that I have said about Abraham for a moment take your mind off from the Lord himself, because the pith of it all lies here,—"I called him alone." Look to Abraham, but only as to the rock from which the Lord quarried his people:" your main thought must be Jehovah himself. "I, I called him alone, and blessed him." "I the Lord do all these things." Look unto the everlasting God who doeth great wonders, and stay yourselves upon him.

Let us joyfully recollect that the Lord our God has not changed, nay, not in one jot or tittle. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is so far a change in the revelation of him, that it is brighter now in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, than it could have been through seer and vision; but that should be a motive for increased faith. "His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear." This God of Abraham is still almighty, and still in the midst of the covenanted ones. If the ages that have passed over his awful brow could wrinkle it and his strength could decay, then might we also decline in our confidence; but it is not so. He fainteth not, neither is

weariness. Our behaviour towards him, therefore, should resemble that of Abraham; and especially, representing, as we do many of us, the churches of Jesus Christ as ministers or deacons, we must never dishonour the Lord by unbelief. Doubt everything but God. Let God be true and every man a liar. This the everlasting decree which none can change,—Christ must reign; he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; the kings of the earth must bow before him. Do not doubt it, for God hath sworn by his own life that all flesh shall see his glory. Here is the grand argument for strong faith.

Notice next that the covenant of God has not changed. God hath not recalled his words, nor taken a pen and struck out his promises from the record. Read the covenant words, and write them upon the doorposts of your mission-house, "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This is the covenant with the one spiritual seed of Abraham, that is the marrow of it, and it has never been revoked. As I have said before, we read it now in clearer light, and understand better the fullness of its provisions, but the covenant is not disannulled. Let us go to God with any one promise of it, and we can say to him, "This is thy promise in Christ Jesus; and thou hast not spoken in secret in a dark place and withdrawn thy word and said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." Such pleading will prevail. He will never run back from his word. Has he said, and will he not do it? Therefore let us cry, "Remember thy word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

But there is this also to be added, that this work which we desire the Lord to do is in some respects even less than that which he has done with Abraham. What ask we? Not that he should begin with one man to build up a nation, or create a church? No, but that Zion being builded, he should comfort her, and cause her waste places to rejoice. The field is the world, and the seed is ready for the sowing. The gospel is in the hands of those who have the best means of spreading it. Everything is ready for its ultimate triumph. The train is laid; we only need the heavenly fire to touch it, and the deed is accomplished. O that the work of the Lord may be speedily done; that the Lord may carry on his work of righteousness



and make a short work in the earth. I say that if God has done this greater thing, if he has excavated a nation from the quarry of Abraham, we may well expect the self-same God to keep his covenant, to multiply his church, and build her up after the similitude of a palace. The time to favour Zion, even the set time, has come. Beside that; we have been already visited by God as Abraham had not been when first he was called. Abraham had not known the Lord till he called him, but our Sion is familiar with God, for she is the city of the great king. He dwelleth in our midst by his Holy Spirit, and holy hymn and prayer rise every day from the multitudes that fear him. The Lord hath redeemed, and justified, and saved his people, and surely we may look to him to refresh and revive his heritage.

What marvellous things hath God done on the face of the earth since Abraham's days!—the stupendous marvel of incarnation, the height and depth of which none of us can measure; the wondrous work of redemption, the highest, grandest, divinest achievement of the Deity—all this is done; what may we not expect after this? You know more of God than Abraham could know; I beseech you then, trust him, at least up to the level of the patriarch. How shall we forge an excuse if we do not? What can excuse us if we distrust so glorious a God.

Brethren, it remains for me only to add this practical word. Let us throw ourselves more and more upon our God. If you have any work appointed you of the Lord, and it is within the compass of your strength, shame upon you if you do not perform it at once; but if it be beyond you, herein will God be glorified if you do it by his power. If there remaineth no might, wit, or wisdom in you, if you are deeply conscious of your weakness you are by this experience made the more fit to be used of the Lord, for when we are weak then are we strong. If you have confidence in God all things are possible to him that believeth. Oh, when will the church cast herself upon her God as men throw themselves into the stream when they mean to swim? They seek no longer for foothold, their foot leaves the spot whereon it rested, and they throw themselves trustfully upon the wave. The everlasting ocean of love and power is ready to upbear us: we shall swim gallantly to shore if we will but trust this blessed sea of love.

Let us begin to believe God and then let us act in daily life as if we believed him. The just shall live by faith. Some people have a faith which is for show, a Sunday faith, faith that cannot bear the wear and tear of every day life; varnished and gilded, but with no pure metal in it. The faith of Abraham could lead strings of camels and flocks of sheep away from Haran to Canaan. His was the faith which could drive the tent-pin into a foreign soil, or roll up the canvas and seek another unknown halting place. The faith of Abraham is a faith that saith to wayfaring men, "Turn in, and I will get you a little water and wash your feet." It is a practical, active, living, week-day, everyday faith. I will speak very broadly and plainly, and say we need a bread-and-cheese faith, that is to say, a faith which believes that God who feeds the ravens will send us our daily bread; a faith which believes that the heavenly Father who clothes the lilies will much more clothe his children; the faith that can believe God about the things that are actually around it, and that does not live in the region of fiction. See how God blessed Abraham with flocks and herds, and everything temporal as well as spiritual, because he walked in reference to these things along the line of faith; gave Lot his choice of pasturage, refused the offer of the king of Sodom, and resolutely paid the children of Heth the full price for the cave and the field. If we walk by faith in business life God may not in every case bless us with abundance of temporal mercies, but assuredly we shall be blessed. He may send us adversity, and poverty, but in these things faith is more than conqueror, glorying in tribulations also.

In the Lord's work of evangelising the world you must have a downright, practical faith; not a faith that will sing when the organ begins to play, and then be so busy fumbling the hymn paper as to forget the collection: not the faith of those who boast of Carey, and Marshman, and Knibb, but whose own names never appear in the subscription list for a single shilling: not a faith which sings -

"Fly abroad thou mighty Gospel."

but never lends a bit of down to make a feather for its wings.

Let us hear the scripture, as it says, "Hearken! "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, "Hearken!" for you may hear the Sabbath bells ringing in the everlasting peace, and angel songs welcoming the reign of grace over all nations. Let the ears of deaf unbelief be unstopped, for the whole earth echoes with the praises of the Lord. Say not that the day is distant. Hearken! Let faith be the listener, and she will hear across the ages which divide us from the gladsome period. Then shall you listen all day and all night long for many a year, but never hear the roll of drum or roar of cannon. Hearken! Ye shall hear from the islands of the sea, and from the once benighted continents, psalms and hymns, and holy songs, ascending unto the one Jehovah and to his Christ. Hearken! for ears were never gladdened with sweeter music.

Then look! till you see the temples of false gods crumbling into dust. See how the shrines are tottering, and the idols breaking as though smitten with a rod of iron. Mohammed's crescent wanes, never to wax again; and she, of the Seven Hills, is hated of the kings, and they burn her with fire. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth! "Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. They fall! They fall! They are as the slain. The day breaketh, and the shadows flee away. O ye watchers that look for the dawning, fall not asleep through sorrowful weariness. The morning cometh. It shall not tarry. Do you doubt it? Know ye not that the Lord reigneth? Is he not the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." If you doubt it, dissolve your Missionary Society, and do not pretend to do a work in which you have no faith; but if you believe in the triumph of God's work, and that you are called to it, behave worthily to so divine an enterprise. God do so to you as you deal with him in this matter. Amen.

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## **The Heart Of The Gospel**

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. - 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken; but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message. In these days I feel bound to go over again the elementary truths of the Gospel. In peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield; but now we must stay at home, and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith. In this age there have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things. There be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach, and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us, who know what we believe, and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the word of life, and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a parable. In the days of Nero there was great shortness of food in the city of Rome, although there was abundance of corn to be purchased at Alexandria. A certain man who owned a vessel went down to the sea coast, and there he noticed many hungry people straining their eyes toward the sea, watching for the vessels that were to come from Egypt with corn. When these vessels came to the shore, one by one, the poor people wrung their hands in bitter disappointment, for on board the galleys there was nothing but sand which the tyrant emperor had compelled them to bring for use in the arena. It was infamous cruelty, when men were dying of hunger to command trading vessels to go to and fro, and bring nothing else but sand for gladiatorial shows, when wheat was so greatly needed. Then the merchant whose vessel was moored by the quay said to his shipmaster, "Take thou good heed that thou bring

nothing back with thee from Alexandria but corn; and whereas, aforetime thou hast brought in the vessel a measure or two of sand, bring thou not so much as would lie upon a penny this time. Bring thou nothing else, I say, but wheat: for these people are dying, and now we must keep our vessels for this one business of bringing food for them." Alas! I have seen certain mighty galleys of late loaded with nothing but mere sand of philosophy and speculation, and I have said within myself, "Nay, but I will bear nothing in my ship but the revealed truth of God, the bread of life so greatly needed by the people." God grant us this day that our ship may have nothing on board it that may merely gratify the curiosity, or please the taste; but that there may be necessary truths for the salvation of souls. I would have each one of you say: "Well, it was just the old, old story of Jesus and his love, and nothing else." I have no desire to be famous for anything but preaching of the gospel. There are plenty who can fiddle to you the new music; it is for me to have no music at any time but that which is heard in heaven,—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever!"

I intend, dear friends, to begin my discourse with the second part of my text, in which the doctrine of Substitution is set forth in these words—"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This is the basis and power of those appeals which it is our duty to make to the consciences of men.

I have found, my brethen, by long experience, that nothing touches the heart like the cross of Christ; and when the heart is touched and wounded by the two-edged sword of the law, nothing heals its wounds like the balm which flows from the pierced heart of Jesus. The cross is life to the spiritually dead. There is an old legend which can have no literal truth in it, but if it be regarded as a parable it is then most instructive. They say that when the Empress Helena was searching for the true cross they digged deep at Jerusalem and found the three crosses of Calvary buried in the soil. Which out of the three crosses was the veritable cross upon which Jesus died they could not tell, except by certain tests. So they brought a corpse and laid it on one of the crosses, but there was neither life nor motion. When the same dead body touched another of the crosses it lived; and then they said, "This is the true cross." When we see men

quicken, converted, and sanctified by the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, we may justly conclude that it is the true doctrine of atonement. I have not known men made to live unto God and holiness except by the doctrine of the death of Christ on man's behalf. Hearts of stone that never beat with life before have been turned to flesh through the Holy Spirit causing them to know this truth. A sacred tenderness the obstinate when they have heard of Jesus crucified for them. Those who have lain at hell's dark door, wrapped about with a sevenfold death-shade, even upon them hath a great light shined. The story of the great Lover of the souls of men who gave himself for their salvation is still in the hand of the Holy Ghost the greatest of all forces in the realm of mind.

So this morning I am going to handle, first, the great doctrine, and then afterwards, and secondly, as God shall help me, we shall come to the great argument which is contained in the 20th verse: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

1. First, then, with as much brevity as possible I will speak upon THE GREAT DOCTRINE. The great doctrine, the greatest of all, is this, that God, seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, hath taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon his only begotten Son, making him to be sin for us, even him who knew no sin; and that in consequence of this transference of sin he that believeth in Christ Jesus is made just and righteous, ya, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ was made sin that sinners might be made righteousness. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of guilty men.

Now consider, first, who was made sin for us? The description of our great Surety here given is upon one point only, and it may more than suffice us for our present meditation. Our substitute was spotless, innocent, and pure. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate, and was made flesh, and dwelt here among men; but though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he knew no sin. Though upon him sin was laid, yet not so as to make him guilty. He was not, he could not be, a sinner: he had no

personal knowledge of sin. Throughout the whole of his life he never committed an offence against the great law of truth and right. The law was in his heart; it was his nature to be holy. He could say to all the world, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Even his vacillating judge enquired, "Why, what evil hath he done?" When all Jerusalem was challenged and bribed to bear witness against him, no witnesses could be found. It was necessary to misquote and wrest his words before a charge could be trumped up against him by his bitterest enemies. His life brought him in contact with both the tables of the law, but no single command had he transgressed. As the Jews examined the Paschal lamb before they slew it, so did scribes and Pharisees, and doctors of the law, and rulers and princes, examine the Lord Jesus, without finding no offence in him. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot.

As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission. Probably, dear brethen, we that are believers have been enabled by divine grace to escape most sins of commission; but I for one have to mourn daily over sins of omission. If we have spiritual graces, yet they do not reach the point required of us. If we do that which is right in itself, yet we usually mar our work upon the wheel, either in the motive, or in the manner of doing it, or by the self-satisfaction with which we view it when it is done. We come short of the glory of God in some respect or other. We forget to do what we ought to do, or, doing it, we are guilty of lukewarmness, self-reliance, unbelief, or some other grievous error. It was not so with our divine Redeemer. You cannot say that there was any feature deficient in his perfect beauty. He was complete in heart, in purpose, in thought, in word, in deed, in spirit. You could not add anything to the life of Christ without its being manifestly an excrescence. He was emphatically an all-round man, as we say in these days. His life is a perfect circle, a complete epitome of virtue. No pearl has dropped from the silver string of his character. No one virtue has overshadowed and dwarfed the rest: all perfections combine in perfect harmony to make in him one surpassing perfection.

Neither did our Lord know a sin of thought. His mind never produced an evil wish or desire. There never was in the heart of our blessed Lord a

wish for an evil pleasure, nor a desire to escape any suffering or shame which was involved in his service. When he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," he never desired to escape the bitter potion at the expense of his perfect lifework. The "if it be possible," meant, "if it be consistent with full obedience to the Father, and the accomplishment of the divine purpose." We see the weakness of his nature shrinking, and the holiness of his nature resolving and conquering, as he adds, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, but though that flesh often caused him weariness of body, it never produced in him the weakness of sin. He took our infirmities, but he never exhibited an infirmity which had the least of blameworthiness attached to it. Never fell there an evil glance from those blessed eyes; never did his lips let drop a hasty word; never did those feet go on an ill errand, nor those hands move towards a sinful deed; because his heart was filled with holiness and love. Within as well as without our Lord was unblemished. His desires were as perfect as his actions. Searched by the eyes of Omniscience, no shadow of fault could be found in him.

Yea, more, there were no tendencies about our Substitute towards evil in any form. In us there are always those tendencies; for the taint of original sin is upon us. We have to govern ourselves and hold ourselves under stern restraint, or we should rush headlong to destruction. Our carnal nature lusteth to evil, and needs to be held in as with bit and bridle. Happy is that man who can master himself. But with regard to our Lord, it was his nature to be pure, and right, and loving. All his sweet wills were towards goodness. His unconstrained life was holiness itself: he was "the holy child Jesus." The prince of this world found in him no fuel for the flame which he desired to kindle. Not only did no sin flow from him, but there was no sin in him, nor inclination, nor tendency in that direction. Watch him in secret, and you find him in prayer; look unto his soul, and you find him eager to do and suffer the Father's will. Oh, the blessed character of Christ! If I had the tongues of men and of angels I could not worthily set forth his absolute perfection. Justly may the Father be well pleased with him! Well may heaven adore him!

Beloved, it was absolutely necessary that any one who should be able to



suffer in our stead should himself be spotless. A sinner obnoxious to punishment by reason of his own offences, what can he do but bear the wrath which is due to his own sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ as man was made under the law: but he owed nothing to that law, for he perfectly fulfilled it in all respects. He was capable of standing in the room, place, and stead of others, because he was under no obligations of his own. He was only under obligations towards God because he had voluntarily undertaken to be the surety and sacrifice for those whom the Father gave him. He was clear himself, or else he could not have entered into bonds for guilty men.

Oh, how I admire him, that being such as he was, spotless and thrice holy, so that even the heavens were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly, yet he condescended to be made sin for us! How could he endure to be numbered with the transgressors and bear the sin of many? It may be no misery for a sinful man to live with sinful men; but it would be a heavy sorrow for the pure-minded to dwell with a company of abandoned and licentious wretches. What an overwhelming sorrow it must have been to the pure and perfect Christ to tabernacle among the hypocritical, the selfish, and the profane! How much worse that he himself should have to take upon himself the sins of those guilty men. His sensitive and delicate nature must have shrunk from even the shadow of sin, and yet read the words and be astonished: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Our perfect Lord and Master bare our sins in his own body on the tree. He, before whom the sun itself is dim and the pure azure of heaven is defilement, was made sin. I need not put this in fine words: the fact is itself too grand to need any magnifying by human language. To gild refined gold, or paint the lily, were absurd; but much more absurd would it be to try to overlay with flowers of speech the matchless beauties of the cross. It suffices in simple rhyme to say -

"Oh, hear that piercing cry!  
What can its meaning be?  
'My God! my God! oh! why hast thou  
In wrath forsaken me?'

"Oh 'twas because our sins

On him by God were laid;  
He who himself had never sinn'd,  
For sinners, sin was made."

This leads me on to the second point of the text, which is, what was done with him who knew no sin? He was "made sin." It is a wonderful expression: the more you weigh it the more you will marvel at its singular strength. Only the Holy Ghost might originate such language. It was wise for the divine Teacher to use very strong expressions, for else the thought might not have entered human minds. Even now, despite the emphasis, clearness, and distinctness of the language used here and elsewhere in Scripture there are found men daring enough to deny that substitution is taught in Scripture. With such subtle wits it is useless to argue. It is clear that language has no meaning for them. To read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and to accept it as relating to the Messiah, and then to deny his substitutionary sacrifice is simply wickedness. It would be vain to reason with such beings; they are so blind that if they were transported to the sun they could not see. In the church and out of the church there is a deadly animosity to this truth. Modern thought labours to get away from what is obviously the meaning of the Holy Spirit, that sin was lifted from the guilty and laid upon the innocent. It is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is as plain language as can be used; but if any plainer was required, here it is,—"He hath made him to be sin for us."

The Lord God laid upon Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, all the weight of human sin. Instead of its resting on the sinner, who did commit it, it was made to rest upon Christ, who did not commit to it; while the righteousness which Jesus wrought out was placed to the account of the guilty, are treated as righteous. Those who by nature are guilty, are regarded as righteous, while he who by nature knew no sin whatever, was treated as guilty. I think I must have read in scores of books that such a transference is impossible; but the statement has had no effect upon my mind. I do not care whether it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers: it is evidently possible with God, for he has done it. But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care for that, either: it may be contrary to the reason of those unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine; and if I am to be guided by reason, I prefer to follow my own. The

atonement is a miracle, and miracles are rather to be accepted by faith than measured by calculation. A fact is the best of arguments. It is a fact that the Lord hath laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God's revelation proves the fact, and our faith defies human questioning! God saith it, and I believe it; and believing it, I find life and comfort in it. Shall I not preach it? Assuredly I will.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die."

Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as if he had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to sin.

Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." The full pressure of it came upon him when he was nailed to the accursed tree. There in the hours of darkness he bore infinitely more than we can tell. We know that he bore condemnation from the mouth of a man, so that is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors." We know that he bore shame for our sakes. Did not your hearts tremble last Sunday evening when our text was, "Then did they spit in his face?" It was a cruel scorn that exhausted itself upon his blessed person. This, I say, we know. We know that he bore pains innumerable of body and mind: he thirsted, he cried out in the agony of desertion, he bled, he died. We know that he poured out his soul unto death, and yielded up the ghost. But there was at the back, and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of sufferings": probably to us they are unknowable sufferings. He was God as well as man, and the Godhead lent an omnipotent power to the manhood, so that there was compressed within his soul, and endured by it, an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception. I will say no more: it is wise to veil what it is impossible to depict. This text both veils and discovers his sorrow, as it

says, "He made him to be sin." Look into the words. Perceive their meaning if you can. The angels desire to look into it. Gaze into this terrible crystal. Let your eyes search deep into this opal, within whose jewelled depth there are flames of fire. The Lord made the perfectly innocent one to be sin for us: that means more humiliation, darkness, agony, and death than you can conceive. It brought a kind of distraction and well-nigh a destruction to the tender and gentle spirit of our Lord. I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what he endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom he died. The cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet, and the smoke of torment which goeth up for ever and ever. Who would know God's hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding in soul even unto death: he must, in fact, spell out each word of my text, and read its innermost meaning. There, my brethen, I am ashamed of the poverty of my explanation, and I will therefore only repeat the full and sublime language of the apostle—"He hath made him to be sin for us." It is more than "He hath put him to grief"; it is more than "God hath forsaken him"; it is more than "The chastisement of our peace was upon him"; it is the most suggestive of all descriptions—"He hath made him sin for us." Oh depth of terror, and yet height of love!

So I pass on to notice in the third place, who did it? The text saith, "He hath made him to be sin for us"; that is, God himself it was who appointed his dear Son to be made sin for guilty men. The wise ones tell us that this substitution cannot be just. Who made them judges of what is right and just. I ask them whether they believe that Jesus suffered and died at all? if they believe that he did, how do they account for the fact? Do they say that he died as an example? Then I ask, is it just for God to allow a sinless being to die as an example? The fact of our Lord's death is sure, and it has to be accounted for.

In the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made sin for us, there was first of all a display of the Divine Sovereignty. God here did what

none but he could have done. It would not have been possible for all of us together to have laid sin upon Christ; but it was possible for the great Judge of all, who giveth no account of his matters, to determine that so it should be. He is the fountain of rectitude, and the exercise of his divine prerogative is always unquestionable righteousness. That the Lord Jesus, who offered himself as a willing surety and substitute, should be accepted as surety and substitute for guilty man was in the power of the great Supreme. In his Divine Sovereignty he accepted him, and before that sovereignty we bow. If any question it, our only answer is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

The death of our Lord also displayed divine justice. It pleased God as the judge of all, that sin should not be forgiven without the exaction of the punishment which had been so righteously threatened to it, or such other display of justice as might vindicate the law. They say that this is not God of love. I answer, it is God of love, pre-eminently so. If you had upon the bench to-day a judge whose nature was kindness itself, it would behove him as a judge to execute justice, and if he did not, he would make his kindness ridiculous; indeed, his kindness to the criminal would be unkindness to society at large. Whatever the judge may be personally, he is officially compelled to do justice. And "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? " You speak of the Fatherhood of God. Enlarge as you please upon that theme, even till you make a heresy of it; but still God is the great moral Governor of the universe, and it behoves him to deal with sin in such a way that it is seen to be an evil and a bitter thing. God cannot wink at wickedness. I bless his holy name, and adore him that he is not unjust in order to be merciful, that he does not spare the guilty in order to indulge his gentleness. Every transgression and disobedience has its just recompense of reward. But through the sacrifice of Christ he is able justly to pardon. I bless his holy name that to vindicate his justice he determined that, while a free pardon should be provided for believers, it should be grounded upon an atonement which satisfied all requirements of the law.

Admire also in the substitutionary sacrifice the great grace of God. Never forget that he whom God made to be sin for us was his own Son; ay, I go further, it was in some sense his own self; for the Son is one with the

Father. You may not confound the persons, but you cannot divide the Son of God from the Father as to forget that God was in him reconciling the world unto himself. It is the Father's other self who on the cross in human form doth bleed and die. "Light of light, very God of very God": it is this Light that was eclipsed, that Godhead which purchased the church with his own blood. Herein is infinite love! You tell me that God might have pardoned without atonement. I answer, that finite and fallible love might have done so, and thus have wounded itself by killing justice; but the love which both required and provided the atonement is indeed infinite. God himself provided the atonement by freely and fully giving up himself in the person of his Son to suffer in consequence of human sin.

What I want you to notice here is this, if ever your mind should be troubled about the propriety or rightness of a substitutionary sacrifice, you may at once settle the matter by remembering that God himself "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God: let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is at. If God himself provided the sacrifice, be you sure that he has accepted it. There can be no question ever raised about it, since Jehovah made to meet on him our iniquities. He that made Christ to be sin for us, knew what he did, and it is not for us to begin to say, "Is this right, or is this not right?" The thrice holy God hath done this, and it must be right. That which satisfies God may well satisfy us. If God is pleased with the sacrifice of Christ, shall not we be much more pleased? Shall we not be delighted, entranced, emparadised, to be saved by such a sacrifice as God himself appoints, provides, and accepts? "He hath made him to be sin for us."

The last point is, what happens to us in consequence? "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Oh this weighty text! No man living can exhaust it. No theologian lived, even in the palmiest day of theology, who could ever get to the bottom of this statement.

Every man that believes in Jesus is through Christ having taken his sin made to be righteousness before God. We are righteous through faith in Christ Jesus, "justified by faith." More than this, we are made not only to have the character of "righteous," but to become the substance called

"righteousness." I cannot explain this, but it is no small matter. It means no inconsiderable thing when we are said to be "made righteousness." What is more, we are not only made righteousness, but we are made "the righteousness of God. "Herein is a great mystery. The righteousness which Adam had in the garden was perfect, but it was the righteousness of man: ours is the righteousness of God. Human righteousness failed; but the believer has a divine righteousness which can never fail. He not only has it, but he is it: he is "made the righteousness of God in Christ." We can now sing,

"With my Saviour's vesture on,  
Holy as the Holy One."

How acceptable with God must those be who are made by God himself to be "the righteousness of God in him"! I cannot conceive of anything more complete.

As Christ was made sin, and yet never sinned, so are we made righteousness, though we cannot claim to have been righteous in and of ourselves. Sinners though we be, and forced to confess it with grief, yet the Lord doth cover us so completely with the righteousness of Christ, that only his righteousness is seen, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. This is true of all the saints, even of as many as believe on his name. Oh, the splendor of this doctrine! Canst thou see it, my friend? Sinner though thou be, and in thyself defiled, deformed, and debased, yet if thou wilt accept the great Substitute which God provide for in the person of his dear Son, thy sins are gone from thee, and righteousness has come to thee. Thy sins were laid on Jesus, the scapegoat: they are thine no longer, he has put them away. I may say that his righteousness is imputed unto thee; but I go further, and say with the text, "Thou art made the righteousness of God in him." No doctrine can be more sweet than this to those who feel the weight of sin and the burden of its curse.

II. So now, gathering all up, I have to close with the second part of the text, which is not teaching, but the application of teaching,—A GREAT ARGUMENT. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to

God."

Oh, that these lips had language, or that this heart could speak without them! Then would I plead with every unconverted, unbelieving soul within this place, and plead as for my life. Friend, you are at enmity with God, and God is angry with you; but on his part there is every readiness for reconciliation. He has made a way by which you can become his friend—a very costly way to himself, but free to you. He could not give up his justice, and so destroy the honour of his own character; but he did give up his Son, his Only Begotten, and his Well-Beloved; and that Son of his had been made sin for us, though he knew no sin. See how God meets you! See how willing, how anxious he is that there should be reconciliation between you and God to-day it is not from want of kindness on his part; it is from want of willingness on yours. The burden of your ruin must lie at your own door: your blood must be on your own skirts.

Now observe what we have to say to you to-day is this: we are anxious that you should be at peace with God, and therefore we act as ambassadors for Christ. I am not going to lay any stress upon the office of ambassador as honourable or authoritative, for I do not feel that this would have weight with you: but I lay all the stress upon the peace to which we would fain have you reconciled also. I once knew him not, neither did I care for him. I lived well enough without him, and sported with trifles of a day, so as to forget him. He brought me to seek his face, and seeking his face I found him. He has blotted out my sins and removed my enmity. I know that I am his servant, and that he is my friend, my Father, my All. And now I cannot help trying in my poor way to be an ambassador for him with you. I do not like that any of you should live at enmity with my Father who made you; and that you should be wantonly provoking him by preferring evil to good. Why should you not be at peace with one who so much wants to be at peace with you? Why should you not love the God of love, and delight in him who is so kind to you? What he hath done for me he is quite willing to do for you: he is a God ready to pardon. I have preached his gospel now for many years, but I never met with a sinner yet that Christ refused to cleanse when he came to him. I never knew a single case of a man who trusted Jesus, and asked to be forgiven, confessing his sin and forsaking it, who was cast out. I say



I never met with one man whom he has restored to purity, and drunkards whom he has delivered from their evil habit, and with men guilty of foul sins who have become pure and chaste through the Lord Jesus. They have always told me the same story—"I sought the Lord, and he heard me; he hath washed me in his blood, and I am whiter than snow." Why should you not be saved as well as these?

Dear friend, perhaps you have never thought of this matter, and this morning you did not come here with any idea of thinking of it; but why should you not begin? You came just to hear a well-known preacher; I pray you forget the preacher, and think only of yourself, your God and your Saviour. It must be wrong for you to live without a thought of your Maker. To forget him is to despise him. It must be wrong for you to refuse the great atonement: you so refuse it if you do not accept it at once. It must be wrong for you to stand out against your God; and you do stand out against him if you will not be reconciled to him. Therefore I humbly play the part of an ambassador for Christ, and I beseech you believe in him and live.

Notice how the text puts it: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." This thought staggers me. As I came along this morning I felt as if I could bury my head in my hands and weep as I thought of God beseeching anybody. He speaks, and it is done; myriads of angels count themselves happy to fly at his command; and yet man has so become God's enemy that he will not be reconciled to him. God would make him his friend, and spends the blood of his dear Son to cement that friendship; but man will not have it. See the great God turns to beseeching his obstinate creature! his foolish creature! In this I feel a reverent compassion for God. Must he beseech a rebel to be forgiven? Do you hear it? Angels, do you hear it? He who is the King of kings veils his sovereignty, and stoops to beseeching his creature to be reconciled to him! I wonder not that some of my brethen start back from such an idea, and cannot believe that it could be so: it seems so derogatory to the glorious God. Yet my text saith it, and it must be true—"As though God did beseech you by us." This makes it awful work to preach, does it not? I ought to beseech you as though God spoke to you through me, looking at you through these eyes, and stretching out his hands through these

hands. He saith, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." He speaks softly, and tenderly, and with paternal affection through these poor lips of mine, "as though God did beseech you by us.

Furthermore notice that next line, which if possible has even more force in it: "We pray you in Christ's stead." Since Jesus died in our stead we, his redeemed ones, are to pray others in his stead; and as he poured out his heart for sinners in their stead, we must in another way pour out our hearts for sinners in his stead. "We pray you in Christ's stead." Now if my Lord were here this morning how would he pray you to come to him? I wish, my Master, I were more fit to stand in thy place at this time. Forgive me that I am so incapable. Help me to break my heart, to think that it does not break as it ought to do, for these men and women who are determined to destroy themselves, and, therefore, pass thee by, my Lord, as though thou were but a common felon, hanging on a gibbet! O men, How can you think so little of the death of the Son of God? It is the wonder of time, the admiration of eternity. O souls, why will you refuse eternal life? Why will ye die? Why will ye despise him by whom alone you can live? There is one gate of life, that gate is the open side of Christ; why will ye not enter, and live? "Come unto me," saith he; "Come unto me." I think I hear him say it: "Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." I think I see him on that last day, the great day of the feast, standing and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." I hear him sweetly declare, "Him that cometh to me I will no wise cast out." I am not fit to pray you in Christ's stead, but I do pray you with all my heart. You that hear my voice from Sunday to Sunday, do come and accept the great sacrifice, and be reconciled to God. You that hear me but this once, I would like you to go away with this ringing in your ears, "Be ye reconciled to God." I have nothing pretty to say to you; I have only to declare that God has prepared a propitiation, and that now he entreats sinners to come to Jesus, that through him they may be reconciled to God.

We do not exhort you to some impossible effort. We do not bid you do some great thing; we do not ask you for money or price; neither do we

demand of you years of miserable feeling; but only this—be ye reconciled. It is not so much reconcile yourselves as "be reconciled." Yield yourselves to him who round you now the bands of a man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because he was given for you. His spirit strives with you, yield to his striving. With Jacob you know there wrestled a man till the breaking of the day; let that man, that God-man, overcome you. Submit yourselves. Yield to grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you. Will you not yield to your best friend? He that doth embrace you now presses you to a heart that was pierced with the spear on your behalf. Oh, yield thee! Yield thee, man! Dost thou not feel some softness stealing over thee? Steel not thine heart against it. He saith, with a Tone most still and sweet. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Believe and live! Quit the arch-enemy who has held thee in his grip. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, but flee where thou seest the open door of the great Father's house. At the gate the bleeding Saviour is waiting to receive thee, and to say, "I was made sin for thee, and thou art made the righteousness of God in me." Father, draw them! Father, draw them! Eternal Spirit, draw them, for Jesus Christ thy Son's sake! Amen.

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## Heaven

As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. - 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

How very frequently verses of Scripture are misquoted! Instead of turning to the Bible, to see how it is written, and saying, "How readest thou?" we quote from one another; and thus a passage of Scripture is handed down misquoted, by a kind of tradition, from father to son, and passes as current among a great number of Christian persons. How very

frequently at our prayer meetings do we hear our brethren describing heaven as a place of which we cannot conceive! They say, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" and there they stop, not seeing that the very marrow of the whole passage lies in this - "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." So that the joys of heaven (if this passage alludes to heaven, which, I take it, is not quite so clear as some would suppose), are, after all, not things of which we cannot conceive; for "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

I have hinted that this passage is most commonly applied to heaven, and I shall myself also so apply it in some measure, this morning. But any one who reads the connexion will discover that the apostle is not talking about heaven at all. He is only speaking of this - that the wisdom of this world is not able to discover the things of God - that the merely carnal mind is not able to know the deep spiritual things of our most holy religion. He says, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And then he goes on lower down to say, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I take it, that this text is a great general fact, capable of specific application to certain cases; and that the great fact is this - that the things of God cannot be perceived by eye, and ear, and heart, but must be revealed by the Spirit of God; as they are unto all true believers. We shall take that thought, and endeavour to expand it this morning, explaining it concerning heaven, as well as regards other heavenly matters.

Every prophet who has stood upon the borders of a new dispensation might have uttered these words with peculiar force. He might have said, as he looked forward to the future, God having touched his eye with the

anointing eye-salve of the Holy Spirit, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." We will divide the economy of free grace into different dispensations. We commence with the patriarchal. A patriarch, who like Abraham was gifted with foresight, might have looked forward to the Levitical dispensation, glorious with its tabernacle, its Shekinah, its gorgeous veil, its blazing altars; he might have caught a glimpse of Solomon's magnificent temple, and even by anticipation heard the sacred song ascending from the assembled thousands of Jerusalem; he might have seen king Solomon upon his throne, surrounded with all his riches, and the people resting in peace and tranquillity in the promised land; and he might have turned to his brethren who lived in the patriarchal age, and said, "'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' in the next dispensation. Ye know not how clearly God will reveal himself in the Paschal Lamb - how sweetly the people will be led, and fed, and guided, and directed all the way through the wilderness - what a sweet and fair country it is that they shall inhabit; Eye hath not seen the brooks that gush with milk, nor the rivers that run with honey; ear hath not heard the melodious voices of the daughters of Shiloh, nor have entered into the heart of man the joys of the men of Zion, 'but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.'"

And so, moreover, at the close of the Levitical dispensation, the prophets might have thus foretold the coming glories. Old Isaiah, standing in the midst of the temple, beholding its sacrifices, and the dim smoke that went up from them, when his eyes were opened by the Spirit of God, said - "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for him that love him." He saw by faith Christ crucified upon the cross; he beheld him weltering in his own blood in Gethsemane's garden; he saw the disciples going out of Jerusalem, to preach everywhere the Word of God; he marked the progress of Messiah's kingdom, and he looked down to these latter days, when every man under his own vine and fig tree doth worship God, none daring to make him afraid; and he could well have cheered the captives in Babylon in words like these, - "Now ye sit down and weep, and ye will not

sing in a strange land the songs of Zion; but lift up your heads, for your salvation draweth nigh. Your eye hath not seen, nor your ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but he hath revealed them unto me by his Spirit." And now, beloved, we stand on the borders of a new era. The mediatorial dispensation is almost finished. In a few more years, if prophecy be not thoroughly misinterpreted, we shall enter upon another condition. This poor earth of ours, which has been swathed in darkness, shall put on her garments of light. She hath toiled a long while in travail and sorrow. Soon shall her groanings end. Her surface, which has been stained with blood, is soon to be purified by love, and a religion of peace is to be established. The hour is coming, when storms shall be hushed, when tempests shall be unknown, when whirlwind and hurricane shall stay their mighty force, and when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." But you ask me what sort of kingdom that is to be, and whether I can show you any likeness thereof. I answer, no; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,' in the next, the millennial dispensation; "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Sometimes, when we climb upwards, there are moments of contemplation when we can understand that verse, "From whence we look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be revealed from heaven," and can anticipate that thrice blessed hour, when the King of kings shall put on his head the crown of the universe, when he shall gather up sheaves of sceptres, and put them beneath his arm - when he shall take the crowns from the heads of all monarchs, and welding them into one, shall put them on his own head, amidst the shouts of ten thousand times ten thousand who shall chaunt his high praises. But it is little enough that we can guess of its wonders.

But persons are curious to know what kind of dispensation the Millennial one is to be. Will the temple, they ask, be erected in Jerusalem? Will the Jews be positively restored to their own land? Will the different nations all speak one language? Will they all resort to one temple? and ten thousand other questions. Beloved, we cannot answer you. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We do not profess to

understand the minutiae of these things. It is enough for us to believe that a latter-day glory is approaching. Our eyes glisten with joy, in the full belief that it is coming; and our hearts swell big at the thought that our Master is to reign over the wide, wide world, and to win it for himself. But if you begin questioning us, we tell you that we cannot explain it. Just as under the legal dispensation there were types and shadows, but the mass of the people never saw Christ in them, so there are a great many different things in this dispensation which are types of the next, which will never be explained till we have more wisdom, more light, and more instruction. Just as the enlightened Jew partially foresaw what the Gospel was to be by the law, so may we guess the Millennium by the present, but we have not light enough: there are few who are taught enough in the deep things of God to explain them fully. Therefore we still say of the mass of mankind - "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," in some measure, and he will do so more and more, by-and-bye.

And this brings us to make the application of the subject to heaven itself. You see, while it does not expressly mean heaven here, you may very easily bring it to bear upon it; for concerning heaven, unto which believers are all fast going, we may say "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Now, beloved, I am about to talk of heaven for this reason: you know, I never preach any funeral sermons for anybody, and never intend. I have passed by many persons who have died in our church, without having made any parade of funeral sermons; but, nevertheless, three or four of our friends having departed recently, I think I may speak a little to you about heaven, in order to cheer you, and God may thus bless their departure. It is to be no funeral sermon, however - no eulogium on the dead, and no oration pronounced over the departed. Frequent funeral sermons I utterly abhor, and I believe they are not under God's sanction and approval. Of the dead we should say nothing but that which is good: and in the pulpit we should say very little of that, except, perhaps, in the

case of some very eminent saint; and then we should say very little of the man; but let the "honour be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

Heaven - then, what is it? First, what is it not? It is not a heaven of the SENSES - "Eye hath not seen it." What glorious things the eye hath seen! Have we not seen the gaudy pageantry of pomp crowding the gay streets. We have seen the procession of kings and princes; our eyes have been feasted with the display of glittering uniforms, of lavished gold and jewels, of chariots and of horses; and we have perhaps thought that the procession of the saints of God may be dimly shadowed forth thereby. But, oh it was but the thought of our poor infant mind, and far enough from the great reality. We may hear of the magnificence of the old Persian princes, of palaces covered with gold and silver, and floors inlaid with jewels; but we cannot thence gather a thought of heaven, for "eye hath not seen" it. We have thought, however, when we have come to the works of God, and our eye hath rested on them: surely we can get some glimpse of what heaven is here. By night we have turned our eye up to the blue azure, and we have seen the stars - those golden-fleeced sheep of God, feeding on the blue meadow of the sky, and we have said, "See! those are the nails in the floor of heaven up yonder;" and if this earth has such a glorious covering, what must that of the kingdom of heaven be? And when our eye has wandered from star to star, we have thought, "Now I can tell what heaven is by the beauty of its floor." But it is all a mistake. All that we can see can never help us to understand heaven. At another time we have seen some glorious landscape; we have seen the white river winding among the verdant fields like a stream silver, covered on either side with emerald; we have seen the mountain towering to the sky, the mist rising on it, or the golden sunrise covering all the east with glory; or we have seen the west, again, reddened with the light of the sun as it departed; and we have said, "Surely, these grandeurs must be something like heaven; we have clapped our hands, and exclaimed -

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,  
Stand dressed in living green."

We have imagined that there really were fields in heaven, and that things of earth were patterns of things in heaven. It was all a mistake: - "Eye



hath not seen" it.

Equally does our text assert that "the ear hath not heard" it. Oh! have we not on the Sabbath day sometimes heard the sweet voice of the messenger of God, when he has by the Spirit spoken to our souls! We knew something of heaven then, we thought. At other times we have been entranced with the voice of the preacher, and with the remarkable sayings which he has uttered; we have been charmed by his eloquence; some of us have known what it is to sit and weep and smile alternately, under the power of some mighty man who played with us as skilfully as David could have played on his harp; and we have said, "How sweet to hear those sounds! how glorious his eloquence! how wonderful his power of oratory! Now I think I know something of what heaven is, for my mind is so carried away, my passions are so excited, my imagination is so elevated, all the powers of my mind are stirred upon so that I can think of nothing but of what the preacher is speaking about!" But the ear is not the medium by which you can guess anything of heaven. The "ear hath not heard" it. At other times perhaps you have heard sweet music; and hath not music poured from the lungs of man - that noblest instrument in the world - or from some manufacture of harmony, and we have thought, "Oh! how glorious this is!" and fancied, "This is what John meant in the Revelation - 'I heard a voice like many waters, and like exceeding great thunders, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps;' and this must be something like heaven, something like the hallelujahs of the glorified." But ah! beloved, we made a mistake. "Ear hath not heard" it.

Here has been the very ground of that error into which many persons have fallen concerning heaven. They have said that they would like to go to heaven. What for? For this reason: they looked upon it as a place where they should be free from bodily pain. They should not have the head-ache or the tooth-ache there, nor any of those diseases which flesh is heir to, and whenever God laid his hand upon them they began to wish themselves in heaven, because they regarded it as a heaven of the senses - a heaven which the eye hath seen or the ear heard. A great mistake; for although we shall have a body free from pain, yet it is not a heaven where our senses shall indulge themselves. The labourer will have it, that heaven is a place,

Where on a green and flowery mount  
His weary soul shall sit.

Another will have it that heaven is a place where he shall eat to the full, and his body shall be satisfied. We may use these as figures; but we are so degenerate that we are apt to build a fine Mahometan heaven, and to think, there shall we have all the delights of the flesh; there shall we drink from bowls of nectared wine; there shall we lavishly indulge ourselves, and our body shall enjoy every delight of which it is capable. What a mistake for us to conceive such a thing! Heaven is not a place for the delight of mere sense; we shall be raised not a sensual body, but a spiritual body. We can get no conceptions of heaven through the senses; they must always come through the Spirit. That is our first thought. It is not a heaven to be grasped by the senses.

But, secondly, it is not a heaven of the IMAGINATION. Poets let their imaginations fly with loosened wings, when they commence speaking of heaven. And how glorious are their descriptions of it! When we have read them, we say, "And is that heaven? I wish I was there." And we think we have some idea of heaven by reading books of poetry. Perhaps the preacher weaves the filigree work of fancy, and builds up in a moment by his words charming palaces, the tops of which are covered with gold, and the walls are ivory. He pictures to you lights brighter than the sun; a place where spirits flap their bright wings, where comets flash through the sky. He tells you of fields where you may feed on ambrosia, where no henbane groweth, but where sweet flowers cover the meads. And then you think you have some idea of heaven: and you sit down and say, "It is sweet to hear that man speak; he carried me so away; he made me think I was there; he gave me such conceptions as I never had before; he worked on my imagination." And do you know, there is not a greater power than imagination. I would not give a farthing for a man who has not imagination; he is of no use, if he wishes to move the multitude. If you were to take away my imagination I must die. It's a little heaven below, to imagine sweet things. But never think that imagination can picture heaven. When it is most sublime when it is freest from the dust of earth, when it is carried up by the greatest knowledge, and kept steady by the most extreme caution, imagination cannot picture heaven. "It hath not

entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Imagination is good, but not to picture to us heaven. Your imaginary heaven you will find by-and-by to be all a mistake; though you may have piled up fine castles, you will find them to be castles in the air, and they will vanish like thin clouds before the gale. For imagination cannot make a heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man to conceive" it.

Our next point is, that it is not a heaven of the INTELLECT. Men who take to themselves the title of intelligent, and who very humbly and modestly call themselves philosophers, generally describe heaven as a place where we shall know all things; and their grandest idea of heaven is, that they shall discover all secrets there. There the rock which would not tell its origin shall bubble forth its history; there the star which would not tell its date, and could not be made to whisper of its inhabitants, shall at once unravel all its secrets; there the animal, the fashion of which could scarcely be guessed at, so long had it been buried amongst other fossils in the earth, shall start up again, and it shall be seen of what form and shape it really was: - there the rocky secrets of this our earth that they never could discover will be opened to them; and they conceive that they shall travel from one star to another star, from planet to planet, and fill their enobled intellect, as they now delight to call it, with all kinds of human knowledge. They reckon that heaven will be to understand the works of the Creator: and concerning such men as Bacon and other great philosophers, of whose piety we generally have very little evidence, we read at the end of their biographies - "He has now departed, that noble spirit which taught us such glorious things here, to sip at the fountain of knowledge, and have all his mistakes rectified, and his doubts cleared up." But we do not believe anything of the kind. Intellect! thou knowest it now! "It hath not entered into the heart of man." It is high; what canst thou know? It is deep; what canst thou understand? It is only the Spirit that can give you a guess of heaven.

Now we come to the point - "He hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit." I think this means, that it was revealed unto the apostles by the Spirit, so that they wrote something of it in the Holy Word; but as you all believe that, we will only hint at it, and pass on. We think also that it refers to

every believer, and that every believer does have glimpses of heaven below, and that God does reveal heaven to him, even whilst on earth, so that he understands what heaven is, in some measure. I love to talk of the Spirit's influence on man. I am a firm believer in the doctrine of impulse, in the doctrine of influence, in the doctrine of direction, in the doctrine of instruction by the Holy Spirit; and I believe him to be an interpreter, one of a thousand, who reveals unto man his own sinfulness, and afterwards teaches him his righteousness in Christ Jesus. I know there are some who abuse that doctrine, and ascribe every text that comes into their heart as given by the Spirit. We have heard of a man who, passing by his neighbour's wood, and having none in his own house, fancied he should like to take some. The text crossed his mind - "In all these things Job sinned not." He said, "There is an influence from the Spirit; I must take that man's wood." Presently, however, conscience whispered, "Thou shalt not steal;" and he remembered then that no text could have been put into his heart by the Spirit, if it excused sin or led him into it. However we do not discard the doctrine of impulse, because some people make a mistake; and we shall have a little of it this morning - a little of the teaching of God's gracious Spirit, whereby he reveals unto us what heaven is.

First of all, we think a Christian gets a gaze of what heaven is, when in the midst of trials and troubles he is able to cast all his care upon the Lord, because he careth for him. When waves of distress, and billows of affliction pass over the Christian, there are times when his faith is so strong that he lies down and sleeps, though the hurricane is thundering in his ears, and though billows are rocking him like a child in its cradle, though the earth is removed, and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, he says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Famine and desolation come; but he says, "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall there be fruit on the vine, though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no increase, yet will I trust in the Lord, and stay myself on the God of Jacob." Affliction smites him to the ground; he looks up, and says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The blows that are given to him are like the lashing of a whip upon the water, covered up immediately, and he seems to feel nothing. It is not stoicism; it is the peculiar sleep of the beloved. "So he

giveth his beloved sleep." Persecution surrounds him; but he is unmoved. Heaven is something like that - a place of holy calm and trust -

"That holy calm, that sweet repose,  
Which none but he who feels it knows.  
This heavenly calm within the breast  
Is the dear pledge of glorious rest,  
Which for the church of God remains,  
The end of cares, the end of pains."

But there is another season in which the Christian has heaven revealed to him; and that is, the season of quiet contemplation. There are precious hours, blessed be God, when we forget the world - times and seasons when we get quite away from it, when our weary spirit wings its way far, far, from scenes of toil and strife. There are precious moments when the angel of contemplation gives us a vision. He comes and puts his finger on the lip of the noisy world; he bids the wheels that are continually rattling in our ears be still; and we sit down, and there is a solemn silence of the mind. We find our heaven and our God; we engage ourselves in contemplating the glories of Jesus, or mounting upwards towards the bliss of heaven - in going backward to the great secrets of electing love, in considering the immutability of the blessed covenant, in thinking of what wind which "bloweth where it listeth," in remembering our own participation of that life which cometh from God, in thinking of our blood-bought union with the Lamb, of the consummation of our marriage with him in realms of light and bliss, or any such kindred topics. Then it is that we know a little about heaven. Have ye never found, O ye sons and daughters of gaiety, a holy calm come over you at times, in reading the thoughts of your fellowmen? But oh! how blessed to come and read the thoughts of God, and work, and weave them out in contemplation. Then we have a web of contemplation that we wrap around us like an enchanted garment, and we open our eyes and see heaven. Christian! when you are enabled by the Spirit to hold a season of sweet contemplation, then you can say - "But he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" for the joys of heaven are akin to the joys of contemplation, and the joys of a holy calm in God. But there are times with me - I dare say there may be with some of you - when we do something more than

contemplate - when we arise by meditation above thought itself, and when our soul, after having touched the Pisgah of contemplation by the way, flies positively into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. There are seasons when the Spirit not only stands and flaps his wings o'er the gulf, but positively crosses the Jordan and dwells with Christ, holds fellowship with angels, and talks with spirits - gets up there with Jesus, clasps him in his arms, and cries, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; I will hold him, and will not let him go." I know what it is at times to lay my beating head on the bosom of Christ with something more than faith - actually and positively to get hold of him; not only to take him by faith, but actually and positively to feed on him; to feel a vital union with him, to grasp his arm, and feel his very pulse beating. You say. "Tell it not to unbelievers; they will laugh!" Laugh ye may; but when we are there we care not for your laughter, if ye should laugh as loud as devils; for one moment's fellowship with Jesus would recompense us for it all. Picture not fairy lands; this is heaven, this is bliss. "He hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit."

And let not the Christian, who says he has very little of this enjoyment be discouraged. Do not think you cannot have heaven revealed to you by the Spirit; I tell you, you can, if you are one of the Lord's people. And let me tell some of you, that one of the places where you may most of all expect to see heaven is at the Lord's table. There are some of you, my dearly beloved, who absent yourselves from the supper of the Lord on earth; let me tell you in God's name, that you are not only sinning against God, but robbing yourselves of a most inestimable privilege. If there is one season in which the soul gets into closer communion with Christ than another, it is at the Lord's table. How often have we sang there,

"Can I Gethesemane forget?  
Or there thy conflicts see,  
Thine agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember thee?"

Remember thee and all thy pains,  
And all thy love to me, -  
Yes, while a pulse, or breath remains,  
I will remember thee."

And then you see what an easy transition it is to heaven: -

"And when these failing lips grow dumb,  
And thought and memory flee;  
When thou shalt in thy kingdom come,  
Jesus, remember me."

O my erring brethren, ye who live on, unbaptized, and who receive not this sacred supper, I tell you not that they will save you - most assuredly they will not, and if you are not saved before you receive them they will be an injury to you; - but if you are the Lord's people, why need you stay away? I tell you, the Lord's table is so high a place that you can see heaven from it very often. You get so near the cross there, you breathe so near the cross, that your sight becomes clearer, and the air brighter, and you see more of heaven there than anywhere else. Christian, do not neglect the supper of thy Lord; for if thou dost, he will hide heaven from thee, in a measure.

Again, how sweetly do we realize heaven, when we assemble in our meetings for prayer. I do not know how my brethren feel at prayer meetings; but they are so much akin to what heaven is, as a place of devotion, that I really think we get more ideas of heaven by the Spirit there, than in hearing a sermon preached, because the sermon necessarily appeals somewhat to the intellect and the imagination. But if we enter into the vitality of prayer at our prayer meetings, then it is the Spirit that reveals heaven to us. I remember two texts that I preached from lately at our Monday evening meeting, which were very sweet to some of our souls. "Abide with us, for the day is far spent," and another, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him and found him." Then indeed we held some foretaste of heaven. Master Thomas would not believe that his Lord was risen. Why? Because he was not at the last prayer-meeting; for we are told that Thomas was not there. And those who are often away from devotional meetings are very apt to have doubting frames; they do not get sights of heaven, for they get their eye-sight spoiled by stopping away.

Another time when we get sights of heaven is in extraordinary closet

seasons. Ordinary closet prayer will only make ordinary Christians of us. It is in extraordinary seasons, when we are led by God to devote, say an hour, to earnest prayer - when we feel an impulse, we scarce know why, to cut off a portion of our time during the day to go alone. Then, beloved, we kneel down, and begin to pray in earnest. It may be that we are attacked by the devil; for when the enemy knows we are going to have a great blessing, he always makes a great noise to drive us away; but if we keep at it, we shall soon get into a quiet frame of mind, and hear him roaring at a distance. Presently you get hold of the angel, and say, "Lord, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." He asks your name. You begin to tell him what your name was:

"Once a sinner, near despair,  
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;  
Mercy heard and set him free;  
Lord, that mercy came to me."

You say, "What is thy name, Lord?" He will not tell you. You hold him fast still; at last he deigns to bless you. That is certainly some foretaste of heaven, when you feel alone with Jesus. Let no man know your prayers; they are between God and yourselves; but if you want to know much of heaven, spend some extra time in prayer; for God then reveals it to us by his Spirit.

"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." You have been saying in your hearts, "The prophet is a fool, and this spiritual man is mad." Go away and say these things; but be it known unto you, that what ye style madness is to us wisdom and what ye count folly "is the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom." And if there is a poor penitent here this morning, saying, "Ah! sir, I get visions enough of hell, but I do not get visions of heaven;" poor penitent sinner, thou canst not have any visions of heaven, unless thou lookest through the hands of Christ. The only glass through which a poor sinner can see bliss is that formed by the holes in Jesus' hands. Dost thou not know, that all grace and mercy was put into the hand of Christ, and that it never could have run out to thee unless his hand had been bored through in crucifixion. He cannot hold it from thee, for it will run through; and he cannot hold it in his heart, for he has got a rent in it made by the spear. Go and confess your sin to him, and he will



wash you, and make you whiter than snow. If you feel you cannot repent, go to him and tell him so, for he is exalted to give repentance, as well as remission of sins. Oh! that the spirit of God might give you true repentance and true faith; and then saint and sinner shall meet together, and both shall not only know what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;" but

"Then shall we see, and hear, and know  
All we desired or wished below,  
And every power find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy."

Till that time we can only have these things revealed to us by the Spirit; and we will seek more of that, each day we live.

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## **Heaven And Hell**

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. - Matthew 8:11-12

This is a land where plain speaking is allowed, and where the people are willing to afford a fair hearing to any one who can tell them that which is worth their attention. To-night I am quite certain of an attentive audience, for I know you too well to suppose otherwise. This field, as you are all aware, is private property; and I would just give a suggestion to those who go out in the open air to preach - that it is far better to get into a field, or a plot of unoccupied building-ground, than to block up the roads and stop business; it is moreover, far better to be somewhat under

protection, so that we can at once prevent disturbance.

To-night, I shall, I hope, encourage you to seek the road to heaven. I shall also have to utter some very sharp things concerning the end of the lost in the pit of hell. Upon both these subjects I will try and speak, as God helps me. But, I beseech you, as you love your souls, weigh right and wrong this night; see whether what I say be the truth of God. If it be not, reject it utterly, and cast it away; but if it is, at your peril disregard it; for, as you shall answer before God, the great Judge of heaven and earth, it will go ill with you if the words of his servant and of his Scripture be despised.

My text has two parts. The first is very agreeable to my mind, and gives me pleasure; the second is terrible in the extreme; but, since they are both the truth, they must be preached. The first part of my text is, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." The sentence which I call the black, dark, and threatening part is this: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I. Let us take the first part. Here is a most glorious promise. I will read it again: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." I like that text, because it tells me what heaven is, and gives me a beautiful picture of it. It says, it is a place where I shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. O what a sweet thought that is for the working man! He often wipes the hot sweat from his face, and he wonders whether there is a land where he shall have to toil no longer. He scarcely ever eats a mouthful of bread that is not moistened with the sweat of his brow. Often he comes home weary, and flings himself upon his couch, perhaps too tired to sleep. He says, "Oh! is there no land where I can rest? Is there no place where I can sit, and for once let these weary limbs be still? Is there no land where I can be quiet? Yes, thou son of toil and labor,

"There is a happy land  
Far, far away - "

where toil and labor are unknown. Beyond yon blue welkin there is a city

fair and bright, its walls are jasper, and its light is brighter than the sun. There "the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling." Immortal spirits are yonder, who never wipe sweat from their brow, for "they sow not, neither do they reap;" they have not to toil and labor.

"There, on a green and flowery mount,  
Their weary souls shall sit;  
And with transporting joys recount  
The labors of their feet."

To my mind, one of the best views of heaven is, that it is a land of rest - especially to the working man. Those who have not to work hard, think they will love heaven as a place of service. That is very true. But to the working man, to the man who toils with his brain or with his hands, it must ever be a sweet thought that there is a land where we shall rest. Soon, this voice will never be strained again; soon, these lungs will never have to exert themselves beyond their power; soon, this brain shall not be racked for thought; but I shall sit at the banquet-table of God; yea, I shall recline on the bosom of Abraham, and be at ease for ever. Oh! weary sons and daughters of Adam, you will not have to drive the ploughshare into the unthankful soil in heaven, you will not need to rise to daily toils before the sun hath risen, and labor still when the sun hath long ago gone to his rest; but ye shall be still, ye shall be quiet, ye shall rest yourselves, for all are rich in heaven, all are happy there, all are peaceful. Toil, trouble, travail, and labor, are words that cannot be spelled in heaven; they have no such things there, for they always rest.

And mark the good company they sit with. They are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." Some people think that in heaven we shall know nobody. But our text declares here, that we "shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." Then I am sure that we shall be aware that they are Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. I have heard of a good woman, who asked her husband, when she was dying, "My dear, do you think you will know me when you and I get to heaven?" "Shall I know you?" he said, "why, I have always known you while I have been here, and do you think I shall be a greater fool when I get to heaven?" I think it was a very good answer. If we have known one another here, we shall know one another there. I have dear departed friends up there, and it is always

a sweet thought to me, that when I shall put my foot, as I hope I may, upon the threshold of heaven, there will come my sisters and brothers to clasp me by the hand and say, "Yes, thou loved one, and thou art here." Dear relatives that have been separated, you will meet again in heaven. One of you has lost a mother - she is gone above; and if you follow the track of Jesus, you shall meet her there. Methinks I see yet another coming to meet you at the door of Paradise; and though the ties of natural affection may be in a measure forgotten, - I may be allowed to use a figure - how blessed would she be as she turned to God, and said, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." We shall recognize our friends: - husband, you will know your wife again. Mother, you will know those dear babes of yours - you marked their features when they lay panting and gasping for breath. You know how ye hung over their graves when the cold sod was sprinkled over them, and it was said, "Earth to earth. Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." But ye shall hear those loved voices again: ye shall hear those sweet voices once more; ye shall yet know that those whom ye loved have been loved by God. Would not that be a dreary heaven for us to inhabit, where we should be alike unknowing and unknown? I would not care to go to such a heaven as that. I believe that heaven is a fellowship of the saints, and that we shall know one another there. I have often thought I should love to see Isaiah; and, as soon as I get to heaven, methinks, I would ask for him, because he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. I am sure I should want to find out good George Whitefield - he who so continually preached to the people, and wore himself out with a more than seraphic zeal. O yes! We shall have choice company in heaven when we get there. There will be no distinction of learned and unlearned, clergy and laity, but we shall walk freely one among another; we shall feel that we are brethren; we shall "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." I have heard of a lady who was visited by a minister on her deathbed, and she said to him, "I want to ask you one question, now I am about to die." "Well," said the minister, "what is it?" "Oh!" said she, in a very affected way, "I want to know if there are two places in heaven, because I could not bear that Betsy in the kitchen should be in heaven along with me, she is so unrefined?" The minister turned round and said, "O! don't trouble yourself about that, madam. There is no fear of that; for, until you get rid of you accursed pride, you will never enter heaven at all." We must all get rid of our pride. We must

come down and stand on an equality in the sight of God, and see in every man a brother, before we can hope to be found in glory. Aye, we bless God, we thank him that there will be no separate table for one and for another. The Jew and the Gentile will sit down together. The great and the small shall feed in the same pasture, and we shall "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

But my text hath a yet greater depth of sweetness, for it says, that "many shall come and shall sit down." Some narrow-minded bigots think that heaven will be a very small place, where there will be a very few people, who went to their chapel or their church. I confess, I have no wish for a very small heaven, and love to read in the Scriptures that there are many mansions in my Father's house. How often do I hear people say, "Ah! straight is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it. There will be very few in heaven; there will be most lost." My friend, I differ from you. Do you think that Christ will let the devil beat him? That he will let the devil have more in hell than there will be in heaven? No; it is impossible. For then Satan would laugh at Christ. There will be more in heaven than there are among the lost. God says, that "there will be a number that no man can number who will be saved;" but he never says, that there will be a number that no man can number that will be lost. There will be a host beyond all count who will get into heaven. What glad tidings for you and for me! For, if there are so many to be saved, why should not I be saved? Why should not you? Why should not yon man, over there in the crowd, say, "cannot I be one among the multitude?" And may not that poor woman there take heart, and say, "Well, if there were but half-a-dozen saved, I might fear that I should not be one; but, since many are to come, why should not I also be saved?" Cheer up, disconsolate! Cheer up, son of mourning, child of sorrow, there is hope for thee still! I can never know that any man is past God's grace. There be a few that have sinned that sin that is unto death, and God gives them up; but the vast host of mankind are yet within the reach of sovereign mercy - "and many of them shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Look at my text again, and you will see where these people come from. They are to "come from the east and west." The Jews said that they would

all come from Palestine, every one of them, every man, woman, and child; that there would not be one in heaven that was not a Jew. And the Pharisees thought that, if they were not all Pharisees, they could not be saved. But Jesus Christ said, there will be many that will come from the east and from the west. There will be a multitude from that far-off land of China, for God is doing a great work there, and we hope that the gospel will yet be victorious in that land. There will be a multitude from this western land of England, from the western country beyond the sea in America, and from the south in Australia, and from the north in Canada, Siberia, and Russia. From the uttermost parts of the earth there shall come many to sit down in the kingdom of God. But I do not think this text is to be understood so much geographically as spiritually. When it says that they "shall come from the east and west," I think it does not refer to nations particularly, but to different kinds of people. Now, "the east and the west" signify those who are the very farthest off from religion; yet many of them will be saved and get to heaven. There is a class of persons who will always be looked upon as hopeless. Many a time have I heard a man or woman say of such a one, "He cannot be saved: he is too abandoned. What is he good for? Ask him to go to a place of worship - he was drunk on Saturday night. What would be the use of reasoning with him? There is no hope for him. He is a hardened fellow. See what he has done these many years. What good will it be to speak to him? Now, hear this, ye who think your fellows worse than yourselves - ye who condemn others, whereas ye are often just as guilty: Jesus Christ says, "many shall come from the east and west." There will be many in heaven that were drunkards once. I believe, among that blood-bought throng, there are many who reeled in and out the tavern half their lifetime. But, by the power of divine grace, they were able to dash the liquor-cup to the ground. They renounced the riot of intoxication - fled away from it - and served God. Yes! There will be many in heaven who were drunkards on earth. There will be many harlots: some of the most abandoned will be found there. You remember the story of Whitefield's once saying, that there would be some in heaven who were "the devil's castaways;" some that the devil would hardly think good enough for him, and yet whom Christ would save. Lady Huntingdon once gently hinted that such language was not quite proper. But, just at the time, there happened to be heard a ring at the bell, and Whitefield went down-stairs. Afterwards he

came up and said, "Your ladyship, what do you think a poor woman had to say to me just now? She was a sad profligate, and she said, 'O, Mr. Whitefield, when you were preaching, you told us that Christ would take in the devil's castaways, and I am one of them,'" and that was the means of her salvation. Shall anybody ever check us from preaching to the lowest of the low? I have been accused of getting all the rabble of London around me. God bless the rabble! God save the rabble! then, say I. But, suppose they are "the rabble," who need the gospel more than they do? Who require to have Christ preached to them more than they do? We have lots of those who preach to ladies and gentlemen, and we want some one to preach to the rabble in these degenerate days. Oh! here is comfort for me, for many of the rabble are to come from the east and from the west. Oh! what would you think if you were to see the difference between some that are in heaven and some that shall be there? There might be found one whose hair hangs across his eyes, his locks are matted, he looks horrible, his bloated eyes start from his face, he grins almost like an idiot, he has drunk away his very brain until life seems to have departed, so far as sense and being are concerned; yet I would tell to you, "that man is capable of salvation: - and in a few years I might say "look up yonder;" see you that bright star? discern you that man with a crown of pure gold upon his head? do you notice that being clad in robes of sapphire and in garments of light? That is the self-same man who sat there a poor, benighted, almost idiotic being; yet sovereign grace and mercy have saved him! There are none, except those, as I have said before, who have sinned the unpardonable sin, who are beyond God's mercy. Fetch me out the worst, and still I would preach the gospel to them; fetch me out the vilest, still I would preach to them, because I recollect my Master said, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled." "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

There is one more word I must notice before I have done with this sweet portion - that is the word "shall." Oh! I love God's "shalls" and "wills." There is nothing comparable to them. Let a man say "shall," what is it good for? "I will," says man, and he never performs; "I shall," says he, and he breaks his promise. But it is never so with God's "shalls." If he says "shall," it shall be; when he says "will," it will be. Now he has said here,

"many shall come." The devil says "they shall not come;" but "they shall come." Their sins say "you can't come;" God says "you shall come." You, yourselves, say, "you won't come;" God says "you shall come." Yes! There are some here who are laughing at salvation, who can scoff at Christ and mock at the gospel; but I tell you some of you shall come yet. "What!" you say, "can God make me become a Christian?" I tell you yes, for herein rests the power of the gospel. It does not ask you consent; but it gets it. It does not say, Will you have it? But it makes you willing in the day of God's power. Not against your will, but it makes you willing. It shows you its value, and then you fall in love with it; and straightway you run after it and have it. Many people have said, "we will not have anything to do with religion." yet they have been converted. I have heard of a man who once went to chapel to hear the singing, and as soon as the minister began to preach, he put his fingers in his ears and would not listen. But by-and-by some tiny insect settled on his face, so that he was obliged to take one finger out of his ears to brush it away. Just then the minister said, "he that hath ears to hear let him hear." The man listened; and God met with him at that moment to his soul's conversion. He went out a new man, a changed character. He who came in to laugh retired to pray; he who came in to mock went out to bend his knee in penitence; he who entered to spend an idle hour went home to spend an hour in devotion with his God. The sinner became a saint; the profligate became a penitent. Who know that there may not be some like that here? The gospel wants not your consent, it gets it. It knocks the enmity out of your heart. You say, "I do not want to be saved;" Christ says you shall be. He makes your will turn round, and then you cry, "Lord, save, or I perish." "Ah," might Heaven exclaim, "I knew I would make you say that;" and then he rejoices over you because he has changed your will and made you willing in the day of his power. If Jesus Christ were to stand on the platform to-night, what would many people do with him? "O!" say some, "we would make him a King." I do not believe it. They would crucify him again, if they had the opportunity. If he were to come and say, "Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by me?" not one of you would consent if you were left to your will. If he should look upon you with those eyes, before whose power the lion would have crouched; if he spoke with that voice which poured forth a cataract of eloquence like a stream of nectar rolling down from the cliffs above, not a single person would come to be his disciple. No; it wants the



power of the Spirit to make men come to Jesus Christ. He himself said, "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Ah! we want that; and here we have it. They shall come! They shall come! Ye may laugh, ye may despise us; but Jesus Christ shall not die for nothing. If some of you reject him, there are some that will not. It there are some that are not saved, others shall be. Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. Some think that Christ died, and yet, that some for whom he died will be lost. I never could understand that doctrine. If Jesus, my surety, bore my griefs and carried my sorrows, I believe myself to be as secure as the angels in heaven. God cannot ask payment twice. If Christ paid my debt, shall I have to pay it again? No.

"Free from sin I walk at large  
The Saviour's blood's my full discharge;  
At his dear feet content I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

They shall come! They shall come! And naught in heaven, nor on earth, nor in hell, can stop them from coming.

And now, thou chief of sinners, list one moment, while I call thee to Jesus. There is one person here to-night, who thinks himself the worst soul that ever lived. There is one who says to himself, "I do not deserve to be called to Christ, I am sure!" Soul! I call thee! thou lost, most wretched outcast, this night, by authority given me of God, I call thee to come to my Saviour. Some time ago, when I went into the County Court to see what they were doing, I heard a man's name called out, and immediately the man said, "Make way! make way! They call me!" And up he came. Now, I call the chief of sinners to-night, and let him say, "Make way! make way, doubts! make way, fears! make way, sins! Christ calls me! And if Christ calls me, that is enough!"

"I'll to his gracious feet approach  
Whose sceptre mercy gives.  
Perhaps he may command me, "Touch!"  
And then the suppliant lives."

"I can but perish if I go;  
I am resolved to try,  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die."

"But, should I die with mercies sought,  
When I the king have tried,  
That were to die, (delightful thought!)  
As sinner never died."

Go and try my Saviour! Go and try my Saviour! If he cast you away after you have sought him, tell in the pit that Christ would not hear you. But that you shall never be allowed to do. It would dishonor the mercy of the covenant for God to cast away one penitent sinner; and it never shall be while it is written, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

II. The second part of my text is heart-breaking. I could preach with great delight to myself from the first part; but here is a dreary task to my soul, because there are gloomy words here. But, as I have told you, what is written in the Bible must be preached, whether it be gloomy or cheerful. There are some ministers who never mention anything about hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation, "If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to that place which it is not polite to mention." He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words. Now, if I saw that house on fire over there, do you think I would stand and say, "I believe the operation of combustion is proceeding yonder?" No; I would call out, "Fire! fire! and then everybody would know what I meant. So, if the Bible says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness," am I to stand here and mince the matter at all? God forbid! We must speak the truth as it is written. It is a terrible truth, for it says, "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out!" Now, who are those children? I will tell you. "The children of the kingdom" are those people who are noted for the externals of piety, but who have nothing of the internals of it. People whom you will see with their Bibles and Hymn Books marching off to chapel as religiously as possible, or going to church as devoutly and demurely as they can, looking as sombre and serious as parish beadles,

and fancying that they are quite sure to be saved, though their hearts are not in the matter; nothing but their bodies. These are the persons who are "the children of the kingdom." They have no grace, no life, no Christ, and they shall be cast into outer darkness.

Again, these people are the children of pious fathers and mothers. There is nothing touches a man's heart, mark you, like talking about his mother. I have heard of a swearing sailor, whom nobody could manage, not even the police, who was always making some disturbance wherever he went. Once he went into a place of worship, and no one could keep him still; but a gentleman went up and said to him, "Jack, you had a mother once." With that the tears ran down his cheeks. He said, "Ha! bless you, sir, I had; and I brought her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, and a pretty fellow I am to be here to-night." He then sat down, quite sobered and subdued by the very mention of his mother. Ah, and there are some of you, "children of the kingdom," who can remember your mothers. Your mother took you on her knee and taught you early to pray; your father tutored you in the ways of godliness. And yet you are here to-night, without grace in you heart - without hope of heaven. You are going downwards towards hell as fast as your feet can carry you. There are some of you who have broken your poor mother's heart. Oh! if I could tell you what she has suffered for you when you have at night been indulging in you sin. Do you know what your guilt will be, ye "children of the kingdom," if ye perish after a pious mother's prayers and tears have fallen upon you? I can conceive of no one entering hell with a worse grace than the man who goes there with drops of his mother's tears on his head, and with his father's prayers following him at his heels. Some of you will inevitably endure this doom; some of you, young men and women, shall wake up one day and find yourselves in utter darkness, while your parents shall be up there in heaven, looking down upon you with upbraiding eyes, seeming to say, "What! after all we did for you, all we said, are ye come to this?" "Children of the kingdom!" do not think that a pious mother can save you. Do not think, because your father was a member of such-and-such a church, that his godliness will save you. I can suppose some one standing at heaven's gate, and demanding, "Let me in! Let me in!" What for? "Because my mother is in there." Your mother had nothing to do with you. If she was holy, she was holy for herself; if she

was evil, she was evil for herself. "But my grandfather prayed for me!" That is no use: did you pray for yourself? "No, I did not." Then grandfather's prayers, and grandmother's prayers, and father's and mother's prayers may be piled on the top of one another till they reach the stars, but they never can make a ladder for you to go to heaven by. You must seek God for yourself; or rather, God must seek you. You must have vital experience of godliness in you heart, or else you are lost, even though all your friends were in heaven. That was a dreadful dream which a pious mother once had, and told to her children. She thought the judgment day was come. The great books were opened. They all stood before God. And Jesus Christ said, "Separate the chaff from the wheat; put the goats on the left hand, and the sheep on the right. The mother dreamed that she and her children were standing just in the middle of the great assembly. And the angel came, and said, "I must take the mother, she is a sheep: she must go to the right hand. The children are goats: they must go on the left." She thought as she went, her children clutched her, and said, "Mother, can we part? Must we be separated?" She then put her arms around them, and seemed to say, "My children, I would, if possible, take you with me." But in a moment the angel touched her; her cheeks were dried, and now, overcoming natural affection, being rendered supernatural and sublime, resigned to God's will, she said, "My children, I taught you well, I trained you up, and you forsook the ways of God; and now all I have to say is, Amen to you condemnation." Thereupon they were snatched away, and she saw them in perpetual torment while she was in heaven. Young man, what will you think, when the last day comes, to hear Christ say, "Depart, ye cursed?" And there will be a voice just behind him, saying, Amen. And, as you inquire whence came the voice, you will find it was your mother. Or, young woman, when thou art cast away into utter darkness, what will you think to hear a voice saying, Amen. And as you look, there sits your father, his lips still moving with the solemn curse. Ah! "children of the kingdom," the penitent reprobates will enter heaven, many of them; publicans and sinners will get there; repenting drunkards and swearers will be saved; but many of the "children of the kingdom" will be cast out. Oh! to think that you who have been so well trained should be lost, while many of the worse will be saved. It will be the hell of hells for you to look up and see there "poor Jack," the drunkard, lying in Abraham's bosom, while you, who have had a pious

mother, are cast into hell, simply because you would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but put his gospel from you, and lived and died without it! That were the very sting of all, to see ourselves cast away, when the chief of sinners finds salvation.

Now list to me a little while - I will not detain you long - whilst I undertake the doleful task of telling you what is to become of these "children of the kingdom." Jesus Christ says they are to be "cast into utter darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

First, notice, they are to be cast out. They are not said to go; but, when they come to heaven's gates, they are to be cast out. As soon as hypocrites arrive at the gates of heaven, Justice will say, "There he comes! there he comes! He spurned a father's prayers, and mocked a mother's tears. He has forced his way downward against all the advantages mercy has supplied. And now, there he comes. "Gabriel, take the man." The angel, binding you hand and foot, holds you one single moment over the mouth of the chasm. He bids you look down - down - down. There is no bottom; and you hear coming up from the abyss, sullen moans, and hollow groans, and screams of tortured ghosts. You quiver, your bones melt like wax, and your marrow quakes within you. Where is now thy might? and where thy boasting and bragging? Ye shriek and cry, ye beg for mercy; but the angel, with one tremendous grasp, seizes you fast, and then hurls you down, with the cry, "Away, away!" And down you go to the pit that is bottomless, and roll for ever downward - downward - downward - ne'er to find a resting-place for the soles of your feet. Ye shall be cast out.

And where are you to be cast to? Ye are to be cast "into outer darkness;" ye are to be put in the place where there will be no hope. For, by "light," in Scripture, we understand "hope;" and you are to be put "into outer darkness," where there is no light - no hope. Is there a man here who has no hope? I cannot suppose such a person. One of you, perhaps, says, "I am thirty pounds in debt, and shall be sold up by-and-by; but I have a hope that I may get a loan, and so escape my difficulty." Says another, "My business is ruined, but things may take a turn yet - I have a hope." Says another, "I am in great distress, but I hope that God will provide for me." Another says, "I am fifty pounds in debt; I am sorry for it; but I will set these strong hands to work, and do my best to get out of it." One of

you thinks a friend is dying, but you have a hope that, perhaps, the fever may take a turn - that he may yet live. But, in hell, there is no hope. They have not even the hope of dying - the hope of being annihilated. They are for ever - for ever - for ever - lost! On every chain in hell, there is written "for ever." In the fires, there blaze out the words, "for ever." Up above their heads, they read "for ever." Their eyes are galled, and their hearts are pained with the thought that it is "for ever." Oh! if I could tell you to-night that hell would one day be burned out, and that those who were lost might be saved, there would be a jubilee in hell at the very thought of it. But it cannot be - it is "for ever" they are "cast into utter darkness."

But I want to get over this as quickly as I can; for who can bear to talk thus to his fellow-creatures? What is it that the lost are doing? They are "weeping and gnashing their teeth." Do you gnash you teeth now? You would not do it except you were in pain and agony. Well, in hell there is always gnashing of teeth. And do you know why? There is one gnashing his teeth at his companion, and mutters, "I was led into hell by you; you led me astray, you taught me to drink the first time." And the other gnashes his teeth and says, "What if I did? You made me worse than I should have been in after times." There is a child who looks at her mother, and says, "Mother, you trained me up to vice." And the mother gnashes her teeth again at the child, and says, "I have no pity for you, for you excelled me in it, and led me into deeper sin." Fathers gnash their teeth at their sons, and sons at their fathers. And, methinks, if there are any who will have to gnash their teeth more than others, it will be seducers, when they see those whom they have led from the paths of virtue, and hear them saying, "Ah! we are glad you are in hell with us, you deserve it, for you led us here." Have any of you, to-night, upon your consciences the fact that you have led others to the pit? O, may sovereign grace forgive you. "We have gone astray like lost sheep," said David. Now a lost sheep never goes astray alone, if it is one of a flock. I lately read of a sheep that leaped over the parapet of a bridge, and was followed by every one of the flock. So, if one man goes astray, he leads others with him. Some of you will have to account for others' sins when you get to hell, as well as your own. Oh, what "weeping and gnashing of teeth" there will be in that pit!

Now shut the black book. Who wants to say any more about it? I have warned you solemnly. I have told you of the wrath to come. The evening darkens, and the sun is setting. Ah! and the evenings darken with some of you. I can see gray-headed men here. Are your gray hairs a crown of glory, or a fool's cap to you? Are you on the very verge of heaven, or are you tottering on the brink of your grave, and sinking down to perdition?

Let me warn you, gray-headed men; your evening is coming. O, poor, tottering gray-head, wilt thou take the last step into the pit? Let a young child step before thee, and beg thee to consider. There is thy staff - it has nothing of earth to rest upon: and now, ere thou diest, bethink thyself this night; let seventy years of sin start up; let the ghosts of thy forgotten transgressions march before thine eyes. What wilt thou do with seventy wasted years to answer for - with seventy years of criminality to bring before God? God give thee grace this night to repent and to put thy trust in Jesus.

And you, middle-aged men, are not safe; the evening lowers with you, too; you may soon die. A few mornings ago, I was roused early from my bed, by the request that I would hasten to see a dying man. I hurried off with all speed to see the poor creature; but when I reached the house, he was dead - a corpse. As I stood in the room I thought, "Ah! that man little thought he should die so soon." There were his wife and children, and friends - they little thought he would die; for he was hale, strong, and hearty but a few days before. None of you have a lease of your lives. If you have, where is it? Go and see if you have it anywhere in your chest at home. No! ye may die to-morrow. Let me therefore warn you by the mercy of God; let me speak to you as a brother may speak; for I love you, you know I do, and would press the matter home to your hearts. Oh, to be amongst the many who shall be accepted in Christ - how blessed that will be! and God has said that whosoever shall call on his name shall be saved: he casts out none that come unto him through Christ.

And now, ye youths and maidens, one word with you. Perhaps you think that religion is not for you. "Let us be happy," say you: "let us be merry and joyous." How long, young man, how long? "Till I am twenty-one." Are you sure that you will live till then? Let me tell you one thing. If you do live till that time, if you have no heart for God now, you will have none

then. Men do not get better if left alone. It is with them as with the garden: if you let it alone, and permit weeds to grow, you will not expect to find it better in six months - but worse. Ah! men talk as if they could repent when they like. It is the work of God to give us repentance. Some even say, "I shall turn to God on such-and-such a day. Ah! if you felt aright, you would say, "I must run to God, and ask him to give me repentance now, lest I should die before I have found Jesus Christ, my Saviour."

Now, one word in conclusion. I have told you of heaven and hell; what is the way, then, to escape from hell and to be found in heaven? I will not tell you my old tale again to-night. I recollect when I told it you before, a good friend in the crowd said, "Tell us something fresh, old fellow." Now really, in preaching ten times a week, we cannot always say things fresh. You have heard John Gough, and you know he tells his tales over again. I have nothing but the old gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is nothing here of works. It does not say, "He who is a good man shall be saved," but "he who believes and is baptized." Well, what is it to believe? It is to put your trust entirely upon Jesus. Poor Peter once believed, and Jesus Christ said to him, "Come on, Peter, walk to me on the water." Peter went stepping along on the tops of the waves without sinking; but when he looked at the waves, he began to tremble, and down he went. Now, poor sinner, Christ says, "Come on; walk on your sins; come to me; and if you do, he will give you power. If you believe on Christ, you will be able to walk over your sins - to tread upon them and overcome them. I can remember the time when my sins first stared me in the face. I thought myself the most accursed of all men. I had not committed any very great open transgressions against God; but I recollected that I had been well trained and tutored, and I thought my sins were thus greater than other people's. I cried to God to have mercy; and I feared that he would not pardon me. Month after month, I cried to God, and he did not hear me, and I knew not what it was to be saved. Sometimes I was so weary of the world that I desired to die; but then I recollected that there was a worse world after this, and that it would be an ill matter to rush before my Maker unprepared. At times I wickedly thought God a most heartless tyrant, because he did not answer my prayer; and then, at others, I thought, "I deserve his displeasure; if he



sends me to hell, he will be just." But I remember the hour when I stepped into a little place of worship, and saw a tall, thin man step into the pulpit: I have never seen him from that day, and probably never shall, till we meet in heaven. He opened the Bible and read, with a feeble voice, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is none else." Ah, thought I, I am one of the ends of the earth; and then turning round, and fixing his gaze on me, as if he knew me, the minister said, "Look, look, look." Why, I thought I had a great deal to do, but I found it was only to look. I thought I had a garment to spin out for myself; but I found that if I looked, Christ would give me a garment. Look, sinner, that is to be saved. Look unto him, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved. That is what the Jews did, when Moses held up the brazen serpent. He said, "Look!" and they looked. The serpent might be twisting round them, and they might be nearly dead; but they simply looked, and the moment they looked, the serpent dropped off, and they were healed. Look to Jesus, sinner. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." There is a hymn we often sing, but which I do not think is quite right. It says,

"Venture on him, venture wholly;  
Let no other trust intrude."

Now, it is no venture to trust in Christ, not in the least; he who trusts in Christ is quite secure. I recollect that, when dear John Hyatt was dying, Matthew Wilks said to him, in his usual tone, "Well, John, could you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus Christ now?" "Yes," said he, "a million! a million souls!" I am sure that every Christian that has ever trusted in Christ can say Amen to that. Trust in him; he will never deceive you. My blessed Master will never cast you away.

I cannot speak much longer, and I have only to thank you for your kindness. I never saw so large a number so still and quiet. I do really think, after all the hard things that have been said, that the English people know who loves them, and that they will stand by the man who stands by them. I thank every one of you; and above all, I beg you, if there be reason or sense in what I have said, bethink yourselves of what you are, and may the Blessed Spirit reveal to you your state! May he show you that you are dead, that you are lost, ruined. May he make you feel what a

dreadful thing it would be to sink into hell! May he point you to heaven! May he take you as the angel did of old, and put his hand upon you, and say, "Flee! flee! flee! Look to the mountain; look not behind thee; stay not in all the plain." And may we all meet in heaven at last; and there we shall be happy for ever.

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## Heaven's Nurse Children

I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms. - Hosea 11:3

If you note well the opening part of this chapter, you will find that it consists of a wonderful chain of mercies; every one single line is a rare jewel, and the whole passage is a casket unspeakably precious. The chapter begins with love; ancient, sovereign, electing love. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." When the Israelitish nation was in a very low and poor estate, and was brought into slavery and subjection in Egypt, God had set his love upon it, and called it his own inheritance. Not for their numbers or greatness as a nation were they chosen, but when they were little and despised they were yet beloved of God. Distinguishing grace had written the name of Israel upon Jehovah's heart. Spiritually we who have believed are in the same favored condition, and our hearts rejoice this day at the memory of "His great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." This is the river-head, from which all the streams of after-mercy flow,—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Like the golden-sanded river which had its rise in Eden, electing love branches off into many streams, and waters all the garden of the Lord. This is the root from which the tree of blessing springs. "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Eph 1:3, 4 Let others say what they will, electing love will always be most precious to us; for it is the foundation blessing, the first of all favors, the mother of mercies. We nail to our mast the old flag of free grace, and believe with the apostle ( Eph 1:11) that we were "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The next sweet word in the chapter is sonship; "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." We are, according to the inspired apostle, "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph

1:5 Adoption follows hard upon the heels of election, and is another messenger of good tidings. Innumerable blessings come to us by this door. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Sonship with God is a dignity unspeakable, and yet it is reserved for such poor dust and ashes as we are: what shall we say concerning this? Are we not swallowed up with adoring gratitude? Unto which of the angels hath he said at any time, "Thou art my son"? but this hath been said to us; and we are thus favored above all creatures that the Lord God has made. Boundless blessings are included in sonship: it is no light thing to be a child of the Lord of Hosts, the Prince of the kings of the earth. "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ." This opens up before us far-reaching views of present covenant provision, and of future infinite bliss. To be, indeed, born into the family of God is a dignity to which the descent of an imperial prince bears no more comparison than a spark in the tinder to the sun in the heavens.

And, because we have in this chapter love and sonship, we see immediately after, in the same verse, calling, salvation, and deliverance: "I called my son out of Egypt." The Lord doth not leave his chosen people for ever in the bondage of sin; when the day of their jubilee dawns, they go forth without price or reward, with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They cannot remain for ever under guilt, nor abide heirs of wrath, even as others; out of Egypt they must come when the years are accomplished. They are his, and he will call them by his effectual grace, and separate them to himself. Their calling is something more than the common and universal gospel invitation: it is a persuasive, convincing, conquering call. They only know it whom the Lord has set apart for himself: "Whom he did predestinate them he also called." This call is like Joseph's invitation to his venerable father to come and see him: it was accompanied by the waggons in which the old man could ride. It was not only an entreating call, but an enabling call. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," says the Saviour; and he speaks to purpose, because he

helps them to come—nay, he brings them himself, carrying them, like lost sheep, "upon his shoulders rejoicing." There is no violence done to the will, but it is set free, and then, being acted upon by a graciously enlightened understanding, it yields to the call, and follows Jesus. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Israel would never have come out of Pharaoh's country, if the Lord had not fetched them; but none can say that he drove them out—nay, rather, "as for his people, he led them forth like sheep." Every step of their exodus from bondage under the divine call was the result of divine leading and influence. Even thus spiritually a peculiar but delightful stress is put upon the chosen of God, and, therefore, they come out of the Egypt of sin. The grace to eat the paschal lamb, to strike the blood upon the lintel, and to gird up the loins, and leave the land of leeks, and garlic, and onions, is given only to the heirs of the promised possession.

Then we come upon the blessing of holy rearing and education, which we have in our text: "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," as they do who have to teach little children to walk, supporting their tottering footsteps, and instructing them how to put one foot before the other, until they are able, at last, to run alone. Calvin says it means, "I have led him on foot. As a child who cannot yet walk with a firm foot is, by degrees, accustomed to do so, and the nurse, or the father, or the mother, who leads him, has a regard for his infancy; so, also, have I led Israel, as much as his feet could bear." And, as if this mercy and condescension of God, in thus comparing himself to a woman with her babe, were not sufficient, in addition to this he becomes a physician too, and grants healing; he says, "I healed them." They had not only weakness that needed to be supported, and ignorance that needed to be tutored; but they had, in addition, sickness and infirmity that needed medicine. "I healed them." He who had carried them as Shaddai—the Lord All-sufficient, became to them Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that healeth them. Who shall tell how much we all owe to heavenly pharmacy? Our diseases are deep-seated and most dangerous; how happy are we in having an omnipotent Physician, whose word alone is more than a match for all our maladies. Surely we have a sickness for every day in the year, but the Beloved Physician has a remedy for every complaint. Glory be unto him who forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases. Then, as if

all this were not enough, we find him drawing them on in the paths of obedience and holiness—not with ropes and chains, that would compel against their will, overhauling them roughly— but with forces suited for minds and hearts. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Thus does the gracious Spirit of God work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. "The love of Christ constraineth us:" "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:" "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."

Thus we have in a few lines unostentatiously opened up before us a cabinet of covenant gems, rivalling those which adorned the high priest of old. Here is a holy education for the nursling that was taunt to walk; here is exercise of the strength which the physician had restored.

As if this had not completed it, there come unburdening and rest-giving: "I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws." They had been like oxen, with a heavy yoke upon them, and God had come and taken the yoke away; and there they stood, as we see horses stand when they are made to rest, when the bearing-rein is loosened, and they stand at ease. And this God has as surely done for us as for his ancient people. He has fulfilled that word unto us, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." We enjoy the peace of God, which passeth all understanding: it keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Nor is this all for the gracious Redeemer takes care to fill his people's mouths with good things; hence, he does not forget the feeding, and it is added, "I laid meat unto them." The Lord refreshed his weary people with "food convenient for them." As the oxen, after the yoke was removed, were fed, so God, when had removed our yoke of guilty bondage, fed us with the finest of the wheat, as he made us understand the gospel of his Son. The doctrines and promises of his word are substantial meat for hungry souls. "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Certain under-shepherds are afraid of laying too much doctrinal food before the Lord's people, but it is a great mistake. Truth never surfeits, though it always satisfies. The Good Shepherd does not stint his sheep, but he gives them so much, that they lie down amid the exceeding plenty of the green pastures. They cannot eat it all, and they lie down in the midst of a superabundance, which infinite

mercy has provided. See, then, how God's boundless love piles mountain upon mountain, as the old classics used to say, Pelion upon Ossa, that we, up from the depths of our distress, may climb to the heights of his blessedness, and enjoy the fullness of the glory which God has treasured up for us in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord. One is tempted, with such a preface to our text, to linger in it, and to be like the man who made the porch of his house larger than the house itself. You can but be fed, and it matters not whether the barley loaves and fishes are in my basket, or whether I carry them loosely in my hand: so long as you are refreshed by them you will not quarrel with my disorderly serving. However, I restrain my loitering heart, and proceed to the text.

Here is the figure of a nurse and a child. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms." Let us look at this in reference to the children of Israel; then let us view it in reference to ourselves.

Take Israel's case first. They were in Egypt, and God was about to bring them forth, and make them a nation, and give them a country of their own. He began to deal with them as little children, for he selected as his ambassador and as the mediator between him and them, not a man of imperious disposition, not an Elijah with fire at his beck, or a John the Baptist with an axe in his hand, but "the man Moses, who was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth." They were childish, vain, foolish, and their leader must be very gentle and full of pity. It requires a patient disposition to deal with such grownup children, for what you could bear from children, who are children in years, you cannot so well endure from those who, though they have reached the age of maturity, have not reached the age of discretion, and seem as if they never would. You can teach a child of six; but who shall be tutor to a child of sixty? The great God, the Father of Israel, selected as a tutor for these grown up children, the meekest man that lived, and, in so doing, he dealt tenderly with them, as a mother with her child. Then, though he meant them ultimately and finally to come out of Egypt, he did not uproot them from their adopted land all at once, roughly and without previous loosening. No unexpected command was given them that they were at once to sever all the ties that connected them with the people of Egypt. They were not forced in an unlooked-for moment to leave the leeks, and

garlic, and onions, and to go forth into the desert; but a long series of miracles was exhibited before their eyes, not only that Pharaoh's power might be broken, but that they might be encouraged to venture themselves upon the providence of God, and trust themselves with him. They ought to have been strong enough have marched out of Egypt at once, at the first word of their leader. Had they forgotten the old covenant which had been made with their fathers, that, the Lord would give them a land that flowed with milk and honey? But they were little children and could not perform manly exploits; they needed to be taught courage, and manliness, and faith in the unseen God of their father Abraham. All those plagues which God wrought in the fields of Zoan, while they had a dark side to Egypt, had a bright side to Israel; it was a "teaching them to go;" a gently persuading them to trust in God, and go forth at his call. Yet, after having seen all Jehovah's wonders, when at last they did take the first step, and found themselves at Succoth, and by-and-by came to Pihahiroth by the sea, they trembled like babes who totter and are ready to fall. Was it not tender mercy on the part of God that he put forth his hand, and held them up, and drowned all their fears at once? They had been alarmed, when they heard the whip of their taskmasters, and the rattling of the war chariots behind them; but God made, as it were with one sweep, an end of every thing that need give them distress. I do not find, whatever were their foolish fears, that the children of Israel in the wilderness were ever again afraid of the Egyptians pursuing them and attempting to drive them back as slaves. The old fear was slain at once; they had been slaves, and dreaded their masters, but the strength of Egypt had been so terribly broken at the Red Sea, that Israel, who before tottered, even began to dance to the music of the triumphant timbrel. Infinite tenderness removed the stumbling block out of their way, lest their infant faith should be tripped up.

When they were fairly in the wilderness they were still treated as children, and they needed it. They had many sensible manifestations of the presence of God with them. A truly spiritual faith does not expect any manifestation to the senses. God treats us to-day as men, compared with the way in which he nursed the Israelites. We have no pillar of glory shining over a visible tabernacle; no shekinah above a material mercy-seat. We have now no holy places whatsoever; and no symbolic worship:



—  
"Where'er we seek Him He is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

Our service of the spiritual God is spiritual; we walk by faith and not by sight; we worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh. The tribes of Israel, as being in their religious childhood, had manifestations of different kinds. They saw not God, for who shall behold the invisible? but the bright light shone between the wings of the cherubim, the glory of the Lord at times burst forth from the tabernacle, and on an ever memorable occasion they heard a voice speaking out of the thick darkness from the top of Sinai, when the Lord came from Paran with ten thousand of his holy ones. We have not heard the voice, neither have we seen the glory, nor need we wish for either, since we have a sure word of testimony, and the abiding of the Holy Ghost: but the Lord treated the tribes in the wilderness as children—their faith and spirituality were so feeble that, like the young church of Christ in the upper room, which needed the rushing wind, and cloven tongues, and miraculous power, they were favored with signs and wonders to confirm their faith: "He taught them to go, taking them by their arms."

Another part of this spiritual nursing, which the Lord condescendingly gave to his people, was their instruction by symbols. He did not give to them, as he gives to us, the clear vision of the glorious gospel in the face of Jesus Christ, but as they were not capable of reading the plain sense, and they needed pictures in their books, he gave them many and most instructive symbols. They saw the morning and the evening lamb. How full of instruction must that double offering have been. They ate the passover; they saw the doors besprinkled with blood; here was a sort of kinder-garten infant school teaching for them. The high priest in his white garments, or in his glorious robes of beauty, with the Urim and Thummim glistening on his breast, the altar, the censor, the candlestick, the table of the shewbread, the laver—all these were pictures in the first A B C book for children. The gentle Father was teaching them to go. There are some childish lovers of the first covenant who would like to get the child's books back again: like big babies they cry for the horn-books of infancy, and would put aside the glory book which God has given to his

children to read in the day of the open manifestation of his Holy Spirit. We need not imitate their example. We desire not go back to the rudiments, when the Lord hath revealed himself in the person of the Only-begotten. Yet to Israel type and symbol was the main instruction, and in that respect the Lord taught them to go. Yea, and it was not only instruction by a few chosen symbols, but everything was a symbol to them. They were always being instructed and helped. The bread they ate was food from heaven, and the water they drank leaped from the living rock; they were covered from the heat by the cloud; they were lighted at night in their encampment by the fiery pillar; everything about them was fitted for a people that needed something tangible, something to be felt, something to be seen and perceived of the senses, a people in childhood who required to have everything represented to the eye as well as spoken to the ear.

The whole of that forty years' journey in the wilderness was a long "teaching them to go." They were not a people able to have formed a well-regulated state. They were no better than a mob of slaves, they were not fit for self-government; and, therefore, they were led about, trained, taught, educated by the space of forty years, before they were able to go, as they did at last, when the Lord settled them in Canaan. And note—and here I will not continue the story longer, because there are ten thousand various ways in which we can illustrate the truth—how he treated them as children even in the conquest of Canaan. Before they came up to the country to conquer it, a pestilence had destroyed many of the people. The spies said, "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof". The Lord had also sent the hornet before them—some terrible and deadly insect which had distressed and driven out the Canaanites, and, in addition to these two scourges, the fear of them and the dread of them had very much weakened their adversaries, and prepared the whole land to submit to them. That marvellous passage of the Jordan, and that miraculous falling, down of the walls of Jericho without their needing to strike a blow—were not these all the means of teaching them to go?—were they not thus gently led on till at last they became men enough to drive out the Canaanites and to settle in the land, and sit every man beneath his own vine and figtree?

We will now leave the seed of Israel, and think of ourselves a while. How very graciously has the meaning of our text been fulfilled in us. The Lord has treated us as a nurse treats a little child.

To begin with, the first step the child takes—its first introduction to the art of locomotion—is caused by the nurse's holding it up. Do we not remember the first uplifting that the Lord gave to some of us? We were grovelling in the dust, and should have been content to be there still, but, under a gracious word that he sent to us, through the ministry, or by some other means, he lifted us up, and we began to feel that there was something better for us than to be always creeping about on the earth, or lying still in supine worldliness. The nurse's hand is first put out before the child thinks of walking, and the divine power of the Holy Ghost was first exerted upon us (we being then passive under it for a while) before we felt a desire for better things. We crawled upon the earth like beasts till God taught us to stand erect in uprightness like grace-born men. We owe all to him who has taught us from our youth.

The nurse, when the child begins to walk, soon teaches it to know its own weakness. It has a fall or two, and a few bruises and tears; but the falls are necessary to its learning to walk. We, also, had many slips and falls. Oh, how often did we resolve in the most admirable manner, but our resolutions ended in smoke! How frequently did we make attempts in our own strength, and these were failures, till at last we said, "We must give it up," and we were compelled to lean wholly upon our Lord. We became more active in the right way after we were weaned from our natural self-reliant activities, which had been so dear to us; but we were very long in the weaning. Falls into sin are terrible things, and these are not what I speak of here, but I mean those broken resolutions, and those aspirations to which we did not attain, those many disappointing tumbles which we encountered when we tried to walk. It is a part of the nurse's art to let the child feel its weakness: and it is a part of our heavenly Father's wisdom to let us know how feeble we are. We are never wise, till we discover that we are fools: we are never strong, till we confess that we are weak. True enough are the Apostle's words, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

The nurse regulates the child's exertions, and allows it to take a step or two at first, and only a step or two. Do we remember how tottering were

our first steps? We limped very sadly. Our walking was comparable to the seeing of the man to whom men looked like trees. Our state of mind was a mixture of light and darkness. We cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." There were only one or two promises in God's word which I could get any hold of when I first came to him. My soul was stayed a little while on that word, "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Only that could I grasp. I have known some who could get consolation from nothing but this sweet word, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." They could believe only a little; it hardly amounted to believing: they reached as far as hoping and trusting, intermittently mixed up with a world of doubting and fearing, but they could stir no further. Very delightful to the Christian pastor is it to see a young convert begin to take the first step or two. We have seen them fall down with doubts and fears, but we have been so pleased that they could walk even a little in the way of faith, and believe even a portion of the word of God. What a mercy it is that the Lord reveals to us his own truth by slow degrees! We ought never to expect our young converts to understand the doctrine of election, and to be able to split hairs in orthodoxy. It is vain to overload them with such a precious truth as union with Christ, or so deep a doctrine as predestination. Do they know Christ as the Saviour, and themselves as sinners? Well, then, do not try to make a child run; it will never walk if you do. Do not try to teach the babe gymnastics; first let it totter on and tremble forward a little way. "I have many things to say unto you," said the Saviour, "but ye cannot hear them now." Now, had certain reputedly wise men been there they would have said, "Lord, let us hear it all; make full proof of it all; bring it all out: we can hear it—only try us." But our Lord knew what was in man, and, therefore, he only little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, brought out the truth, and he does so experimentally with his children still. We do not know our own depraved hearts so well at first as we do afterwards. The disease and the remedy have both of them to be more fully revealed to us by-and-by. Did we know at the first all we shall know hereafter, we should be so overwhelmed with the abundance of the revelation that we should not be able to endure it; the Lord, therefore, lets in the light by degrees. If a person had been long famished, and you were to find him hungry, and faint, and ready to die, your instincts would say, "Put food before him at once, and let him have all he wants." Yet this

would be a ready enough way to kill him. If you are wise, you will give him nutriment slowly, as he is able to bear it. If you have been long in the dark, and come into the light at once, your eyes smart, and you cannot bear it, you need to come to it by degrees, and thus is it with the Lord's children. By little and by little he introduces them into the glory of his kingdom, preparing them for its fullness as children are prepared for their manhood. Have you not seen how the nurse will tempt the child to take a little longer walk, by holding out a pleasant thing to allure it? And how often has our blessed Lord tempted us to some bolder deed of service, to something that required more faith than we had before, by giving us choice signs of his presence, and ravishing our hearts with his love. Some of us know what it is to have seen such sweet results from our little faith, that we could not but desire to try what stronger faith would do. God so rewarded the weak faith we had, that we felt we must rely upon him, and venture still further. Kindly hath the Lord conducted us onward in this respect.

The nurse does not let the child put too much weight upon its little legs at first, for it might be to its lasting injury. It shall have a little trial of walking: but she will put her hands under its arms, and hold it up that it shall not be tried too long, lest it be strained and injured; so does our heavenly Father try our faith by little and by little. When we shall have become men in Christ Jesus, we shall be tested by stronger trials, for the Lord loveth to put stress upon faith; he sends forth his knights of the cross upon desperate battles, knowing that he intends to glorify himself in their natural weakness, by granting them strength: but to the little babe, he sets no such stern tasks. He tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb, and deals tenderly with those that are but tender. "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young." Can you not look back, beloved brethren and sisters, to your own experience, and confirm all I have said, only feeling that you could say very much more about it if you could speak out your own heart?

The Lord has dealt with us, in other respects as children, as, for instance, in not chiding us for our many mistakes. If the nurse were to scold the child for not walking as she does; if she were to be angry with it because it is not as strong as she is; the poor thing might be long before it came to

walk at all. God sometimes does with his people as Apelles did with Alexander when he painted him—he did not draw the scar on Alexander's face, but placed his finger over it. Note how the Holy Spirit describes Sarah. There was not much good in what Sarah said on that day when she lied; but she called her husband "lord," and the Holy Spirit lights on that, and mentions it to her honor. He has often accepted our poor service, and given us sweetly to feel that it was so, though now we look back upon it, we wonder how it could have been accepted at all.

Many of us who preach the gospel, had God's blessing on our early preachings. Our knowledge was dreadfully scant, and our ability slender. We wonder how God could have blessed us, but he did. If he were to let us know how badly we do his work even now, we should despair, and do no more; but in his great mercy, he lets the light shine on the brighter spots, and lets us see what his Spirit is doing; and so we take courage and go on, and learn to walk after all. With all our tremblings, and tumblings, and failings down, we do at length learn to stand upright, and even to run in his ways.

Dear brethren and sisters, do you not feel that God has had great patience with you? Do you not wonder that he has endured you? Could you have had so much patience with another as God has had with you? Impossible. You can hardly run alone yet, can scarcely take a step without slipping or sliding, you need still to be carried in the everlasting arms like babes, and yet you are persuaded that his patience will hold out till there shall be no more need of it. He will bear us as on eagle's wings, that is, with unwearied perseverance and strength of love he will uphold us even to the end.

We must remind you, however, before we leave this, that there are some respects in which the figure before us does not come up to the full point. God has been very gracious to us, beyond what a nurse is to a child. Let us unfold this fact for a moment or two. The nurse, with the child, has not the disadvantages that God has with us, for we are full of the notion that we can walk, and thus there are two battles in our case—the first, is to get us out of our bad walking, and the next is, to teach us to walk rightly. It is sometimes more difficult to instruct a man who has been educated wrongly, than it would have been if he knew nothing. He has both to learn

and to unlearn. So with us: we have a notion that we can do so much, until the Lord shows us thee without him we can do nothing. We are very strong in our own opinion: we are blown out with pride and self-sufficiency, and that has to be taken from us; so that there is a double task for infinite mercy to perform—not merely to plant a tree, but to cut down the old tree and root it up—to get rid of our former way of walking, and then to teach us to walk in the Spirit, and not in the fancied energy of the flesh.

Moreover, you never found a babe anxious to use stilts; but every one of us, when God's Spirit has begun to teach us to walk, have been seeking to use crutches. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man. And how many of us must have deserved that curse; for trusting in man is very very common. Resting on an arm of flesh seems to be the hereditary disease of God's people. They fly first to this and then to that, but forget their true and only resting-place. The simple walk of faith, trusting and leaning alone upon the Invisible, how difficult it into bring ourselves to it! We would have some favourite child to lean upon, or husband, or wife, or friend. Our abilities, or something or other that we can see and handle, shall be the golden calf which we set up and say, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" Here is a great difficulty, then, to wean us from crutches, which are promoters of spiritual lameness.

I have never met with a child that had any fear about the nurse's power to hold it up. She puts her arms about it, and it trusts itself with her, leaning wholly upon her. But we appear to be afraid of leaning hard upon God: we cannot leave ourselves with him: we don't throw ourselves right back on the divine bosom. Yet is there no true rest to ourselves till we do. As long as we are trying to support ourselves in some measure or degree, we have not yet come to the rest of faith. I have known people who went in the sea to learn to swim, but they never dare take their feet off the bottom, and I do not see how they can swim while they also endeavor to stand on their feet. Standing and swimming cannot be managed at the same time. So there am souls that would fain trust themselves to the goodness of God, but they cannot be content without an earthly prop. They cannot quite cast themselves upon God and trust in the stream of his abundant faithfulness. This, then, is another difficulty which is not

with the nurse, but which is with our God in reference to us.

One more remark let us make, and that is, that we are, many of us, most unwilling to try to walk. Though we are believers, after a fashion, it may be said of us at this day as of those in the Saviour's time: "If the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Why, entire portions of the Christian church are afraid to trust God with the maintenance of their ministers and the support of their worship; they enter into an adulterous alliance with the State sooner than trust in God and rely upon the faithfulness of his people. And as it is with large masses of the people, so is it with separate Christians.; they cannot walk by faith; they must have some way or other of clinging to the flesh. Oh, for grace to be willing to believe in God! Oh, for power to cut the moorings, and have done with the signs, and the evidences, and the marks, and come to look upon Christ and his finished work; upon the covenant, and upon the faithful God, who breaketh not his promise and cannot turn away from his decree. May he who teacheth us to profit make us to walk in his ways. Our prayer is like that of quaint old Quarles:—

Great ALL IN ALL, that art my rest, my home;  
My way is tedious, and my steps are slow:  
Reach forth thy helping hand: or bid me come;  
I am thy child, O teach thy child to go:  
Conjoin thy sweet commands to my desire,  
And I will venture, though I fall or tire."

Now, why is it that mothers take so much pains in teaching their children to walk? I suppose the reason is, because they are their own offspring. And the reason why the Lord has been so patient with us, and will be so still, is because we are his children, still his children, still, his children! Ah there is wondrous power in that—still his children! I was sitting at table once, and I heard a mother expatiating upon her son. She said a very great deal about him; and some one sitting near me said, "I wish that good woman would be quiet." I said, "What's the matter? May she not speak of her son?" "Why," he said, "he's been transported. He was as bad a fellow as ever fired, and yet she always sees something wonderful in him." So I ventured, some little time after, when I had gained her acquaintance, to say something about this son; and I remember her



remark: "If there is nobody else to speak up for him his mother always will." Just so; she loved him so that if she could not be altogether blind to his faults, yet she would also see all that was hopeful in him, Our blessed God does not bring into the foreground what we are, so much as what he means to make us. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever." He puts our blackness away; and he sees us as we shall be when we shall bear the image of the heavenly, and shall be like our Lord. For Christ's sake, beholding our shield and looking upon the face of his anointed, he loves us and goes on to instruct us still. It seems at times as if there were a conflict in the divine bosom, and he felt he must surely give us up, but then his love rushes to the rescue, and it comes to this: "How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." He returns to us with such a word as this: "I have betrothed thee unto me in righteousness, and in mercy, and in judgment." He declares that he hates putting away: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." We are his own children. Oh! I have found it such a blessed thing, in my own experience, to plead before God that I am his child. When I was racked some months ago with pain, to an extreme degree, so that I could no longer bear it without crying out, I asked all to go from the room, and leave me alone; and then I had nothing I could say to God but this, "Thou art my Father and I am thy child; and thou, as a Father, art tender and full of mercy. I could not bear to see my child suffer as thou makest me suffer, and if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do what I 'could to help him, and put my arms under him to sustain him. Wilt thou hide thy face from me, my Father? Wilt thou still lay on a heavy hand, and not give me a smile from thy countenance?" I held the Lord to that. I talked to him as Luther would have done, and pleaded his Fatherhood in right down earnest. "Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." If he be a Father, let him show himself a Father—so I pleaded, and I ventured to say, when I was quiet, and they came back who watched me: "I shall never have such pain again from this moment, for God has heard my prayer." I bless God that ease came and the racking pain never returned. Faith mastered the pain by laying hold upon God in his own revealed character, that character in which in our darkest hour we are best able to appreciate him. I think that is why that prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven," is given

to us, because, when we are lowest, we can still say, "Our Father," and when it is very dark, and we are very weak, our childlike appeal can go up, "Father, help me! Father rescue me!" He teacheth us still to go, taking us by the arms, because he is our parent still. If any one fears God may leave him, let him enquire whether a mother can forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, for even if it be so, God will not forget his people. He has graven you upon the palms of his hands. There is a relationship between you and him so familiar that it never can be forgotten, so firm that it can never be dissolved. Be of good confidence; he will teach you to go, till you shall run without weariness, and walk without fainting. I would that all here had committed themselves to this good Father's hand; I pray that they may do so. The Holy Spirit grant it, for whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Amen.

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## **A Heavenly Pattern For Our Earthly Life**

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. - Matthew 6:10

Our Father's will shall certainly be done, for the Lord "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Let us adoringly consent that it shall be so, desiring no alteration therein. That "will" may cost us dear; yet let it never cross our wills: let our minds be wholly subjugated to the mind of God. That "will" may bring us bereavement, sickness, and loss; but let us learn to say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." We should not only yield to the divine will, but acquiesce in it so as to rejoice in the tribulation which it ordains. This is a high attainment, but we set ourselves to reach it. He that taught

us this prayer used it himself in the most unrestricted sense. When the bloody sweat stood on his face, and all the fear and trembling of a man in anguish were upon him, he did not dispute the decree of the Father, but bowed his head and cried, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." When we are called to suffer bereavements personally, or when, as a holy brotherhood, we see our best men taken away, let us know that it is well, and say most sincerely, "The will of the Lord be done."

God knows what will best minister to his gracious designs. To us it seems a sad waste of human life that man after man should go to a malarious region, and perish in the attempt to save the heathen: but infinite wisdom may view the matter very differently. We ask why the Lord does not work a miracle, and cover the heads of his messengers from the death shaft? No reason is revealed to us, but there is a reason, for the will of the great Father is the sum of wisdom. Reasons are not made known to us, else were there no scope for our faith; and the Lord loves that this noble grace should have ample room and verge enough. Our God wastes no consecrated life: he has made nothing in vain: he ordains all things according to the counsel of his will, and that counsel never errs. Could the Lord endow us with his own omniscience, we should not only consent to the deaths of his servants, but should deprecate their longer life. The same would also be true of our own living or dying. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"; and therefore we are sure that he does not afflict us by bereavement without a necessity of love. We must still see one missionary after another cut down in his prime; for there are arguments with God, as convincing with him as they are obscure to us, which require that by heroic sacrifice the foundations of the African church should be laid. Lord, we do not ask thee to explain thy reasons to us. Thou canst screen us from a great temptation by hiding thyself; for if even now we sin by asking reasons, we might soon go further, and provoke thee sorely by contending against thy reasons. He who demands a reason of God is not in a fit state to receive one. In the case of the honoured men whom the Lord has removed from us this year, there is assuredly no loss to the great cause as it is viewed by the eye of God. See the great stones and costly stones laboriously brought from the quarry to the edge of the sea! Can it be possible that these are deliberately thrown into the deep? It swallows them up! Wherefore is so much labour thrown

away? These living stones might surely have been built into a temple for the Lord; why should the waves of death engulf them? Yet more are sought for, and still more: will the hungry abyss never cease to devour? Alas, that so much precious material should be lost! It is not lost. No, not a stone of it. Thus the Lord layeth the foundation of his harbour of refuge among the people. "Mercy shall be built up for ever." In due time massive walls shall rise out of the deep, and we shall no longer ask the reason for the losses of early days.

Peace be to the memories of the heroic dead! Men die that the cause may live. "Father, thy will be done." With this prayer upon our lips let us bend low in child-like submission to the will of the great Jehovah, and then gird up our loins anew to dauntless perseverance in our holy service. Though more should be taken away next year, and the next, yet we must pray on, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

My heart is grieved for the death of beloved Hartley, and those noble men who preceded him to "the white man's grave." I had seen him especially, for it had been a joy to assist him for three years in preparing for missionary service. Alas! the preparation led to small visible results. He left us, he landed, and he died. Surely the Lord means to make further use of him; if he did not make him a preacher to the natives, he must intend that he should preach to us. I may say of each fallen missionary, "He being dead yet speaketh." "Faithful unto death," they inspire us by their example. Dying without regret in the cause of such a Master, they remind us of our own indebtedness to him. Their spirits rising to his throne are links between this Society and the glorified assembly above. Let not our thoughts go downward to their graves, but rise upward to their thrones. Does not our text point with a finger of flame from earth to heaven? Do not the dear departed ones mark a line of light between the two worlds?

If the prayer of our text had not been dictated by the Lord Jesus himself, we might think it too bold. Can it ever be that this earth, a mere drop of a bucket, should touch the great sea of life and light above and not be lost in it? Can it remain earth and yet be made like to heaven? Will it not lose its individuality in the process? This earth is subject to vanity, dimmed with ignorance, defiled with sin, furrowed with sorrow; can holiness dwell in it as in heaven? Our Divine Instructor would not teach us to pray

for impossibilities; he puts such petitions into our mouths as can be heard and answered. Yet certainly this is a great prayer; it has the hue of the infinite about it. Can earth be tuned to the harmonies of heaven? Has not this poor planet drifted too far away to be reduced to order and made to keep rank with heaven? Is it not swathed in mist too dense to be removed? Can its grave-clothes be loosed? Can thy will, O God, be done in earth as it is in heaven? It can be, and it must be; for a prayer wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit is ever the shadow of a coming blessing, and he that taught us to pray after this manner did not mock us with vain words. It is a brave prayer, which only heaven-born faith can utter; yet it is not the offspring of presumption, for presumption never longs for the will of the Lord to be perfectly performed.

I. May the Holy Spirit be with us, while I first lead you to observe that **THE COMPARISON IS NOT FAR FETCHED**. That our present obedience to God should be like to that of holy ones above is not a strained and fanatical notion. It is not far-fetched, for earth and heaven were called into being by the same Creator. The empire of the Maker comprehends the upper and the lower regions. "The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's"; and "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He sustaineth all things by the word of his power both in heaven above and in the earth beneath. Jesus reigneth both among angels and men, for he is the Lord of all. If, then, heaven and earth were created by the same God, and are sustained by the same power, and governed from the same throne, we believe that the same end will be subserved by each of them, and that both heaven and earth shall tell out the glory of God. They are two bells of the same chime, and this is the music that peals forth from them: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!" If earth were of the devil and heaven were of God, and two self-existent powers were contending for the mastery, we might question whether earth would ever be as pure as heaven; but as our ears have twice heard the divine declaration, "Power belongeth unto God," we expect to see that power triumphant, and the dragon cast out from earth as well as heaven. Why should not every part of the great Creator's handiwork become equally radiant with his glory? He that made can remake. The curse which fell upon the ground was not eternal; thorns and thistles pass away. God will bless the earth for Christ's sake even as once he cursed it for man's sake.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It was so once. Perfect obedience to the heavenly upon this earth will only be a return to the good old times which ended at the gate of Eden. There was a day when no gulf was digged between earth and heaven; there was scarce a boundary line, for the God of heaven walked in Paradise with Adam. All things on earth were then pure, and true, and happy. It was the garden of the Lord. Alas, that the trail of the serpent has now defiled everything. Then earth's morning song was heard in heaven, and heaven's hallelujahs floated down to earth at eventide. Those who desire to set up the kingdom of God are not instituting a new order of things; they are restoring, not inventing. Earth will drop into the old groove again. The Lord is king: and he has never left the throne. As it was in the beginning so shall it be yet again. History shall, in the divinest sense, repeat itself. The temple of the Lord shall be among men, and the Lord God shall dwell among them. "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It will be so at the last. I shall not venture far into prophecy. Some brethren are quite at home where I should lose myself. I have scarcely yet been able to get out of the gospels and the epistles; and that deep book of Revelation, with its waters to swim in, I must leave to better instructed minds. "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of that book;" to that blessing I would aspire, but I cannot yet make claim to interpret it. This much, however, seems plain,—there is to be "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This creation, which now "groaneth and travaileth in pain," in sympathy with man, is to be brought forth from its bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Blessed be the Lord Jesus, when he brought his people out of their bondage, he did not redeem their spirits only, but their bodies also: hence their material part is the Lord's as well as their spiritual nature, and hence again this very earth which we inhabit shall be uplifted in connection with us. The creation itself shall be delivered. Materialism, out of which there has been once made a vesture for the Godhead in the person of Christ, shall become a fit temple for the Lord of hosts. The New Jerusalem shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride is prepared for her husband. We are sure of this. Therefore unto this consummation let us

strive mightily, praying evermore, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Meanwhile, remember also that there is an analogy between earth and heaven, so that the one is the type of the other. You could not describe heaven except by borrowing the things of earth to symbolize it; and this shows that there is a real likeness between them. What is heaven? It is Paradise, or a garden. Walk amid your fragrant flowers and think of heaven's bed of spices. Heaven is a kingdom: thrones, and crowns, and palms are the earthly emblems of the heavenlies. Heaven is a city; and there, again, you fetch your metaphor from the dwelling-places of men. It is a place of "many mansions"—the homes of the glorified. Houses are of earth, yet is God our dwelling-place. Heaven is a wedding-feast; and even such is this present dispensation. The tables are spread here as well as there; and it is our privilege to go forth and bring in the hedge-birds and the highwaymen, that the banqueting-hall may be filled. While the saints above eat bread in the marriage supper of the Lamb, we do the like below in another sense.

Between earth and heaven there is but a thin partition. The home country is much nearer than we think. I question if "the land that is very far off" be a true name for heaven. Was it not an extended kingdom on earth which was intended by the prophet rather than the celestial home? Heaven is by no means the far country, for it is the Father's house. Are we not taught to say, "Our Father which art in heaven"? Where the Father is the true spirit of adoption counts itself near. Our Lord would have us mingle heaven with earth by naming it twice in this short prayer. See how he makes us familiar with heaven by mentioning it next to our usual food, making the next petition to be, "Give us this day our daily bread." This does not look as if it should be thought of as a remote region. Heaven, is at any rate, so near that in a moment we can speak with him that is King of the place, and he will answer to our call. Yea, before the clock shall tick again you and I may be there. Can that be a far-off country which we can reach so soon? Oh, brothers, we are within hearing of the shining ones; we are well-nigh home. A little while and we shall see our Lord. Perhaps another day's march will bring us within the city gate. And what if another fifty years of life on earth should remain, what is it but the

twinkling of an eye?

Clear enough is it that the comparison between the obedience of earth and that of heaven is not far-fetched. If heaven and heaven's God be, in truth, so near to us, our Lord has set before us a homely model taken from our heavenly dwelling-place. The petition only means—let all the children of the one Father be alike in doing his will.

II. Secondly, THIS COMPARISON IS EMINENTLY INSTRUCTIVE. Does it not teach us that what we do for God is not everything, but how we do it is also to be considered? The Lord Jesus Christ would not only have us do the Father's will, but do it after a certain model. And what an elevated model it is! Yet is it none too elevated, for we would not wish to render to our heavenly Father service of an inferior kind. If none of us dare say that we are perfect, we are yet resolved that we will never rest until we are. If none of us dare hope that even our holy things are without a flaw, yet none of us will be satisfied while a spot remains upon them. We would give to our God the utmost conceivable glory. Let the mark be as high as possible. If we do not as yet reach it, we will aim higher and yet higher. We do not desire that our pattern should be lowered, but that our imitation should be raised.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Mark the words "be done," for they touch a vital point of the text. God's will is done in heaven. How very practical! On earth his will is often forgotten, and his rule ignored. In the church of the present age there is a desire to be doing something for God, but few enquire what he wills them to do. Many things are done for the evangelizing of the people which were never commanded by the great Head of the Church, and cannot be approved of by him. Can we expect that he will accept or bless that which he has never commanded? Will-worship is as sin in his sight. We are to do his will in the first place, and then to expect a blessing upon the doing of that will. My brethren, I am afraid that Christ's will on earth is very much more discussed than done. I have heard of brethren spending days in disputing upon a precept which their dispute was breaking. In heaven they have no disputes, but they do the will of God without discord. We are best employed when we are actually doing something for this fallen world, and for the glory of our Lord. "Thy will be done": we must come to actual works of faith and



labours of love. Too often we are satisfied with having approved of that will, or with having spoken of it in words of commendation. But we must not stay in thought, resolve, or word; the prayer is practical and business-like, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." An idle man stretched himself on his bed when the sun had risen high in heaven, and as he rolled over, he muttered to himself that he wished this were hard work, for he could do any quantity of it with pleasure. Many might wish that to think and to speak were to do the will of God; for them they would have effected it very thoroughly. Up yonder there is no playing with sacred things: they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Would God his will were not alone preached and sung below, but actually done as it is in heaven.

In heaven the will of God is done in spirit, for they are spirits there. It is done in truth with undivided heart, and unquestioned desire. On earth, too often, it is done and yet not done; for a dull formality mocks real obedience. Here obedience often shades off into dreary routine. We sing with the lips, but our hearts are silent. We pray as if the mere utterance of words were prayer. We sometimes preach living truth with dead lips. It must no longer be so. Would God we had the fire and fervour of those burning ones who behold the face of God. We pray in that sense, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." I hope there is a revival of spiritual life among us, and that, to a large extent, our brotherhood is instinct with fervour; but there is room for far more zeal. Ye that know how to pray, go down upon your knees, and with the warm breath of prayer arouse the spark of spiritual life until it becomes a flame. With all the powers of our innermost being, with the whole life of God within us, let us be stirred up to do the will of the Lord on earth as it is done in heaven.

In heaven they do God's will constantly, without failure. Would God it could be so here! We are aroused to-day, but we fall asleep tomorrow. We are diligent for one hour, but sluggish the next. This must not be, dear friends. We must be steadfast, unmovable—always abounding in the work of the Lord. We need to pray for sacred perseverance, that we may imitate the days of heaven upon the earth by doing the Lord's will without a break.

They do God's will in heaven universally, without making a selection.

Here men pick and choose—take this commandment to be obeyed, and lay that commandment by as non-essential. We are, I fear, all tinctured, more or less, with this odious gall. A certain part of obedience is hard, and therefore we try to forget it. It must no longer be so; but whatsoever Jesus saith unto us we must do. Partial obedience is actual disobedience. The loyal subject respects the whole law. If anything be the will of the Lord, we have no choice in the matter, the choice is made by our Lord. Let us pray that we may neither misunderstand the Lord's will, nor forget it, nor violate it. Perhaps we are, as a company of believers, ignorantly omitting a part of the Lord's will, and this may have been hindering our work these many years; possibly there is something written by the pen of inspiration which we have not read, or something read that we have not practised; and this may hold back the arm of the Lord from working. We should often make diligent search, and go through our churches to see wherein we differ from the divine pattern. Some goodly Babylonish garment or wedge of gold may be as an accursed thing in the camp, bringing disaster to the Lord's armies. Let us not neglect anything which our God commands lest he withhold his blessing.

His will is done in heaven instantly, and without hesitation. We, I fear, are given to delays. We plead that we must look the thing round about. "Second thoughts are best," we say, whereas the first thoughts of eager love are the prime production of our being. I would that we were obedient at all hazard, for therein lies the truest safety. Oh, to do what God bids us, as God bids us, on the spot, and at the moment! It is not ours to debate, but to perform. Let us dedicate ourselves as perfectly as Esther consecrated herself when she espoused the cause of her people, and said, "If I perish, I perish." We must not consult with flesh and blood, or make a reserve for our own selfishness, but at once most vigorously follow the divine command.

Let us pray the Lord that we may do his will on earth as it is done in heaven; that is, joyfully, without the slightest weariness. When our hearts are right, it is a glad thing to serve God, though it be only to unloose the latches of our Master's shoes. To be employed by Jesus in service which will bring us no repute, but much reproach, should be our delight. If we were altogether as we should be, sorrow for Christ's sake would be joy: ay,

we should have joy right along, in dark nights as well as in bright days. Even as they are glad in heaven, with a felicity born of the presence of the Lord, so should we be glad, and find our strength in the joy of the Lord.

In heaven the will of the Lord is done right humbly. There perfect purity is set in a frame of lowliness. Too often we fall into self-gratulation, and it defiles our best deeds. We whisper to ourselves, "I did that very well." We flatter ourselves that there was no self in our conduct, but while we are laying that flattering unction to our souls, we are lying, as our self-contentment proves. God might have allowed us to do ten times as much, had he not known that it would not be safe. He cannot set us upon the pinnacle, because our heads are weak, and we grow dizzy with pride. We must not be permitted to be rulers over many things, for we should become tyrants if we had the opportunity. Brother, pray the Lord to keep thee low at his feet, for in no other place canst thou be largely used of him.

The comparison being thus instructive, I pray that we may be the better for our meditation upon it. I do not find it an easy thing even to describe the model; but if we essay to copy it: "this is the work; this is the difficulty." Unless we are girded with the divine strength we shall never do the will of God as it is done in heaven. Here is a greater labour than those of Hercules, bringing with it victories nobler than those of Alexander. To this the unaided wisdom of Solomon could not attain; the Holy Ghost must transform us, and lead the earthly in us captive to the heavenly.

III. Thirdly, I beg you to notice, dear friends, that **THIS COMPARISON** of holy service on earth to that which is in heaven, **IS BASED UPON FACTS**. The facts will both comfort and stimulate us. Two places are mentioned in the text which seems very dissimilar, and yet the likeness exceeds the unlikeness—earth and heaven.

Why should not saints do the will of the Lord on earth as their brethren do it in heaven? What is heaven but the Father's house, wherein there are many mansions? Do we not abide in that house even now? The Psalmist said, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." Have we not often said of our Bethels, "This is none other but the

house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"? The spirit of adoption causes us to be at home with God even while we sojourn here below. Let us therefore do the will of God at once.

We have the same fare on earth as the saints in heaven, for "the Lamb in the midst of the throne doth feed them:" he is the Shepherd of his flock below, and daily feeds us upon himself. His flesh is meat indeed, his blood is drink indeed. Whence come the refreshing draughts of the immortals? The Lamb doth lead them to living fountains of waters; and doth he not even here below say to us, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"? The same river of the water of life which makes glad the city of our God above, also waters the garden of the Lord below.

Brethren, we are in the same company below as they enjoy above. Up there they are with Christ, and here he is with us, for he hath said—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." There is a difference as to the brightness of his presence; but not as to the reality of it. Thus you see we are partakers of the same privileges as the shining ones within the city gates. The church below is a chamber of the one great house, and the partition which separates it from the church above is a mere veil, of inconceivable thinness. Wherefore should we not do the Lord's will on earth as it is done in heaven?

"But heaven is a place of peace," says one; "there they rest from their labours." Beloved, our estate here is not without its peace and rest. "Alas," cries one, "I find it far otherwise." I know it. But whence come wars and fightings but of our fretfulness and unbelief? "We which have believed do enter into rest." That is not in all respects a fair allegory which represents us as crossing the Jordan of death to enter into Canaan. No, my brethren, believers are in Canaan now; how else could we say that the Canaanite is still in the land? We have entered upon the promised heritage, and we are warring for the full possession of it. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I for one do not feel like a lone dove flying over waters dark, seeking rest for the sole of her foot. No, I have found my Noah: Jesus has given me rest. There is a difference between the best estate of earth and the glory of heaven, but the rest which every soul may have that learns to conquer its will, is most deep and real. Brethren, having rest already, and being participators of the joy of the Lord, why

should we not serve God on earth as they do in heaven?

"But we have not their victory," cries one, "for they are more than conquerors." Yes, and "our warfare is accomplished." We have prophetic testimony to that fact. Moreover, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In the Lord Jesus Christ the Lord giveth us the victory, and maketh us to triumph in every place. We are warring; but we are of good cheer, for Jesus has overcome the world, and we also overcome by his blood. Ever is this our war-cry, "Victory! Victory!" The Lord will tread Satan under our feet shortly. Why should we not do the Lord's will on earth as it is done in heaven?

Heaven is the place of fellowship with God, and this is a blessed feature in its joy; but in this we are now participators, for "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The fellowship of the Holy Ghost is with us all; it is our joy and our delight. Having communion with the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are uplifted and sanctified, and it is becoming that by us the will of the Lord should be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"Up there," says a brother, "they are all accepted, but here we are in a state of probation." Did you read that in the Bible? for I never did. A believer is in no state of probation; he has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. We are already "accepted in the Beloved," and that acceptance is so given as never to be reversed. The Redeemer brought us up out of the horrible pit of probation, and he has set our feet on the rock of salvation, and there he has established our goings. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Wherefore should we not, as the accepted of the Lord, do his will on earth as it is in heaven?

"Ay," saith one, "but heaven is the place of perfect service; 'for his servants shall serve him.'" But is not this the place, in some respects, of a more extensive service still? Are there not many things which perfect saints above and holy angels cannot do? If we had choice of a sphere in which we could serve God with widest range, we should choose not heaven but earth. There are no slums and over-crowded rooms in heaven to which we can go with help, but there are plenty of them here. There are

no jungles and regions of malaria where missionaries may prove their unreserved consecration by preaching the gospel at the expense of their lives. In some respects this world has a preference beyond the heavenly state as to the extent of doing the will of God. Oh, that we were better men, and then the saints above might almost envy us! If we did but live as we should live, we might make Gabriel stoop from his throne and cry, "I wish I were a man!" It is ours to lead the van in daily conflict with sin and Satan, and at the same time ours to bring up the rear, battling with the pursuing foe. God help us, since we are honoured with so rare a sphere, to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven.

"Ay," say you, "but heaven is the place of overflowing joy." Yes, and have you no joy even now? A saint who lives near to God is so truly blessed that he will not be much astonished when he enters heaven. he will be surprised to behold its glories more clearly; but he will have the same reason for delight as he possesses to-day. We live below the same life which we shall live above, for we are quickened by the same Spirit, are looking to the same Lord, and rejoicing in the same security. Joy! Do you not know it? Your Lord says, "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." You will be larger vessels in heaven, but you will not be fuller; you will be brighter, doubtless, but you will not be cleaner than you are when the Lord has washed you and made you white in his own blood. Do not be impatient to go to heaven. Nay, do not have a wish about it. Set very loose by the things of earth; yet count it a great privilege to have a long life in which to serve the Lord on earth. Our mortal life is but a brief interval between the two eternities, and if we judged unselfishly, and saw the needs of earth, we might almost say, "Give us back the antediluvian periods of human life, that through a chiliad we might serve the Lord in suffering and in reproach, as we cannot do in glory." This life is the vestibule of glory. Array yourselves in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for this is the court-dress of earth and heaven. Manifest at once the spirit of saints, or else you will never abide with them. Now begin the song which your lips shall carol in Paradise, or else you will never be admitted to the heavenly choirs; none can unite in the music but those who have rehearsed it here below.

IV. Lastly, THIS COMPARISON, which I feel I can so feebly bring out, of

doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven, OUGHT TO BE BORNE OUT BY HOLY DEEDS. Here is the urgency of the missionary enterprise. God's will can never be intelligently done where it is not known; therefore, in the first place, it becomes us as followers of Jesus to see to it that the will of the Lord is made known by heralds of peace sent forth from among us. Why has it not been already published in every land? We cannot blame the great Father, nor impute the fault to the Lord Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, nor the mercy of God restrained. Is it not probably true that the selfishness of Christians is the main reason for the slow progress of Christianity? If Christianity is never to spread in the world at a more speedy rate than the present, it will not even keep pace with the growth of the population. If we are going to give to Christ's kingdom no larger a percentage than we have usually given, I suppose it will require about an eternity-and-a-half to convert the world; or, in other words, it will never be done. The progress made is so slow, that it threatens to be like that of the crab, which is always described in the fable as going backward. What do we give, brethren? What do we do? A friend exhorts me to say that the Baptist Missionary Society ought to raise a million a-year. I have my doubts about that; but he proposes that we should, at least, try to do so for one year. There is nothing like having a high mark to aim at. A million a-year seems hugely too much by the general consent of you all, and yet I am not sure. What amount of property is now held by Baptists? The probable estimate of money now in the hands of baptized believers in the United Kingdom might make us ashamed that a million is not put down at once. Far more than that is spent by a similar number of Englishmen upon strong drink. We do not know how much wealth lies in the custody of God's stewards; and some of them are not likely to let us know until we read it in the paper, and then we shall discover that they died worth so many hundreds of thousands. The world counts men to be worth what they hoard; but in truth they were not worth much, or else they could not have retained so much from the work of the Lord when it was needed for the spread of the gospel. As a denomination we are improving a little. We are improving a little. I was obliged to repeat that sentence, and place the emphasis in the right place. We may not congratulate ourselves: considerable room for improvement yet remains: the income of the Society might be doubled and no one oppressed in the process. It is not for us to say, "Thy will be done on earth

as it is in heaven: but, Lord. Thou hast many ways and means of accomplishing that will; I pray thee do it, but let me not be asked to help on the work." No, when I utter this prayer, if I am sincere I shall be searching my stores to see what I can give to make known the truth. I shall be enquiring whether I cannot personally speak the saving word. I shall not decline to give because the times are very hard, neither shall I fail to speak because I am of a retiring disposition. An opportunity is a golden gift. Now, do not offer the prayer of the text if you do not mean it. Better omit the petition than play the hypocrite with it. You who fail to support missions when it is in your power to do so should never say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," but leave out that petition for fear of mocking God.

Our text, dear friends, leads me to say that as God's will must be known that it may be done, it must be God's will that we should make it known; because God is love, and the law under which he has placed us is that we love. What love of God dwelleth in that man who denies to a benighted heathen that light without which he will be lost? Love is a grand word to talk of, but it is nobler as a principle to be obeyed. Can there be love of God in that man's heart who will not help to send the gospel to those who are without it? We want to bless the world; we have a thousand schemes by which to bless it, but if ever God's will is done in earth as it is done in heaven it will be an unmixed and comprehensive blessing. Join the Peace Society by all means, and be forgiving and peaceable yourself; but there is no way of establishing peace on the earth except by God's will being done in it, and that can only be done through the renewing of men's hearts by the gospel of Jesus Christ. By all manner of means let us endeavour so to control politics, as Christian men, that oppression shall not remain in the earth; but, after all, there will be oppression unless the gospel is spread. This is the one balm for all earth's wounds. They will bleed still until the Christ shall come to bind them up. Oh, let us then, since this is the best thing that can be, show our love to God and man by spreading his saving truth.

The text says, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Suppose any one of you had come from heaven. It is but a supposition; but let it stand for a minute: suppose that a man here has come fresh from heaven. Some



would be curious to see what his bodily form would be like. They would expect to be dazzled by the radiance of his countenance. However, we will let that pass. We want to see how he would live. Coming newly from heaven, how would he act? Oh, sirs, if he came here to do the same as all men do on earth, only after a heavenly sort, what a father he would be, what a husband, what a brother, what a friend! I would sit down and let him preach this morning, most assuredly; and when he had done preaching, I would go home with him, and have a chat. I should be very careful to observe what he would do with his substance. His first thought would be, if he had a shilling, to lay it out for God's glory. "But," says one, "I have to go to shop with my shilling." Be it so, but when you go say, "Oh! Lord, help me to lay it out to thy glory." There should be as much piety in buying your necessaries as in going to a place of worship. I do not think this man coming fresh from heaven would say, "I must have this luxury; I must have this goodly raiment; I must have this grand house." But he would say, "How much can I save for the God of heaven? How much can I invest in the country I came from?" I am sure he would be pinching and screwing to save money to serve God with; and he himself, as he went about the streets, and mingled with ungodly men and women, would be sure to find out ways of getting at their consciences and hearts; he would be always trying to bring others to the felicity he had enjoyed. Think that over, and live so—so as he did who really did come down from heaven. For after all, the best rule of life is, what would Jesus do if he were here to-day, and the world still lying in the wicked one? If Jesus were in your business, if he had your money, how would he spend it? For that is how you ought to spend it. Now think, my brother, you will be in heaven very soon. Since last year a great number have gone home: before next year many more will have ascended to glory. Sitting up in those celestial seats, how shall we wish that we had lived below? It will not give any man in heaven even a moment's joy to think that he gratified himself while here. It will give him no reflections suitable to the place to remember how much he amassed, how much he left behind to be quarrelled over after he was gone; he will say to himself, "I wish I had saved more of my capital by sending it on before me, for what I saved on earth was lost, but what I spent for God was really laid up where thieves do not break through and steal."

Oh, brothers, let us live as we shall wish we had lived when life is over; let us fashion a life which will bear the light eternal. Is it life to live otherwise? Is it not a sort of fainting fit, a coma, out of which life may not quite have gone, but all that is worth calling life has oozed away? Unless we are striving mightily to honour Jesus, and bring home his banished, we are dead while we live. Let us aim at a life which will outlast the fires which shall try every man's work.

If I may have moved any person here to resolve, "I will so live," I have not spoken in vain. I have at least stirred myself with the intense desire to cast off the mere outsides and husks of life, and to ripen the real kernel of my being. Thy will by me be done on earth, as yet, my Lord, I hope to do it in the skies. May I begin here a life worthy to be perpetuated in eternity. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Heavenly Race**

So run, that ye may obtain. - 1 Corinthians 9:24

We are continually insisting upon it from day to day, that salvation is not of works, but of grace. We lay this down as one of the very first doctrines of the gospel. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." But we find that it is equally necessary to preach the absolute necessity of a religious life for the attainment of heaven at last. Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet are we equally sure that no man will be saved without them; and that he who leads an unholy life, who neglects the great salvation, can never inherit that crown of life which fadeth not away. In one sense, true religion is wholly the work of God; yet there are high and important senses in which we must ourselves "strive to enter in at the strait gate." We must run a race; we must wrestle

even to agony; we must fight a battle, before we can inherit the crown of life. We have in our text the course of religion set down as a race; and inasmuch as there be many who enter upon a profession of religion with very false motives, the apostle warns us that although all run in a race, yet all do not obtain the prize: they run all, but only one is rewarded: and he gives us, therefore, the practical exhortation to run that we may obtain; for unless we are the winners we had better not have been runners at all; for he that is not a winner is a loser; he who makes a profession of religion, and does not at last obtain the crown of life, is a loser by his profession; for his profession was hypocrisy or else formality, and he had better not have made a profession, than fall therein.

And now, in entering upon the text, I shall have to notice what it is we are to run for: "So run that ye may obtain;" secondly, the mode of running, to which we must attend—"So run that ye may obtain;" and then I shall give a few practical exhortations to stir those onward in the heavenly race who are flagging and negligent, in order that they may at last "obtain."

I. In the first place, then, WHAT IS IT THAT WE OUGHT TO SEEK TO OBTAIN?

Some people think they must be religious, in order to be respectable. There are a vast number of people in the world who go to church and to chapel, because everybody else does so. It is disreputable to waste your Sundays, not to be found going up to the house of God, therefore they take a pew and attend the services, and they think they have done their duty: they have obtained all that they sought for, when they can hear their neighbors saying, "Such-and-such a man is a very respectable person; he is always very regular at his Church; he is a very reputable person, and exceedingly praiseworthy." Verily, if this be what you seek after in your religion, you shall get it; for the Pharisees who sought the praise of men "had their reward." But when you have gotten it, what a poor reward it is! Is it worth the drudgery? I do not believe that the drudgery to which people submit in order to be called respectable, is at all compensated by what they gain. I am sure, for my own part, I would not care a solitary rap what I was called, or what I was thought; nor would I perform anything that was irksome to myself for the sake of pleasing any man that ever walked beneath the stars, however great or mighty he may be. It is the

sign of a fawning, cringing spirit, when people are always seeking to do that which renders them respectable. The esteem of men is not worth the looking after, and sad it is, that this should be the only prize which some men put before them, in the poor religion which they undertake.

There are people who go a little farther: they are not content with being considered respectable, but they want something more; they desire to be considered pre-eminently saints. These persons come to our places of worship, and after a little time they venture to come forward and ask whether they may unite with our churches. We examine them, and so hidden is their hypocrisy that we cannot discover its rottenness: we receive them into our churches; they sit at the Lord's Supper; they come to our church-meetings: mayhap, they are even voted into the deacon's office; sometimes they attain to the pulpit, though God has never called them, and preach what they have never felt in their hearts. Men may do all this merely to enjoy the praise of men; and they will even undergo some persecution for the sake of it; because to be thought a saint, to be reckoned by religious people to be everything that is right and proper, to have a name among the living in Zion, is to some persons a thing exceedingly coveted. They would not like to be set down among the "chief of sinners," but if they may have their names written among the chief of saints they will consider themselves exceedingly exalted. I am afraid we have a considerable admixture of persons of this sort in our churches who only come for the mere sake of keeping up their religious pretensions and obtaining a religious status in the midst of the church of God. "Verily, I say unto you they have their reward," and they shall never have any but what they obtain here. They get their reward for a little time. for a short time they are looked up to. but perhaps even in this life they make a trip, and down they go; the church discovers them, and they are sent out like the ass stripped of the lion's skin to browse once more among their native nettles, no longer to be glorious in the midst of the church of the living God. Or mayhap, they may wear the cloak until the last day of their lives, and then death comes, and strips them of all their tinsel and gewgaw; And they who acted upon the stage of religion as kings and princes, are sent behind the stage to be unrobed and to find themselves beggars to their shame, and naked to their eternal disgrace. It is not this which you and I would seek after in religion. Dearly beloved, if we do run the race,

we would run for a higher and more glorious prize than any of these things.

Another set of people take up with religious life for what they can get by it. I have known tradespeople attend church for the mere sake of getting the custom of those who went there. I have heard of such things as people knowing which side their bread was buttered, and going to that particular denomination, where they thought they could get the most by it. Loaves and fishes drew some of Christ's followers, and they are very attracting baits, even to this day. Men find there is something to be gotten by religion. Among the poor it is, perhaps, some little charity to be obtained, and among those that are in business, it is the custom which they think to get. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward;" for the church is ever foolish and unsuspecting. We do not like to suspect our fellow creatures of following us from sordid motives. The church does not like to think that a man would be base enough to pretend to religion for the mere sake of what he can get, and, therefore, we let these people easily slip through, and they have their reward. But ah! at what a price they buy it! They have deceived the Lord's servants for gold, and they have entered into his church as base hypocrites for the sake of a piece of bread; and they shall be thrust out at last with the anger of God behind them, like Adam driven out of Eden, with the flaming Cherubim with a sword turning every way to keep the tree of life; and they shall for ever look back upon this as the most fearful crime they have committed—that they pretended to be God's people when they were not, and entered into the midst of the fold when they were but wolves in sheeps' clothing.

There is yet another class, and when I have referred to them I will mention no more. These are the people who take up with religion for the sake of quieting their conscience, and it is astonishing how little of religion will sometimes do that. Some people tell us that if in the time of storm men would pour bottles of oil upon the waves, there would be a great calm at once. I have never tried it, and it is most probable I never shall, for my organ of credulity is not large enough to accept so extensive a statement. But there are some people who think that they can calm the storm of a troubled conscience by pouring a little of the oil of a profession about religion upon it; and it is amazing how wonderful an effect this

really has. I have known a man who was drunk many times in a week, and who got his money dishonestly, and yet he always had an easy conscience by going to his church or chapel regularly on the Sunday. We have heard of a man who could "devour widows' houses"—a lawyer who could swallow up everything that came in his way, and yet he would never go to bed without saying his prayers; and that stilled his conscience. We have heard of other persons, especially among the Romanists, who would not object to thieving, but who would regard eating anything but fish on a Friday as a most fearful sin, supposing that by making a fast on the Friday, all the iniquities of all the days in the week would be put away. They want the outward forms of religion to keep the conscience quiet; for Conscience is one of the worst lodgers to have in your house when he gets quarrelsome: there is no abiding with him; he is an ill bed-fellow; ill at lying down, and equally troublesome at rising up. A guilty conscience is one of the curses of the world: it puts out the sun, and takes away the brightness from the moonbeam. A guilty conscience casts a noxious exhalation through the air, removes the beauty from the landscape, the glory from the flowing river, the majesty from the rolling floods. There is nothing beautiful to the man that has a guilty conscience. He needs no accusing; everything accuses him. Hence people take up with religion just to quiet them. They take the sacrament sometimes; they go to a place of worship; they sing a hymn now and then, they give a guinea to a charity; they intend to leave a portion in their will to build alms-houses, and in this way conscience is lulled asleep, and they rock him to and fro with religious observances, till there he sleeps while they sing over him the lullaby of hypocrisy, and he wakes not until he shall wake with that rich man who was here clothed in purple, but in the next world did lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments, without a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

What, then, is it, for which we ought to run in this race? Why heaven, eternal life, justification by faith, the pardon of sin, acceptance in the Beloved, and glory everlasting. If you run for anything else than salvation, should you will, what you have won is not worth the running for. Oh! I beseech every one of you, make sure work for eternity, never be contented with anything less than a living faith in a living Saviour; rest not until you are certain that the Holy Spirit is at work in your souls. Do not think that

the outside of religion can be of use to you; it is just the inward part of religion that God loveth. Seek to have a repentance that needeth not to be repented of—a faith which looks alone to Christ, and which will stand by you when you come into the swellings of Jordan, Seek to have a love which is not like a transient flame, burning for a moment and then extinguished; but a flame which shall increase and increase, and still increase, till your heart shall be swallowed up therein, and Jesus Christ's one name shall be the sole object of your affection. We must, in running the heavenly race, set nothing less before us than that which Christ did set before him. He set the joy of salvation before himself, and then he did run, despising the cross and enduring the shame. So let us do; and may God give us good success, that by his good Spirit we may attain unto eternal life, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord!

II. Thus have I noticed what it is we are to run for. And now the Apostle says, "So run that ye may obtain." I shall notice some people who never will obtain, and tell you the reason why, and in so doing, I shall be illustrating THE RULES OF THE RACE.

There are some people who certainly never will obtain the prize, because they are not even entered. Their names are not down for the race, and therefore it is quite clear that they will not run, or if they do run, they will run without having any warrant whatever for expecting to receive the prize. There are some such here this afternoon: who will tell you themselves, "We make no profession, sir—none whatever." It is quite as well, perhaps, that you do not; because if you did, you would be hypocrites, and it is better to make no profession at all than to be hypocrites. Still, recollect, your names are not down for the race, and therefore you cannot win. If a man tells you in business that he makes no profession of being honest, you know that he is a confirmed rogue. If a man makes no profession of being religious, you know what he is—he is irreligious—he has no fear of God before his eyes, he has no love to Christ, he has no hope of heaven. He confesses it himself. Strange that men should be so ready to confess this. You don't find persons in the street willing to acknowledge that they are confirmed drunkards. Generally a man will repudiate it with scorn. You never find a man saying to you, "I don't profess to be a chaste living man." You don't hear another

say, "I don't profess to be anything but a covetous wretch." No; people are not so fast about telling their faults: and yet you hear people confess the greatest fault to which man can be addicted: they say, "I make no profession"—which means just this—that they do not give God his due. God has made them, and yet they won't serve him; Christ hath come into the world to save sinners, and yet they will not regard him; the gospel is preached; and yet they will not hear it, they have the Bible in their houses, and yet they will not attend to its admonitions: they make no profession of doing so. It will be short work with them at the last great day. There will be no need for the books to be opened, no need for a long deliberation in the verdict. They do not profess to be pardoned; their guilt is written upon their own foreheads, their brazen shamelessness shall be seen by the whole world, as a sentence of destruction written upon their very brows. You cannot expect to win heaven unless your names are entered for the race. If there be no attempts whatever made, even at so much as a profession of religion, then of course you may just sit down and say, "Heaven is not for me; I have no part nor lot in the inheritance of Israel, I cannot say that my Redeemer liveth; and I may rest quite assured that Tophet is prepared of old for me. I must feel its pains and know its miseries; for there are but two places to dwell in hereafter, and if I am not found on the right hand of the Judge, there is but one alternative—namely, to be cast away for ever into the blackness of darkness."

Then there is another class whose names are down, but they never started right. A bad start is a sad thing. If in the ancient races of Greece or Rome a man who was about to run for the race had loitered, or if he had started before the time it would not matter how fast he ran, if he did not start in order. The flag must drop before the horse starts; otherwise, even if it reach the winning post first, it shall have no reward. There is something to be noted, then, in the starting of the race. I have known men run the race of religion with all their might, and yet they have lost it because they did not start right. You say, "Well, how is that?" Why, there are some people who on a sudden leap into religion. They get it quickly, and they keep it for a time. and at last they lose it because they did not get their religion the right way. They have heard that before a man can be saved, it is necessary that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he should feel the weight of sin, that he should make a confession of it, that he should



renounce all hope in his own works, and should look to Jesus Christ alone. They look upon all these things as unpleasant preliminaries and therefore, before they have attended to repentance, before the Holy Spirit has wrought a good work in them before they have been brought to give up everything and trust to Christ, they make a profession of religion. This is just setting up in business without a stock in trade, and there must be a failure. If a man has no capital to begin with, he may make a fine show for a little time, but it shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, a great deal of noise and much light for a little time, but it shall die out in darkness. How many there are who never think it necessary that there should be heart work within! Let us remember, however, that there never was a true new birth without much spiritual suffering, that there never was a man who had a changed heart without his first having a miserable heart. We must pass through that black tunnel of conviction before we can come out upon the high embankment of holy joy; we must first go through the Slough of Despond before we can run along the walls of Salvation. There must be ploughing before there is sowing; there must be many a frost, and many a sharp shower before there is any reaping. But we often act like little children who pluck flowers from the shrubs and plant them in their gardens without roots; then they say how fair and how pretty their little garden is; but wait a little while, and their flowers are withered, because they have no roots. This is an the effect of not having a right start, not having the "root of the matter." What is the good of outward religion, the flower and the leaf of it, unless we have the "root of the matter" in us—unless we have been digged into by that sharp iron spade of conviction, and have been ploughed with the plough of the Spirit, and then have been sown with the sacred seed of the gospel, in the hope of bringing forth an abundant harvest? There must be a good start; look well to that, for there is no hope of running unless the start be right.

Again, there are some runners in the heavenly race who cannot win because they carry too much weight. A light weight, of course, has the advantage. There are come people who have an immensely heavy weight to carry. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What is the reason? Because he carries so much weight; he has so much of the cares and pleasures of this world; he has such a burden that he is not likely to win, unless God should please to give him a mighty mass of

strength to enable him to bear it. We find many men willing to be saved, as they say; they receive the word with great joy, but by-and-bye thorns spring up and choke the word. They have so much business to do; they say they must live; they forget they must die. They have such a deal to attend to, they cannot think of living near to Christ. They find they have little time for devotions; morning prayer must be cut short, because their business begins early; they can have no prayer at night, because business keeps them so late. How can they be expected to think of the things of God? They have so much to do to answer this question—"What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" It is true they read in the Bible that their Father who is in heaven will take care of them in these things if they will trust him. But they say, "Not so." Those are enthusiasts according to their notions who rely upon providence. They say, the best providence in all the world is hard work; and they say rightly, but they forget that into the bargain of their hard work "it is in vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; for except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." You see two men running a race. One of them, as he starts, lays aside every weight, he takes off his garment and away he runs. There goes the other poor fellow, he has a whole load of gold and silver upon his back. Then around his loins he has many distrustful doubts about what shall become of him in the future, what will be his prospects when he grows old, and a hundred other things. He does not know how to roll his burden upon the Lord. See how he flags, poor fellow, and how the other distances him, leaves him far behind, has gained the corner, and is coming to the winning post. It is well for us if we can cast everything away except that one thing needful, and say, "This is my business, to serve God on earth, knowing that I shall enjoy him in heaven." For when we leave our business to God, we leave it in better hands than if we took care of it ourselves. They who carve for themselves generally cut their fingers; but they who leave God to carve for them, shall never have an empty plate. He who will walk after the cloud shall go aright, but he who will run before it shall soon find that he has gone a fool's errand. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Our Saviour said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you

that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not much better than they?" "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Carry the weight of this world's cares about you. and it will be as much as you can do to carry them and to stand upright under them, but as to running a race with such burdens, it is just impossible.

There is also another thing that will prevent man's running the race. We have known people who stopped on their way to kick their fellows. Such things sometimes occur in a race. The horse, instead of speeding onwards to the mark, is of an angry disposition, and sets about kicking those that are running beside him—there is not much probability of his coming in first. "Now they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." There is one however who never gets it, and that is the man who always attends to his fellow-creatures instead of himself. It is a mysterious thing that I never yet saw a man with a hoe on his shoulder, going to hoe his neighbour's garden, it is a rarity to see a farmer sending his team of horses to plough his neighbour's land; but it is a most singular thing that every day in the week I meet with persons who are attending to other people's character. If they go to the house of God and hear a trite thing said, they say at once "How suitable that was for Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown?" The thought never enters their head, how suitable it was to themselves. They lend their ears to everybody else, but they do not hear for themselves. When they get out of chapel, perhaps as they walk home, their first thought is, "Well, how can I find fault with my neighbors?" They think that putting other people down is going up themselves (there never was a greater mistake); that by picking holes in their neighbour's coat they mend their own They have so few virtues of their own that they do not like anybody else to have any therefore they do the best they can to despoil everything good in their neighbor; and if there be a little fault, they will look at it through a magnifying glass, but they will turn the glass the other way when they look at their own sins. Their own faults become exceedingly small while those of others become magnificently great. Now

this is a fault not only among professing religious men, but among those who are not religious. We are all so prone to find fault with other people instead of attending to our own home affairs. We attend to the vineyards of others, but our own vineyard we have not kept. Ask a worldly man why he is not religious, and he tells you "Because so-and-so makes a profession of religion and is not consistent." Pray is that any business of yours? To your own Master you must stand or fall, and so must he; God is their judge, and not you. Suppose there are a great many inconsistent Christians—and we are compelled to acknowledge that there are—so much the more reason why you should be a good one. Suppose there are a great many who deceive others; so much the more reason you should set the world an example of what a genuine Christian is. "Ah! but," you say, "I am afraid there are very few." Then why don't you make one? But after all, is that your business? Must not every man bear his own burden? You will not be judged for other men's sins, you will not be saved by their faith, you will not be condemned for their unbelief. Every man must stand in his own proper flesh and blood at the bar of God, to account for the works done in his own body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. It will be of little avail for you to say at the day of judgment, "O Lord, I wee looking at my neighbors; O Lord, I was finding fault with the people in the village; I was correcting their follies." But thus saith the Lord: "Did I ever commission thee to be a judge or a divider over them? Why, if thou hadst so much time to spare, and so much critical judgment, didst thou not exercise it upon thyself? Why didst thou not examine thyself, so that thou mightest have been found ready and acceptable in the day of God?" These persons are not very likely to win the race, because they turn to kicking others.

Again, there is another class of persons who will not win the race—namely, those who, although they seem to start very fair, very soon loiter. They dart ahead at the first starting, and distance all the others. There they fly away as if they had wings to their heels; but a little further on in the race, it is with difficulty that with whip and spur they are to be kept going at all, and they almost come to a stand still. Alas! this race of persons are to be discovered in all our churches. We get young people who come forward and make a profession of religion, and we talk with them, and we think it is all well with them, and for a little while they do

run well; there is nothing wanting in them; we could hold them up as patterns for the imitation of others. Wait a couple of years. they drop off just by little and little. First, perhaps, there is the attendance on a week-day service neglected; then it is altogether discontinued; then one service on Sabbath; then perhaps family prayer, then private prayer—one thing after another is given up, until at last the whole edifice which stood upright and looked so fair, having been built upon the sand, gives way before the shock of time, and down it falls, and great is the ruin thereof. Recollect, it is not starting that wins the race; it is running all the way. He that would be saved, must hold on to the end: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Stop and loiter in the race before you have come to the end thereof, and you have made one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly occur. On, on, on! while you live; still onward, onward, onward! for until you come to the grave, you have not come to your resting place until you arrive at the tomb, you have not come to the spot where you may cry "Halt!" Ever onward if ye would win. If you are content to lose, if you would lose your own soul, you may say, "Stop," if you please; but if you would be saved evermore, be on, on, till you have gained the prize.

But there is another class of persons, who are worse than these. They start well too, and they run very fast at first, but at last they leap over the posts and rails, they go quite out of the course altogether, and you do not know where they are gone. Every now and then, we get such people as this. They go out from us, because they are not of us, for had they been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. I might point out in my congregation on the Sabbath-day, a man whom I saw start myself. I saw him running so well I almost envied him the joy he seemed always able to preserve, the faith which ever seemed to be so buoyant and full of jubilee. Alas! just when we thought he was speeding onwards to the prize, some temptation crossed his path, and he turned aside. Away he is scrambling far over the heath, out of the path of right, and men say, "Aha! aha! so would we have it; so would we have it." And they laugh and make merriment over him, because, having once named the name of Jesus Christ, he hath afterwards gone back again, and his last end is worse than the first. Those whom God starts never do this, for they are preserved in Christ Jesus. Those who have been "entered" in the great roll of the

Covenant before all eternity shall persevere, by the aid of the good Spirit. He that began the good work in them, shall carry it on even unto the end. But, alas! there are many who run on their own account and in their own strength; and they are like the snail, which as it creeps, leaves its life as a trail upon its own path. They melt away; their nature decayeth; they perish, and where are they? Not in the church, but lost to all hope. They are like the dog that returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. "The last end of that man shall be worse than the first."

I do not think I shall now mention any other class of persons. I have brought before you the rules of the race, if you would will; if you would "so run that you may obtain," you must first of all take care to start well; you must keep to the course; you must keep strait on; you must not stop on the road, or turn aside from it, but, urged on by Divine grace, you must ever fly onwards, "like an arrow from the bow, shot by an archer strong." And never rest until the march is ended, and you are made pillars in the house of your God, to go out no more for ever.

III. But now I am about to give you some few reasons to URGE YOU ONWARD IN THE HEAVENLY RACE—those of you who are already running.

One of my reasons shall be this—"We are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses." When zealous racers on yonder heath are flying across the plain, seeking to obtain the reward, the whole heath is covered with multitudes of persons, who are eagerly gazing upon them, and no doubt the noise of those who cheer them onward, and the thousand eyes of those who look upon them, have a tendency to make them stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on. It was so in the games to which the apostle alludes. There the people sat on raised platforms, while the racers ran before them, and they cried to them, and the friends of the racers urged them forward, and the kindly voice would ever be heard bidding them go on. Now, Christian brethren, how many witnesses are looking down upon you. Down! do I say? It is even so. From the battlements of heaven the angels look down upon you, and they seem to cry to-day to you with sweet, silvery voice, "Ye shall reap if ye faint not; ye shall be rewarded if ye continue stedfast in the work and faith of Christ." And the

saints look down upon you—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; martyrs and confessors, and your own pious relatives who have ascended to heaven, look down upon you, and if I might so speak, methinks sometimes you might hear the clapping of their hands when you have resisted temptation and overcome the enemy; and you might see their suspense when you are lagging in the course, and you might hear their friendly word of caution as they bid you gird up the loins of your mind, and lay aside every weight, and still speed forward, never resting to take your breath, never staying for a moment's ease till you have attained the flowery beds of heaven. where you may rest forever. And recollect, these are not the only eyes that are looking upon you. The whole world looks upon a Christian: he is the observed of all observers. In a Christian every fault is seen. A worldly man may commit a thousand faults, and nobody notices him; but let a Christian do so, and he will very soon have his faults published to the wide world. Everywhere men are looking at Christians. and it is quite right that they should do so. I remember a young man, a member of a Christian church, who went to a public-house hall of the lowest character; and he was no sooner mounting up the stairs, than one of them said, "Ah! here comes the Methodist; we will give it to him." As soon as they had him in the room, they first of all lead him up and down to let everybody see the Methodist who had come among them, and then they kicked him down stairs. I sent them my respectful compliments for doing so, for it served him right; and I took care that he was kicked down stairs in another sense afterwards, and kicked out of the church. The world would not have him and the church would not have him. The world then looks upon you, it never misses an opportunity of throwing your religion in your teeth. If you don't give sixteen ounces to the pound of morality, if you don't come up to the mark in everything, you will hear of it again. Don't think the world is ever asleep. We say, "as sound asleep as a church," and that is a very good proverb; but we cannot say, "as sound asleep as the world" for it never sleeps; it always has its eyes open, it is always watching us in all we do. The eyes of the world are upon you. "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses;" "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And there are darker and yet more malignant eyes that scowl upon us. There are spirits that people this air, who are under the prince of the power of the air, who watch every day for our halting.

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,  
Both when we wake and when we sleep."

And alas! those spiritual creatures are not all good. There be those that are not yet chained and reserved in darkness, but who are permitted by God to wander through this world like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, ever ready to tempt us. And there is one at the head of them called Satan, the enemy, and you know his employment. He has access to the throne of God, and he makes most horrid use of it, for he accuses us day and night before the throne. The accuser of the brethren is not yet cast down—that is to be in the great day of the triumph of the Son of Man; but as Jesus stands our Advocate before the throne, so does old Satan first watch us and tempt us, and then stands as our accuser before the bar of God. O my dear brothers and sisters, if you have entered into this race, and have commenced it, let these many eyes urge you forward.

"A cloud of witnesses around  
Hold thee in full survey;  
Forget the steps already trod,  
And onward urge thy way."

And now a more urgent consideration still. Recollect, your race is win or lose—death or life, hell or heaven, eternal misery or everlasting joy. What a stake that is for which you run. If I may so put it, you are running for your life; and if that does not make a man run nothing will. Put a man there on yonder hill, and put another after him with a drawn sword seeking his life, If there is any run in him you will soon see him run; there will be no need for us to shout out to him, "Run, man, run" for he is quite certain that his life is at hazard, and he speeds with all his might—speeds till the veins stand like whipcords on his brow, and a hot sweat runs from every pore of his body—and still flees onward. Now, he looks behind, and sees the avenger of blood speeding after him; he does not stop; he spurns the ground, and on he flees till he reaches the city of refuge, where he is safe. Ah! if we had eyes to see, and if we knew who it is that is pursuing us every afar of our lives, how we should run! for lo! O man, hell is behind thee, sin pursues thee, evil seeks to overtake thee; the City of Refuge has its gates wide open; I beseech thee, rest not till thou canst say with confidence, "I have entered into this rest, and now I am secure, I know



that my Redeemer liveth." And rest not even then, for this is not the place for rest; rest not until thy six days work is done; and thy heavenly Sabbath is begun. Let this life be thy six days of ever-toiling faith. Obey thy Master's commandment; "labour therefore to enter into this rest," seeing that there are many who shall not enter in, because through their want of faith they shall not be able. If that urge not a man to speed forward, what can?

But let me picture yet one more thing; and may that help you onward! Christian, run onward, for remember who it is that stands at the winning post. You are to run onward, always looking unto Jesus, then Jesus must be at the end. We are always to be looking forward, and never backward; therefore Jesus must be there. Are you loitering? See him with his open wounds. Are you about to leave the course? See him with his bleeding hands; will not that constrain you to devote yourself to him? Will not that impel you to speed your course, and never loiter until you have obtained the crown? Your dying Master cries to you to-day, and he says. "By my agony and bloody sweat; by my cross and passion, onward! By my life, which I gave for you; by the death which I endured for your sake, onward!" And see! He holds out his hand, laden with a crown sparkling with many a star, and he says, "By this crown, onward!" I beseech you, onward, my beloved; press forward, for "I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life which fadeth not away, and not for me only, but for all them that love his appearing."

I have thus addressed myself to all sorts of characters. Will you this afternoon take that home to yourself which is the most applicable to your case. Those of you who make no profession of religion, are living without God and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel,—let me affectionately remind you that the day is coming when you will want religion. It is very well now to be sailing over the smooth waters of life, but the rough billows of Jordan will make you want a Saviour. It is hard work to die without a hope; to take that last leap in the dark is a frightful thing indeed. I have seen the old man die when he has declared he would not die. He has stood upon the brink of death, and he has said, "All dark, dark, dark! O God, I cannot die." And his agony has been fearful when the strong hand of the destroyer has seemed to push him over the precipice.

He lingered shivering on the brink, and feared to launch away." And frightful was the moment when the foot slipped and the solid earth was left, and the soul was sinking into the depths of eternal wrath. You will want a Saviour then, when your pulse is faint and few; you will need an angel then to stand at your bedside: and when the spirit is departing, you will need a sacred convoy to pilot you through the dark clouds of death and guide you through the iron gate, and lead you to the blessed mansion in the land of the hereafter. Oh, "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned. Draw us and we will run after thee; and thine shall be the glory; for the crown of our race shall be cast at thy feet, and thou shalt have the glory forever and ever.

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## Heavenly Rest

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. - Hebrews 4:9

The Apostle proved, in the former part of this and the latter part of the preceding chapter, that there was a rest promised in Scripture called the rest of God. He proved that Israel did not attain that rest for God swore in his wrath, saying, "They shall not enter into my rest." He proved that this did not merely refer to the rest of the land of Canaan; for he says that after they were in Canaan, David himself speaks again in after ages concerning the rest of God, as a thing which was yet to come. Again he proves, that "seeing those to whom it was promised did not enter in, because of unbelief, and it remaineth that some must enter in, therefore," saith he, "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

"My rest," says God: the rest of God! Something more wonderful than any other kind of rest. In my text it is (in the original) called the Sabbatism—not the Sabbath, but the rest of the Sabbath—not the outward ritual of the Sabbath, which was binding upon the Jew, but the inward spirit of the sabbath, which is the joy and delight of the Christian. "There remaineth therefore"—because others have not had it, because some are to have it—"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Now, this rest, I believe, is partly enjoyed on earth. "We that have believed do enter into rest," for we have ceased from our own works, as God did from his. But the full fruition and rich enjoyment of it remains in the future and eternal state of the beatified on the other side the stream of death. Of that it shall be our delightful work to talk a little this morning. And oh! if God should help me to raise but one of his feeble saints on the wings of love to look within the veil, and see the joys of the future, I shall be well contented to have made the joy-bells ring in one heart at least, to have set one eye flashing with joy, and to have made one spirit light with gladness. The rest of heaven! I shall try first to exhibit it

and then to extol it.

I. First, I shall try to EXHIBIT the rest of heaven; and in doing so I shall exhibit it, first by way of contrast, and then by way of comparison.

1. To begin then, I shall try to exhibit heaven by way of contrast. The rest of the righteous in glory is now to be contrasted with certain other things.

We will contrast it, first, with the best estate of the worldling and the sinner. The worldling has frequently a good estate. Sometimes his vats overflow, his barns are crammed, his heart is full of joy and gladness, there are periods with him when he flourishes like a green bay tree, when field is added to field, and house to house, when he pulls down his barns and builds greater, when the river of his joy is full, and the ocean of his life is at its flood with joy and blessedness. But sh! beloved, the state of the righteous up there is not for a moment to be compared with the joy of the sinner;—it is so infinitely superior, so far surpassing it, that it seems impossible that I should even try to set it in contrast. The worldling, when his corn and his wine are increased, has a glad eye and A joyous heart; but even then he has the direful thought that he may soon leave his wealth. He remembers that death may cut him down, that he must then leave all his fair riches behind him, and sleep like the meanest of the land in a narrow coffin, six feet of earth his only heritage. Not so the righteous man: he has obtained an inheritance which is "undefiled, and that fadeth not away." He knows that there is no possibility of his losing his joys;

"He is securely blessed,  
Has done with sin, and care, and woe,  
And doth with Jesus rest."

He has no dread of dissolution, no fear of the coffin or the shroud, and so far the life of heaven is not worthy to be put in comparison with the life of the sinner. But the worldling, with all his joys, always has a worm at the root of them. Ye votaries of pleasure! the blush upon your cheek is frequently but a painted deception. Ah! ye sons and daughters of gaiety! the light foot of your dance is not in keeping with the heavy woe of your miserable spirits. Do you not confess that if by the excitement of company

you for awhile forget the emptiness of your heart, yet silence, and the hour of midnight, and the waking watches of your bed, bid you sometimes think that there must be something more blessed than the mere wanderings of gaiety in which you now are found? You are trying the world some of you; speak then! Do you not find it empty? Might it not be said of the world, as an old philosopher said of it when he represented a man with it in his hands smiting it and listening to its ringing? Touch it, touch it I make it ring again; it is empty. So it is with the world. You know it is so; and if you know it not as yet, the day is coming when after you have plucked the sweets you shall be pricked with the thorn, and when you shall find that all is unsatisfactory that does not begin and end with God. Not so the Christian in heaven. For him there are no nights; and if there be times of solitude and rest, he is ever filled with ecstatic joy. His river floweth ever full of bliss, without one pebble of sorrow over which it ripples, he has no aching conscience, no "aching void the world can never fill." He is supremely blessed, satisfied with favor, and full with the goodness of the Lord. And ye know, ye worldlings, that your best estates often bring you great anxiety, lest they should depart from you. You are not so foolish yet as to conceive that riches endure for ever. You men of business are frequently led to see that riches take to themselves wings and fly away. You have accumulated a fortune; but you find it is harder to retain than it is to get. You are seeking after a competence; but you find that you grasp at shadows that flit away—that the everlasting vicissitudes of business and the constant changes of mankind are causes of prudent alarm to you, for you fear that you shall lose your gods, and that your gourd shall be eaten by the worm, and fall down, and your shadow shall be taken away. Not so the Christian. He lives in a house that can never hasten to decay; he wears a crown, the glister of which shall never be dim; he has a garment which shall never wax old; he has bliss that never can depart from him, nor he from it. He is now firmly set, like a pillar of marble in the temple of God. The world may rock, the tempest may sway it like the cradle of a child; but there, above the world, above the perpetual revolution of the stars, the Christian stands secure and immovable; his rest infinitely surpasseth yours. Ah I ye shall go to all the fabled luxuries of eastern monarchs, and see their dainty couches and their luscious wines. Behold the riches of their pleasantries! How charming is the music that lulls them to their sleep! How gently moves the fan that

wafts them to their slumber! But ah!

"I would not change my blest estate  
For all the world calls good or great;  
And whilst my faith can keep her hold  
I envy not the sinner's gold" -

I reckon that the richest, highest, noblest condition of a worldly man is not worthy to be compared with the joy-that is to be revealed hereafter in the breasts of those who are sanctified. O ye spendthrift mortals, that for one merry dance and a giddy life will lose a world of joys! O fools that catch at bubbles and lose realities! O ten thousand times mad men, that grasp at shadows and lose the substance! What! sirs do you think a little round of pleasure, a few years of gaiety and merriment, just a little time of the tossing about, to and fro, of worldly business, is a compensation for eternal ages of unfading bliss! Oh! how foolish will you conceive yourselves to be, when you are in the next state, when cast away from heaven you will see the saints blessed! I think I hear your mournful soliloquy, "Oh! how cheaply did I sell my soul! What a poor price did I get for all I have now lost! I have lost the palace and the crown, and the joy and bliss for ever, and am shut up in hell! And for what did I lose it? I lost it for the lascivious wanton kiss. I lost it for the merry drunken song; I lost it for just a few short years of pleasures, which, after all, were only painted pleasures!" Oh! I think I see you in your lost estates, cursing yourselves, rending your hair, that you should have sold heaven for counters and have changed away eternal life for pitiful farthings, which were spent quickly and which burned your hand in the spending of them! Oh! that ye were wise, that ye would weigh those things, and reckon that a life of the greatest happiness here is nothing compared with the glorious hereafter: "There remaineth a rest to the people of God."

Now let me put it in more pleasing contrast. I shall contrast the rest of the believer above with the miserable estate of the believer sometimes here below. Christians have their sorrows. Suns have their spots skies have their clouds, and Christians have their sorrows too. But oh! how different will the state of the righteous be up there, from the state of the believer here! Here the Christian has to suffer anxiety. He is anxious to serve his

Master, to do his best in his day and generation His constant cry is —"Help me to serve thee, O my God," and he looks out, day after day, with a strong desire for opportunities of doing good. Ah! if he be an active Christian, he will have much labor, much toil, in endeavoring to serve his Master; and there will be times when he will say, "My soul is in haste to be gone; I am not wearied of the labor, I am wearied in it. To toil thus in the sun, though for a good Master, is not the thing that just now I desire." Ah! Christian, the day shall soon be over, and thou shalt no longer have to toil; the sun is nearing the horizon; it shall rise again with a brighter day than thou hast ever seen before. There, up in heaven, Luther has no more to face a thundering Vatican; Paul has no more to run from city to city, and continent to continent, there Baxter has no more to toil in his pulpit, to preach with a broken heart to hard hearted sinners, there no longer has Knox to "cry aloud and spare not" against the immoralities of the false church; there no more shall be the strained lung, and the tired throat, and the aching eye; no more shall the sunday school teacher feel that his sabbath is a day of joyful weariness; no more shall the tract distributor meet with rebuffs. No, there, those who have served their country and their God, those who have toiled for man's welfare, with all their might, shall enter into everlasting rest. Sheathed is the sword, the banner is furled, the fight is over, the victory won; and they rest from their labors.

Here, too, the Christian is always sailing onward, he is always in motion he feels that he has not yet attained. Like Paul he can say "Forgetting the things that are behind, I press forward to that which is before." But there his weary head shall be crowned with unfading light. There the ship that has been speeding onward shall furl its sails in the port of eternal bliss. There he who, like an arrow, has sped his way shall be fixed for ever in the target. There we who like fleeting clouds were driven by every wind, shall gently distil in one perennial shower of everlasting joy. There is no progress, no motion there; they are at rest, they have attained the summit of the mountain, they have ascended to their God and our God. Higher they cannot go; they have reached the Ultima Thule, there are no fortunate islands beyond; this is life's utmost end of happiness; and they furl their sails, rest from their labors, and enjoy themselves for aye. There is a difference between the progress of earth and the perfect fixity of the

rest of hearer.

Here, too, the believer is often the subject of doubt and fear. "Am I his or am I not?" is often the cry. He trembleth lest he should be deceived, at times he almost despairs, and is inclined not to put his name down as one of the children of God. Dark insinuations are whispered into his ears, he thinks that God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that he will not be mindful of him any more. Again, his sins some times upbraid him, and he thinks God will not have mercy on him. He has a poor fainting heart; he is like Ready-to-halt, he has to go all his way on crutches; he has a poor feeble mind, always tumbling down over a straw, and fearing one day he shall be drowned in a cart-rut. Though the lions are chained he is as much afraid of them as if they were loose. Hill Difficulty often afrights him; going down into the valley of humiliation is often troublesome work to him; but there, there are no hills to climb, no dragons to fight, no foes to conquer, no dangers to dread. Ready-to-halt, when he dies, will bury his crutches, and Feeblemind will leave his feebleness behind him; Fearing will never fear again; poor Doubting-heart will learn confidently to believe. Oh, joy above all joys! The day is coming when I shall "know as I am known," when I shall not want to ask whether I am his or not, for in his arms encircled, there shall be no room for doubt. Oh! Christian, you think there are slips between your lips and that cup of joy, but when you grasp the handle of that cup with your hand, and are drinking draughts of ineffable delight, then you will have no doubt or fear.

"There you shall see his face,  
And never, never sin  
There from the rivers of his grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in."

Here, too, on earth, the Christian has to suffer; here he has the aching head and the pained body; his limbs may be bruised or broken, disease may rack him with torture; he may be an afflicted one from his birth, he may have lost an eye or an ear or he may have lost many of his powers; or if not, being of a weakly constitution he may have to spend the most of his days and nights upon the bed of weariness. Or if his body be sound, yet what suffering he has in his mind! Conflicts between depravity and gross



temptations from the evil one, assaults of hell, perpetual attacks of divers kinds, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But there, no aching head no weary heart; there no palsied arm, no brow ploughed with the furrows of old age; there the lost limb shall be recovered, and old age shall find itself endowed with perpetual youth, there the infirmities of the flesh shall be left behind, given to the worm and devoured by corruption. There they shall flit, as on the wings of angels, from pole to pole, and from place to place, without weariness or anguish; there they shall never need to lie upon the bed of rest, or the bed of suffering, for day without night, with joy unflagging, they shall circle God's throne rejoicing, and ever praise him who hath said, "The inhabitants there shall never be sick."

There, too, they shall be free from persecution. Here Sicilian Vespers, and St. Bartholomew, and Smithfield, are well-known words; but there shall be none to taunt them with a cruel word, or touch them with a cruel hand. There emperors and kings are not known, and those who had power to torture them cease to be. They are in the society of saints; they shall be free from all the idle converse of the wicked, and from their cruel jeers set free for ever. Set free from persecution! Ye army of martyrs, ye were slain, ye were torn asunder, ye were cast to wild beasts, ye wandered about in sheep skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented. I see you now, a mighty host. The habiliments you wear are torn with thorns; your faces are scarred with sufferings; I see you at your stakes, and on your crosses; I hear your words of submission on your racks, I see you in your prisons, I behold you in your pillories - but

"Now ye are arrayed in white,  
Brighter than the noonday-sun  
Fairest of the sons of light,  
Nearest the eternal throne."

These are they, who "for their Master died, who love the cross and crown;" they waded through seas of blood, in order to obtain the inheritance; and there they are, with the blood-red crown of martyrdom about their heads, that ruby brightness, far excelling every other. Yes, there is no persecution there. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

Alas! in this mortal state the child of God is also subject to sin; even he faileth in his duty, and wandereth from his God; even he doth not walk in all the law of his God blameless, though he desireth to do it. Sin now troubleth him constantly; but there sin is dead, there they have no temptation to sin, from without or from within, but they are perfectly free to serve their Master. Here the child of God has sometimes to weep repentingly of his backslidings; but there they never shed tears of penitence, for they have never cause to do so.

And last of all, here, the child of God has to wet the cold ashes of his relatives with tears; here he has to bid adieu to all that is lovely and fair of mortal race; here it is he hears, "earth to earth, and dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," while the solemn music of the dust upon the coffin lid beats doleful time to those words. Here is the mother buried, the child snatched away, the husband rent from the bosom of a loving wife, the brother parted from the sister. The plate upon the coffin, the last coat of arms of earth, earth's last emblems are here ever before our eyes. But there never once shall be heard the toll of the funeral bell, no hearse with plumes has ever darkened the streets of gold, no emblems of sorrow have ever intruded into the homes of the immortal, they are strangers to the meaning of death; they cannot die—they live for ever, having no power to decay, and no possibility of corruption. Oh! rest of the righteous, how blest art thou, where families shall again be bound up in one bundle, where parted friends shall again meet to part no more, and where the whole church of Christ united in one mighty circle, shall together praise God and the Lamb throughout eternal ages.

Brethren, I have tried thus to set the rest of the righteous in the way of contrast; I feel I have failed. Poor are the words I can utter to tell you of immortal things. Even holy Baxter himself, when he wrote of the "Saints' Rest," paused and said; "But these are only tinklings compared with the full thunders of heaven." I cannot tell you, dear friends, nor can mortal tell, what God hath prepared for them that love him.

2. And now I shall try very briefly to exhibit this contrast in the way of comparison. The Christian hath some rest here, but nothing compared

with the rest which is to come.

There is the rest of the church. When the believer joins the church of God, and becomes united with them, he may expect to rest. The good old writer of the "Pilgrim's Progress," says, that when the weary pilgrims were once admitted to the house Beautiful, they were shown to sleep in a chamber called peace," or "rest." The church-member at the Lord's table has a sweet enjoyment of rest in fellowship with the saints; but ah! up there the rest of church fellowship far surpasses anything that is known here; for there are no divisions there, no angry words at the church meetings, no harsh thoughts of one another, no bickerings about doctrine, no fightings about practice. There Baptist, and Presbyterian, and Independent, and Wesleyan, and Episcopalian, serving the same Lord, and having been washed in the same blood, sing the same song, and are all joined in one. There pastors and deacons never look coolly on each other; no haughty prelates here, no lofty-minded ministers there, but all meek and lowly, all knit together in brotherhood; they have a rest which surpasseth all the rest of the church on earth.

There is, again, a rest of faith which a Christian enjoys; a sweet rest. Many of us have known it. We have known what it is, when the billows of trouble have run high, to hide ourselves in the breast of Christ, and feel secure. We have cast our anchor deep into the rocks of God's promise, we have gone to sleep in our chamber and have not feared the tempest, we have looked at tribulation, and have smiled at, we have looked at death himself, and have laughed him to scorn, we have had much trust by Christian faith that, dauntless and fearless, nothing could move us. Yes, in the midst of calumny, reproach, slander and contempt, we have said, "I shall not be moved, for God is on my side." But the rest up there is better still more unruffled, more sweet, more perfectly calm, more enduring, and more lasting than even the rest of faith.

And, again, the Christian sometimes has the blessed rest of communion. There are happy moments when he puts his head on the Saviour's breast —when, like John, he feels that he is close to the Saviour's heart, and there he sleeps. "God giveth his beloved sleep;" not the sleep of unconsciousness, but the sleep of joy. Happy, happy, happy are the

dreams we have had on the couch of communion; blessed have been the times, when, like the spouse in Solomon's song, we could say of Christ, "His left hand was under my head, and with his right hand did he embrace me."

"But sweeter still the fountain head,  
Though sweet may be the stream;"

When we shall have plunged into a very bath of joy, we shall have found the delights even of communion on earth to have been but the dipping of the finger in the cup, but the dipping of the bread in the dish, whereas heaven itself shall be the participation of the whole of the joy, and not the mere antepast of it. Here we sometimes enter into the portico of happiness, there we shall go into the presence chamber of the King, here we look over the hedge and see the flowers in heaven's garden, there we shall walk between the beds of bliss, and pluck fresh flowers at each step; here we just look and see the sunlight of heaven in the distance, like the lamps of the thousand-gated cities shining afar off, but there we shall see them in all their blaze of splendor, here we listen to the whisperings of heaven's melody, borne by winds from afar; but there, entranced, amidst the grand oratorio of the blessed, we shall join in the everlasting hallelujah to the great Messiah, the God, the I AM. Oh! again I say, do we not wish to mount aloft, and fly away, to enter into the rest which remaineth to the people of God?

II. And now, yet more briefly, and then we shall have done. I am to endeavor to EXTOL this rest, as I have tried to EXHIBIT it. I would extol this rest for many reasons; and oh! that I were eloquent, that I might extol it as it deserves! Oh! for the lip of angel, and the burning tongue of cherub, to talk now of the bliss of the sanctified and of the rest of God's people!

It is, first, a perfect rest. They are wholly at rest in heaven. Here rest is but partial. I hope in a little time to cease from every-day labors for a season, but then the head will think, and the mind may be looking forward to prospective labor, and whilst the body is still, the brain will yet be in motion. Here, on Sabbath days a vast multitude of you sit in God's

house, but many of you are obliged to stand, and rest but little except in your mind, and even when the mind is at rest the body is wearied with the toil of standing. You have a weary mile perhaps, many miles, to go to your homes on the Sabbath day. And let the Sabbatarian say what he will, you may work on the Sabbath day, if you work for God; and this Sabbath day's work of going to the house of God is work for God, and God accepts it. For yourselves you may not labor, God commands you to rest, but if you have to toil these three, these four, these five, these six miles, as many of you have done, I will not and I must not blame you. "The priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." It is toil and labor, it is true but it is for a good cause—for your Master. But there, my friends, the rest is perfect; the body there rests perpetually, the mind too always rests; though the inhabitants are always busy, always serving God, yet they are never weary, never toil-worn, never fagged; they never fling themselves upon their couches at the end of the day, and cry, "Oh! when shall I be away from this land of oil?" They I never stand up in the burning sunlight, and wipe the hot sweat from their brow; they never rise from their bed in the morning, half refreshed, to go to laborious study. No, they are perfectly at rest, stretched on the couch of eternal joy. They know not the semblance of a tear; they have done with sin, and care, and woe, and, with their Saviour rest.

Again, it is a seasonable rest. How seasonable it will be for some of you! Ye sons of wealth, ye know not the toils of the poor; the horny-handed laborer, perhaps, you have not seen, and you not how he has to tug and to toil. Among my congregation I have many of a class, upon whom I have always looked with pity, poor women who must rise to-morrow morning with the sun, and begin that everlasting "stitch, stitch," that works their finger to the bone. And from Monday morning till Saturday night, many of you, my members, and multitudes of you, my hearers, will not be able to lay aside your needle and your thread, except when, tired and weary, you fall back on your chair, and are lulled to sleep by your thoughts of labor! Oh! how seasonable will heaven's rest be to you! Oh! how glad will you be, when you get there, to find that there are no Monday mornings, no more toil for you, but rest, eternal rest! Others of you have hard manual labor to perform; you have reason to thank God that you are strong enough to do it and you are not ashamed of your work; for labor is

an honor to a man. But still there are times when you say, "I wish I were not so dragged to death by the business of London life." We have but little rest in this huge city, our day is longer, and our work is harder than our friends in the country. You have sometimes sighed to go into the green fields for a breath of fresh air, you have longed to hear the song of the sweet birds that used to wake you when you were lads; you have regretted the bright blue sky, the beautiful flowers, and the thousand charms of a country life. And perhaps, you will never get beyond this smoky city, but remember, when you get up there, "sweet fields arrayed in living green" and "rivers of delight" shall be the place where you shall rest, you shall have all the joys you can conceive of in that home of happiness; and though worn and weary, you come to your grave, tottering on your staff; having journeyed through the wilderness of life, like a weary camel, which has only stopped on the Sabbath to sip its little water at the well, or to be baited at the oasis, there you will arrive at your journey's end, laden with gold and spices, and enter into the grand caravanserai of heaven, and enjoy for ever the things you have wearily carried with you here.

And I must say, that to others of us who have not to toil with our hands, heaven will be a seasonable rest. Those of us who have to tire our brain day after day will find it no slight boon to have an everlasting rest above. I will not boast of what I may do, there may be many who do more, there may be many who are perpetually and daily striving to serve God, and are using their mind's best energies in so doing. But this much I may say, that almost every week I have the pleasure of preaching twelve times, and often in my sleep do I think of what I shall say next time. Not having the advantage of laying out my seven shillings and sixpence in buying manuscripts, it costs me hard diligent labor to find even something to say. And I sometimes have a difficulty to keep the hopper full in the mill, I feel that if I had not now and then a rest I should have no wheat for God's children. Still it is on, on, on, and on we must go, we hear the chariot wheels of God behind us, and we dare not stop, we think that eternity is drawing nigh, and we must go on. Rest to us now is more than labor, we want to be at work; but oh! how seasonable it shall be, when to the minister it shall be said -

"Servant of God, well done!

Rest from thy loved employ;  
The battle fought, the victory won,  
Enter thy Master's joy."

It will be seasonable rest. You that are weary with state cares, and have to learn the ingratitude of men; you that have sought honors, and have got them to your cost, you seek to do your best, but your very independence of spirit is called servility, whilst your servility would have been praised! You who seek to honor God, and not to honor men, who will not bind yourselves to parties, but seek in your own independent and honest judgment to serve your country and your God you, I say, when God shall see fit to call you to himself, will find it no small joy to have done with parliaments, to have done with states and kingdoms, and to have laid aside your honors, to receive honors more lasting amongst those who dwell for ever before the throne of the Most High.

One thing, and then once more, and then farewell. This rest, my brethren, ought to be extolled, because it is eternal. Here my best joys bear "mortar" on their brow; here my fair flowers fade; here my sweet cups have dregs and are soon empty; here my sweetest birds must die, and their melody must soon be hushed; here my most pleasant days must have their nights; here the flowings of my bliss must have their ebbs, everything doth pass away, but there everything shall be immortal; the harp shall be unruined, the crown unwithered, the eye undimmed the voice unfaltering, the heart unwavering, and the being wholly consolidated unto eternity. Happy day, happy day, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and the mortal shall have put on immortality!

And then, lastly, this glorious rest is to be best of all commended for its certainty. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God." Doubting one, thou hast often said, "I fear I shall never enter heaven." Fear not, all the people of God shall enter there; there is no fear about it. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who, in his country brogue, exclaimed, "I have no fear of going home; I have sent all before me. God's finger is on the latch of my door and I am ready for him to enter." "But," said one "are you not afraid least you should miss your inheritance?" "Nay," said he "nay, there is one crown in heaven that the angel Gabriel could not wear; it will fit no

head but mine. There is one throne in heaven that Paul the apostle could not fill; it was made for me, and I shall have it. There is one dish at the banquet that I must eat, or else it will be untasted, for God has set it apart for me." O Christian, what a joyous thought! thy portion is secure! "there remaineth a rest." "But cannot I forfeit it?" No, it is entailed. If I be a child of God I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there.

"Come, Christian, mount to Pisgah's top,  
And view the landscape o'er."

Seest thou that little river of death, glistening in the sunlight, and across it dost thou see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Dost thou mark the pleasant suburbs and all the joyous inhabitants? Turn thine eye to that spot. Dost thou see where that ray of light is glancing now? There is a little spot there; dost thou see it? That is thy patrimony; that is thine. Oh, if thou couldst fly across thou wouldst see written upon it, "this remaineth for such an one, preserved for him only. He shall be caught up and dwell for ever with God." Poor doubting one; see thine inheritance; it is thine. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus thou art one of the Lord's people; if thou hast repented of sin thou art one of the Lord's people; if thou hast been renewed in heart thou art one of the Lord's people, and there is a place for thee, a crown for thee, a harp for thee. No one else shall have it but thyself, and thou shalt have it ere long. Just pardon me one moment if I beg of you to conceive of yourselves as being in heaven. Is it not a strange thing to think of—a poor clown in heaven? Think, how will you feel with your crown on your head? Weary matron, many years have rolled over you. How changed will be the scene when you are young again. Ah, toil-worn laborer, only think when thou shalt rest for aye. Canst thou conceive it? couldst thou but think for a moment, of thyself as being in heaven now, what a strange surprise would seize thee. Thou wouldst not so as much say, "What! are these streets of gold? What! are these walls of jasper?" "What, am I here? in white? Am I here, with a crown on my brow? Am I here singing, that was always groaning? What! I praise God that once cursed him? What! I lifting up my voice in his honor? Oh, precious blood that washed me clean! Oh, precious faith that set me free! Oh, precious Spirit that made me repent, else I had been cast away and been in hell! But oh! what wonders! Angels! I am surprised. I



am enraptured! Wonder of wonders! Oh! gates of pearls, I long since heard of you! Oh! joys that never fade, I long since heard tell of you! But I am like the Queen of Sheba, the half has not yet been told me. Profusion, oh profusion of bliss!—wonder of wonders!—miracle of miracles! What a world I am in! And oh! that I am here, this is the topmost miracle of all!" And yet 'tis true, 'tis true; and that is the glory of it. It is true. Come, worm, and prove it, come, pall; come shroud; come, and prove it. Then come wings of faith, come, leap like a seraph; come, eternal ages, come, and ye shall prove that there are joys that the eye hath not seen, which the ear hath not heard, and which only God can reveal to us by his spirit. Oh! my earnest prayer is, that none of you may come short of this rest, but that ye may enter into it, and enjoy it for ever and ever. God give you his great blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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## **Heavenly Worship**

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. - Revelation 14:1-3

The scene of this marvellous and magnificent vision is laid upon Mount Sion; by which we are to understand, not Mount Sion upon earth, but Mount Sion which is above, "Jerusalem, the mother of us all." To the Hebrew mind Mount Sion was a type of heaven, and very justly so. Among all the mountains of the earth none was to be found so famous as

Sion. It was there that patriarch Abraham drew his knife to slay his son; it was there, too, in commemoration of that great triumph of faith, Solomon built a majestic temple, "beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth." That Mount Sion was the centre of all the devotions of the Jews.

"Up to her courts, with joys unknown,  
The sacred tribes repaired."

Between the wings of the cherubim Jehovah dwelt; on the one altar there all the sacrifices were offered to high heaven. They loved Mount Sion, and often did they sing, when they drew nigh to her, in their annual pilgrimages, "How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord God of hosts, my King and my God!" Sion is now desolate; she hath been ravished by the enemy; she hath been utterly destroyed; her vail hath been rent asunder, and the virgin daughter of Sion is now sitting in sackcloth and ashes; but, nevertheless, to the Jewish mind it must ever, in its ancient state, remain the best and sweetest type of heaven. John, therefore, when he saw this sight might have said, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood in heaven, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand having his Father's name written in their foreheads: And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

This morning I shall endeavour to show you, first of all, the object of heavenly worship—the Lamb in the midst of the throne; in the next place we shall look at the worshippers themselves, and note their manner and their character; in the third place we shall listen to hear their song, for we may almost hear it; it is like "the noise of many waters and like great thunder;" and then we shall close by noting, that it is a new song which they sing, and by endeavouring to mention one or two reasons why it must necessarily be so.

I. In the first place, then, we wish to take a view of THE OBJECT OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP. The divine John was privileged to look within the gates of pearl; and on turning round to tell us what he saw—observe

how he begins—he saith not, "I saw streets of gold or walls of Jasper;" he saith not, "I saw crowns, marked their lustre, and saw the wearers." That he shall notice afterwards. But he begins by saying, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" To teach us that the very first and chief object of attraction in the heavenly state is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Nothing else attracted the Apostle's attention so much as the person of that Divine Being, who is the Lord God, our most blessed Redeemer: "I looked, and, lo a Lamb!" Beloved, if we were allowed to look within the vail which parts us from the world of spirits, we should see, first of all, the person of our Lord Jesus. If now we could go where the immortal spirits "day without night circle the throne rejoicing," we should see each of them with their faces turned in one direction; and if we should step up to one of the blessed spirits, and say, "O bright immortal, why are thine eyes fixed? What is it that absorbs thee quite, and wraps thee up in vision?" He, without deigning to give an answer, would simply point to the centre of the sacred circle, and lo, we should see a Lamb in the midst of the throne. They have not yet ceased to admire his beauty, and marvel at his wonders and adore his person.

"Amidst a thousand harps and songs,  
Jesus, our God, exalted reigns."

He is the theme of song and the subject of observation of all the glorified spirits and of all the angels in paradise. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!"

Christian, here is joy for thee; thou hast looked, and thou hast seen the Lamb. Through thy tearful eyes thou hast seen the Lamb taking away thy sins. Rejoice, then! In a little while, when thine eyes shall have been wiped from tears, thou wilt see the same Lamb exalted on his throne. It is the joy of the heart to hold daily fellowship and communion with Jesus; thou shalt have the same joy in heaven; "there shalt thou see him as he is, and thou shalt be like him." Thou shalt enjoy the constant vision of his presence, and thou shalt dwell with him for aye. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" Why, that Lamb is heaven itself; for as good Rutherford says, "Heaven and Christ are the same things; to be with Christ is to be in heaven, and to be in heaven is to be with Christ." And he very sweetly says in one of his letters, wrapped up in love to Christ. "Oh! my Lord Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell; and if I

could be in hell, and have thee still, it would be a heaven to me, for thou art all the heaven I want." It is true, is it not Christian? Does not thy soul say so?

"Not all the harps above  
Could make a heavenly place,  
Should Christ his residence remove,  
Or but conceal his face."

All thou needest to make thee blessed, supremely blessed, is "to be with Christ, which is far better."

And now observe the figure under which Christ is represented in heaven. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb." Now, you know Jesus, in Scripture, is often represented as a lion: he is so to his enemies, for he devoureth them, and teareth them to pieces. "Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." But in heaven he is in the midst of his friends, and therefore he

"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,  
And wears his priesthood still."

Why should Christ in heaven choose to appear under the figure of a lamb, and not in some other of his glorious characters? We reply, because it was as a lamb that Jesus fought and conquered, and, therefore as a lamb he appears in heaven. I have read of certain military commanders, when they were conquerors, that on the anniversary of their victory they would never wear anything but the garment in which they fought. On that memorable day they say, "Nay, take away the robes; I will wear the garment which has been embroidered with the sabre-cut, and garnished with the shot that hath riddled it; I will wear no other garb but that in which I fought and conquered." It seems as if the same feeling possessed the breast of Christ. "As a Lamb," saith he, "I died, and worsted hell; as a Lamb I have redeemed my people, and therefore as a Lamb I will appear in paradise."

But, perhaps, there is another reason; it is to encourage us to come to him in prayer. Ah, believer, we need not be afraid to come to Christ, for he is a

Lamb. To a lion-Christ we need fear to come; but the Lamb-Christ!—oh, little children, were ye ever afraid of lambs? Oh, children of the living God, should ye ever fail to tell your griefs and sorrows into the breast of one who is a Lamb? Ah, let us come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace, seeing a Lamb sits upon it. One of the things which tend very much to spoil prayer-meetings is the fact that our brethren do not pray boldly. They would practice reverence, as truly they ought, but they should remember that the highest reverence is consistent with true familiarity. No man more reverent than Luther; no man more fully carried out for the passage, "He talked with his Maker as a man talketh with his friend." We may be as reverent as the angels, and yet we may be as familiar as children in Christ Jesus. Now, our friends, when they pray, very frequently say the same thing every time. They are Dissenters; they cannot bear the Prayer Book; they think that forms of prayer are bad, but they always use their own form of prayer notwithstanding; as much as if they were to say that the bishop's form would not do, but their own they must always use. But a form of prayer being wrong, is as much wrong when I make it as when the bishop makes it; I am as much out of order in using what I compose myself continually and constantly, as I am when I am using one that has been composed for me; perhaps far more so, as it is not likely to be one-half so good. If our friends, however, would lay aside the form into which they grow, and break up the stereotyped plates with which they print their prayers so often, they might come boldly to the throne of God, and need never fear to do so; for he whom they address is represented in heaven under the figure of a Lamb, to teach us to come close to him, and tell him all our wants, believing that he will not disdain to hear them.

And you will further notice that this Lamb is said to stand. Standing is the posture of triumph. The Father said to Christ, "Sit thou on my throne, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." It is done; they are his footstool, and here he is said to stand erect, like a victor over all his enemies. Many a time the Saviour knelt in prayer; once he hung upon the cross; but when the great scene of our text shall be fully wrought out, he shall stand erect, as more than conqueror, through his own majestic might. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion." Oh, if we could rend the veil—if now we were privileged to see within it—there is no sight would so

enthrall us as the simple sight of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. My dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, would it not be all the sight you would ever wish to see, if you could once behold him whom your soul loveth? Would it not be a heaven to you, if it were carried out in your experience—"Mine eye shall see him, and not another's?" Would you want anything else to make you happy but continually to see him? Can you not say with the poet -

"Millions of years my wondering eyes  
Shall o'er my Saviour's beauty rove,  
And endless ages I'll adore  
The wonders of his love?"

And if a single glimpse of him on earth affords you profound delight; it must be, indeed, a very sea of bliss, and an abyss of paradise, without a bottom or a shore, to see him as he is; to be lost in his splendours, as the stars are lost in the sunlight, and to hold fellowship with him, as did John the beloved, when he leaned his head upon his bosom. And this shall be thy lot, to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

II. The second point is, THE WORSHIPPERS, WHO ARE THEY? Turn to the text, and you will not, first of all, their numbers—"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." This is a certain number put for an uncertain—I mean uncertain to us, though not uncertain to God. It is a vast number, put for that "multitude which no man can number," who shall stand before the throne of God. Now, here is something not very pleasant to my friend Bigot yonder. Note the number of those who are to be saved; they are said to be a great number, even a "hundred forty and four thousand," which is but a unit put for the vast innumerable multitude who are to be gathered home. Why, my friend, there are so many as that belonging to your church. You believe that none will be saved but those who hear your minister, and believe your creed; I do not think you could find one hundred and forty-four thousand anywhere. You will have to enlarge your heart I think; you must take in a few more, and not be so inclined to shut out the Lord's people, because you cannot agree with them. I do abhor from my heart that continual whining of some men about their own little church as the "remnant"—the "few that are to be saved." They are always

dwelling upon strait gates and narrow ways, and upon what they conceive to be a truth, that but few shall enter heaven. Why, my friends, I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell. If you ask me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how he could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in paradise. Moreover, it is said there is to be a multitude that no man can number in heaven; I have never read that there is to be a multitude that no man can number in hell. But I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! And then there are the just, and the redeemed of all nations and kindreds up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; when kingdoms shall bow before him, and nations be born in a day; and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; his train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariots of the grim monarch of hell. Christ shall be master everywhere, and his praise sounded in every land. One hundred and forty-four thousand were observed, the types and representatives of a far larger number who are ultimately to be saved.

But notice, whilst the number is very large, how very certain it is. By turning over the leaves of your Bible to a previous chapter of this book, you will see that at the 4th verse it is written, that one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed; and now we find there are one hundred and forty-four thousand saved; not 143,999, and 144,001, but exactly the number that are sealed. Now, my friends may not like what I am going to say; but if they do not like it, their quarrel is with God's Bible, not with me. There will be just as many in heaven as are sealed by God—just as many as Christ did purchase with his blood; all of them, and no more and no less. There will be just as many there as were quickened to life by the Holy Spirit, and were, "born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Ah," some say, "there is that abominable doctrine of election." Exactly so, if it be abominable; but you will never be able to cut it out of the Bible. You may hate it, and gnash

and grind your teeth against it; but, remember, we can trace the pedigree of this doctrine, even apart from Scripture, to the time of the apostles. Church of England ministers and members, you have no right to differ from me on the doctrine of election, if you are what you profess by your own Articles. You who love the old Puritans, you have no right to quarrel with me; for where will you find a Puritan who was not a strong Calvinist? You who love the fathers, you cannot differ from me. What say you of Augustine? Was he not, in his day, called a great and mighty teacher of grace? And I even turn to Roman Catholics, and, with all the errors of their system, I remind them that even in their body have been found those who have held that doctrine, and, though long persecuted for it, have never been expelled the church. I refer to the Jansenists. But, above all, I challenge every man who reads his Bible to say that that doctrine is not there. What saith the 9th of Romans? "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." And then it goes on to say to the carping objector—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?" But enough on this subject.

One hundred and forty-four thousand, we say, is a certain number made to represent the certainty of the salvation of all God's elect, believing people. Now, some say that this doctrine has a tendency to discourage men from coming to Christ. Well, you say so; but I have never seen it, and blessed be God I have never proved it so. I have preached this doctrine ever since I began to preach; but I can say this,—ye shall not (and I am now become a fool in glorying) ye shall not find among those who have not preached the doctrine, one who has been the instrument of turning more harlots, more drunkards, and more sinners of every class, from the error of their ways, than I have, by the simple preaching of the doctrine of free grace; and, while this has been so, I hold that no argument can be brought to prove that it has a tendency to discourage sinners, or bolster them up in sin. We hold, as the Bible says, that all the elect, and those only, shall be saved; all who go to Christ are elect. So that if any of you



have in your heart a desire after heaven and after Christ; if you carry out that desire in sincere and earnest prayer, and are born again, you may as certainly conclude your election as you can conclude that you are alive. You must have been chosen of God before the foundation of the world, or you would never have done any of these things, seeing they are the fruits of election.

But why should it keep any one from going to Christ? "Because," says one, "if I go to Christ I may not be elect." No, sir, if you go, you prove that you are elect. "But," says another, "I am afraid to go, in case I should not be elect." Say as an old woman once said, "If there were only three persons elected, I would try to be one of them; and since he said, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' I would challenge God on his promise, and try if he would break it." No, come to Christ; and if you do so, beyond a doubt you are God's elect from the foundation of the world; and therefore this grace has been given to you. But why should it discourage you? Suppose there are a number of sick folk here, and a large hospital has been built. There is put up over the door, "All persons who come shall be taken in:" at the same time it is known that there is a person inside the hospital, who is so wise that he knows all who will come, and has written down the names of all who will come in a book, so that, when they come, those who open the doors will only say, "How marvellously wise our Master was, to know the names of those who would come." Is there anything despiriting in that? You would go, and you would have all the more confidence in that man's wisdom, because he was able to know before that they were going. "Ah, but," you say, "it was ordained that some should come." Well, to give you another illustration; suppose there is a rule that there always must be a thousand persons, or a very large number in the hospital. You say, "When I go perhaps they will take me in, and perhaps they will not." "But," says someone, "there is a rule that there must be a thousand in: somehow or other they must make up that number of beds, and have that number of patients in the hospital." You say, "Then why should not I be among the thousand; and have not I the encouragement that whosoever goes shall not be cast out? And have I not again the encouragement, that if they will not go, they must be fetched in somehow or other; for the number must be made up; so it is determined and so it is decreed." You would therefore have a double encouragement, instead of half a one; and

you would go with confidence, and say, "They must take me in, because they say they will take all in that come; and on the other hand, they must take me in, because they must have a certain number: that number is not made up, and why should not I be one?" Oh, never doubt about election; believe in Christ, and then rejoice in election; do not fret about it till you have believed in Christ.

"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." And who were these people, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads?" Not Bs for "Baptists," not Ws for "Wesleyans," not Es for "Established Church:" they had their Father's name and nobody else's. What a deal of fuss is made on earth about our distinctions! We think such a deal about belonging to this denomination, and the other. Why, if you were to go to heaven's gates, and ask if they had any Baptists there, the angel would only look at you, and not answer you; if you were to ask if they had any Wesleyans, or members of the Established Church, he would say, "Nothing of the sort;" but if you were to ask him whether they had any Christians there, "Ay," he would say, "an abundance of them: they are all one now—all called by one name; the old brand has been obliterated, and now they have not the name of this man or the other; they have the name of God, even their Father, stamped on their brow." Learn then dear friends, whatever the connection to which you belong, to be charitable to your brethren, and kind to them, seeing that, after all, the name you now hold here will be forgotten in heaven, and only your Father's name will be there known.

One more remark here, and we will turn from the worshippers to listen to their song. It is said of all these worshippers that they learned the song before they went there. At the end of the third verse it is said, "No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." Brethren, we must begin heaven's song here below, or else we shall never sing it above. The choristers of heaven have all had rehearsals upon earth, before they sing in that orchestra. You think that, die when you may, you will go to heaven, without being prepared. Nay, sir; heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and unless you are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," you can never stand there among them. If you were in heaven

without a new heart and a right spirit, you would be glad enough to get out of it; for heaven, unless a man is heavenly himself, would be worse than hell. A man who is unrenewed and unregenerate going to heaven would be miserable there. There would be a song—he could not join in it; there would be a constant hallelujah, but he would not know a note: and besides, he would be in the presence of the Almighty, even in the presence of the God he hates, and how could he be happy there? No, sirs; ye must learn the song of paradise here, or else ye can never sing it. Ye must learn to sing -

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,  
'Tis music to my ears."

You must learn to feel that "sweeter sounds than music knows mingle in your Saviour's name," or else you can never chaunt the hallelujahs of the blest before the throne of the great "I AM." Take that thought, whatever else you forget; treasure it up in your memory, and ask grace of God that you may here be taught to sing the heavenly song, that afterwards in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the beautified, you may continually chaunt the high praises of him that loved you.

III. And now we come to the third and most interesting point, namely, **THE LISTENING TO THEIR SONG.** "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps;" singing—how loud and yet how sweet!

First, then, singing how loud! It is said to be "like the voice of many waters." Have you never heard the sea roar, and the fulness thereof? Have you never walked by the sea-side, when the waves were singing, and when every little pebble-stone did turn chorister, to make up music to the Lord God of hosts? And have you never in time of storm beheld the sea, with its hundred hands, clapping them in gladsome adoration of the Most High? Have you never heard the sea roar out his praise, when the winds were holding carnival—perhaps singing the dirge of mariners, wrecked far out on the stormy deep, but far more likely exalting God with their hoarse voice, and praising him who makes a thousand fleets sweep over them in safety, and writes his furrows on their own youthful brow? Have

you never heard the rumbling and booming of ocean on the shore, when it has been lashed into fury and has been driven upon the cliffs? If you have, you have a faint idea of the melody of heaven. It was "as the voice of many waters." But do not suppose that it is the whole of the idea. It is not the voice of one ocean, but the voice of many, that is needed to give you an idea of the melodies of heaven. You are to suppose ocean piled upon ocean, sea upon sea,—the Pacific piled upon the Atlantic, the Arctic upon that, the Antarctic higher still, and so ocean upon ocean, all lashed to fury, and all sounding with a mighty voice the praise of God. Such is the singing of heaven. Or if the illustration, fails to strike, take another. We have mentioned here two or three times the mighty falls of Niagara. They can be heard at a tremendous distance, so awful is their sound. Now, suppose waterfalls dashing upon waterfalls, cataracts upon cataracts, Niagaras upon Niagaras, each of them sounding forth their mighty voices, and you have got some idea of the singing of paradise. "I heard a voice like the voice of many waters." Can you not hear it? Ah! if our ears were opened we might almost cast the song. I have thought sometimes that the voice of the Aeolian harp, when it has swollen out grandly, was almost like an echo of the songs of those who sing before the throne; and on the summer eve, when the wind has come in gentle zephyrs through the forest, you might almost think it was the floating of some stray notes that had lost their way among the harps of heaven, and come down to us, to give us some faint foretaste of that song which hymns out in mighty peals before the throne of the Most High. But why so loud? The answer is, because there are so many there to sing. Nothing is more grand than the singing of multitudes. Many have been the persons who have told me that they could but weep when they heard you sing in this assembly, so mighty seemed the sound when all the people sang -

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

And, indeed, there is something very grand in the singing of multitudes. I remember hearing 12,000 sing on one occasion in the open air. Some of our friends were then present, when we concluded our service with that glorious hallelujah. Have you ever forgotten it? It was indeed a mighty sound; it seemed to make heaven itself ring again. Think, then, what must be the voice of those who stand on the boundless plains of heaven, and

with all their might shout, "Glory and honour and power and dominion unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

On reason, however, why the song is so loud is a very simple one, namely, because all those who are there think themselves bound to sing the loudest of all. You know our favourite hymn -

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,  
While heav'n's resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sov'reign grace."

And every saint will join that sonnet, and each one lift up his heart to God, then how mighty must be the strain of praise that will rise up to the throne of the glorious God our Father!

But note next, while it was a loud voice, how sweet it was. Noise is not music. There may be "a voice like many waters." and yet no music. It was sweet as well as loud; for John says, "I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Perhaps the sweetest of all instruments is the harp. There are others which give forth sounds more grand and noble, but the harp is the sweetest of all instruments. I have sometimes sat to hear a skilful harper, till I could say, "I could sit and hear myself away," whilst with skilful fingers he touched the chords gently, and brought forth strains of melody which flowed like liquid silver, or like sounding honey into one's soul. Sweet, sweet beyond sweetness; words can scarcely tell how sweet the melody. Such is the music of heaven. No jarring notes there, no discord, but all one glorious harmonious song. You will not be there, formalist, to spoil the tune; nor you, hypocrite, to mar the melody; there will be all those there whose hearts are right with God, and therefore the strain will be one great harmonious whole, without a discord. Truly do we sing—

"No groans to mingle with the songs  
That warble from immortal tongues."

And there will be no discord of any other sort to spoil the melody of those before the throne. Oh! my beloved brethren, that we might be there! Lift us up, ye cherubs! Stretch your wings, and bear us up where the sonnets

fill the air. But if ye must not, let us wait our time.

"A few more rolling suns at most,  
Will land us on fair Canaan's coast;"

and then we shall help to make the song, which now we can scarcely conceive, but which yet we desire to join.

IV. We now close with a remark upon the last point: WHY IS THE SONG SAID TO BE A NEW SONG? But one remark here. It will be a new song, because the saints were never in such a position before as they will be when they sing this new song. They are in heaven now; but the scene of our text is something more than heaven. It refers to the time when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, when the last battle shall have been fought, and the last warrior shall have gained his crown. It is not now that they are thus singing, but it is in the glorious time to come, when all the hundred and forty and four thousand—or rather, the number typified by that number—will be all safely housed and all secure. I can conceive the period. Time was—eternity now reigns. The voice of God exclaims, "Are my beloved all safe?" The angel flies through paradise and returns with this message, "Yea, they are." "Is Fearful safe? Is Feeble-minded safe? Is Ready-to-Halt safe? Is Despondency safe?" "Yes, O king, they are," says he. "Shut-to the gates," says the Almighty, "they have been open night and day; shut them to now." Then, when all of them shall be there, then will be the time when the shout shall be louder than many waters, and the song shall begin which will never end. There is a story told in the history of brave Oliver Cromwell, which I use here to illustrate this new song. Cromwell and his Ironsides before they went to battle bowed the knee in prayer, and asked for God's help. Then, with their Bibles in their breasts, and their swords in their hands—a strange and unjustifiable mixture, but which their ignorance must excuse—they cried, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;" and rushing to battle they sang -

"O Lord our God, arise and let  
Thine enemies scattered be,  
And let all those that do thee hate  
Before thy presence flee.

They had to fight up hill for a long time, but at last the enemy fled. The Ironsides were about to pursue them and win the booty, when the stern harsh voice of Cromwell was heard—"Halt! halt! now the victory is won, before you rush to the spoil return thanks to God;" and they sang some such song as this—"Sing unto the Lord, for he has gotten us the victory! Sing unto the Lord." It was said to have been one of the most majestic sights in that strange, yet good man's history. (I say that word without blushing, for good he was.) For a time the hills seemed to leap, whilst the vast multitude, turning from the slain, still stained with blood, lifted up their hearts to God. We say, again, it was a strange sight, yet a glad one. But how great shall be that sight, when Christ shall be seen as a conqueror, and when all his warriors, fighting side by side with him, shall see the dragon beaten in pieces beneath their feet. Lo, their enemies are fled; they were driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They are all gone, death is vanquished, Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and here stands the King himself, crowned with many crowns, the victor of the victors. And in the moment of exaltation the Redeemer will say, "Come let us sing unto the Lord;" and then, louder than the shout of many waters, they shall sing, "Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Ah! that will be the full carrying out of the great scene! My feeble words cannot depict it. I send you away with this simple question, "Shall you be there to see the conqueror crowned?" Have you "a good hope through grace" that you shall? If so, be glad; if not, go to your houses, fall on your knees, and pray to God to save you from that terrible place which must certainly be your portion, instead of that great heaven of which I preach, unless you turn to God with full purpose of heart.

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## **Hidden Manna**

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the

joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts, - Jeremiah 15:16

Jeremiah was a man of exceedingly sensitive temperament; the very reverse of Elijah. Yet he was sent of God to execute a duty which apparently required a person of great sternness and slender sensibility. It was his unhappy duty to denounce the judgments of God upon a people whom he dearly loved, but whom it was impossible to save; for even his deep anguish of heart and melting pathos were powerless with them, and rather excited their ridicule than their attention. Either they did not believe that he was sent of God at all, or else they neither cared for Jehovah nor for his prophet. Naturally mild and retiring, his strong sense of allegiance to God and love to Israel made him bear a fearless testimony for the truth; but the reproaches, insults, and threats, which were heaped upon him, sorely wounded his soul; and even deeper was his anguish, because he well knew that his rejected warnings were terribly true. He carried before his mind's eye at all times the picture of Jerusalem captured by her foes, and her wretched sons and daughters given up to the sword. There is no line in the whole of his prophecy more characteristic of him than that exclamation, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

He was eminently the man that had seen affliction, and yet in the midst of a wilderness of woe he discovered fountains of joy. Like that Blessed One, who was "the man of sorrows" and the acquaintance of grief, he sometimes rejoiced in spirit and blessed the name of the Lord. It will be both interesting and profitable to note the root of the joy which grew up in Jeremiah's heart, like a lone palm tree in the desert. Here was its substance. It was an intense delight to him to have been chosen to the prophetic office; and when the words of God came to him, he fed upon them as dainty food. They were often very bitter in themselves, for they mainly consisted of denunciations, yet being God's words, such was the prophet's love to his God, that he ate every syllable, bitter or not. This also was evermore a consolation to him—that he was known by the people to be a prophet of Jehovah. This distinction, whatever persecution it brought upon him, was his joy "I am called by thy name." God's word



received, God's name named upon him, and God's work entrusted to him, these were stars which cheered the midnight of his grief. However hard his lot might be, and none seem to have fallen upon worse times, there were secret sweetnesses of which none could deprive him. When he was "filled with bitterness, and drunken with wormwood," he still drank of that ever-flowing river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God. The basis of faith's joy lies deeper than the water-floods of affliction; no torrents of misery can remove the firm foundations of our peace.

May our hearts be so moulded by divine grace that the words of the weeping prophet in this verse may be proper language for us to use. Especially do I speak to those who during the last few weeks have found a Savior; my prayer and cry to God for you, beloved friends, is that you may say sincerely, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts."

I. In considering these words, we shall begin by dwelling upon A MEMORABLE DISCOVERY—"Thy words were found." As Jeremiah meant them, they signified this: that certain messages came to him most clearly from God, and he recognised them as such; he ascertained how far the thoughts which passed through his mind were originated by the Spirit of God, and how far they were merely his own imaginings; he separated between the precious and the vile, and when he had found, discovered, and discerned God's word, then it was that he fed upon it.

But the words, as we may use them, may signify something more. Beloved, it is a great thing to find God's word, and discern it for ourselves. Many have heard it for years and yet have never found it. I may say of them as of the heathen gods, "Eyes have they, but they see not: ears have they, but they hear not." Content with the outward letter of the Scriptures, the inner meaning is hid from their eyes. O that they had known the life-giving truth! O that they had found the "treasure hid in the field!" The word of God to them might as well be the word of King James the First, whose name dishonors our authorised version, for they have never felt that its truths proceed immediately from the throne of God, and bear the sign-manual of the King of kings. Hence they have never felt the

weight of authority with which its authorship impresses holy writ. What is meant by finding God's words! The expression suggests the mode. A thing found has usually been sought for. Happy is that man who reads the Scriptures and hears the word—searching all the while for the hidden spiritual sense, which is indeed the voice of God. The letter of the truth contains a kernel, which is the inner life of it. Like some tropical fruits, which are very large, but in which the actual life-germ is a comparatively small thing, so within the sacred volume are many words and books, but the living secret may be summed up in a few syllables. The mystery which was hid from ages, is a secret something which flesh and blood cannot reveal unto us. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is a vital and heartsearching question, meaning more than appears at once. The chosen of God dig into the mines of revelation, believing that "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it;" therefore they give their hearts to meditation, and cry mightily unto God to reveal himself unto them. Such seekers winnow sermons as the husbandman winnows his corn; they care little for the chaff of fair speeches; they desire only the fine wheat of the Lord's own truth. Solomon tells us the method of finding the true wisdom, in that cheering word at the commencement of the second chapter of the Proverbs, "My son, if thou wilt incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Though occasionally the Lord in his infinite sovereignty has been pleased to reveal his salvation to those who sought it not, according to his own word, "I am found of them that sought me not," yet there is no promise to this effect; the promise is to those who seek.

To find God's words, means that we have been made to understand them. A man may be well versed in Scripture, both in the English and in the original tongue; he may be accustomed to read the best of commentaries, and be acquainted with Eastern manners, and yet he may be quite ignorant as to the word of God. For the understanding of this Book, as to its depth of meaning, does not lie within the range of natural learning and human research; reason alone is blinded by the excess of light, and

wanders in darkness at noon day; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Before my conversion I was accustomed to read the Scriptures, to admire their grandeur, to feel the charm of their history, and wonder at the majesty of their language; but I altogether missed the Lord's intent therein; but when the Spirit came with his divine life, and quickened all the page to my newly-enlightened soul, the inner meaning shone forth with quickening glory. The Bible is to many carnal minds almost as dull a book for reading as an untranslated Latin work would be to an ignorant ploughman, because they cannot get at the internal sense, which is to the words as juice to the grape, or the kernel to the nut. It is a tantalising riddle till you get the key; but the clue once found, the volume of our Father's grace absorbs our attention, delights our intellect, and enriches our heart.

To find the word of God means not only to understand it, but to appropriate it as belonging to yourself. To read a will is not an interesting occupation—repetitions, legal phrases, tautologies multiplied to utter weariness; but if there be a legacy left to you in that will, no writing will be more fascinating; you will trip lightly over the lawyer's fences and five-barred gates, and rejoice as one that findeth spoil when you reach those clauses which leave certain "messages, tenements, and hereditaments" to yourself and heirs. In such a case every repetition becomes musical, and technical phrases sound harmoniously. After this manner we learn to enjoy the word of God by discovering that we have a part and lot in it. When we perceive that the Lord is calling us and blessing us, then have we found his word. When the divine promise assures us personally that our sin is forgiven, that our spirit is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that heaven is for us, that we are accepted in the Beloved, then the word is found indeed. I will ask each hearer here, whether in this respect he has found God's word. Have you an ear to hear gospel truth as the voice of the Infinite God addressed to your own soul? The Dutch farmers at the Cape, at no very distant period, considered the hottentots around them to be little better than beasts, quite incapable of anything beyond mere eating, drinking, stealing, and lying. After our missionaries had labored among the natives for a time, one of them was found reading the Bible by the

roadside. The Dutchman enquired of him, "What book are you reading?"—"The Bible." "The Bible! Why that book was never intended for you."—"Indeed it was," said the black man, "for I see my name here." "Your name: Where?" cried the farmer. "Show it to me."—"There," said the Hottentot, putting his finger on the word "sinners." "That's my name; I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save me." It were well indeed if men would but read the Bible, saying, "In this volume the great God condescends to speak to me, and bids me come and reason with him that my scarlet sins may become white; therein he appeals to my weakness that he may remove it, to my wilfulness that he may subdue it, to my distance from him that he may bring me near!" Happy is that man who hears or reads the word of God for himself, feeling evermore a living power witnessing within his soul, and operating mightily upon him. Unapplied truth is useless. Unappropriated truth may condemn but cannot save. The word of God to an unregenerate heart is like a trumpet at the ear of a corpse: the sound is lost. Beloved, I pray that you may discern the truth, and then may grasp it as your own. May your interest and title to the promises be clearly made out, so that not presumptuously, but with the full approbation of your conscience, you may know yourself to be beloved of the Lord.

"Thy word was found." Yes, indeed, it has been found by many of us, and a blessed find it was! Recollect, my brethren, the time when you first found God's word. Recall the period of your conversion; let the remembrance kindle in you anew the flame of gratitude. Magnify the divine grace which revealed the heavenly word to you. What a removal of darkness, and bursting in of glory you then felt! It was a discovery far more memorable than the finding of a new continent by Columbus, or the discovery of gold mines in the southern continent—you found eternal life in God's word. May you who have never found the life-giving word, be led to desire it. We pray for you, that the Lord may open your eyes to see wondrous things in his law.

II. Secondly, our text testifies to AN EAGER RECEPTION. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them."

It is not "I did hear them," for that he might have done, and yet have

perished. Herod heard John gladly, and yet became his murderer. He does not say, "I did learn them by heart"—hundreds have committed chapters to memory, and were rather wearied than benefited thereby. The Scribes fought over the jots and titles of the law, but were blind leaders of the blind notwithstanding. It is not "Thy words were found, and I did repeat them," for that he might have done as a parrot repeats language it is taught: nor is it even, "Thy words were found, and I remembered them;" for though its an excellent thing to store truth in the memory, yet the blessed effect of the divine words comes rather to those who ponder them in their hearts. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." What is meant by eating God's words? The phrase signifies more than any other word could express. It implies an eager study—"I did eat them." I could not have too much of them, could not enter too thoroughly into their consideration. He who loves the Savior desires to grow in knowledge of him; he cannot read or hear too much or too often concerning his great Redeemer. He turns to the holy page with ever new delight; he seeks the blessing of the man who meditates in God's law, both day and night. It is pleasing to notice the sharp-set, spiritual appetite of a new convert; he hungers and thirsts after righteousness; he will hear a sermon without fatigue, though he may have to stand in an uncomfortable position; and when one discourse is over, he is ready for another. O that we all had our first appetites back again! Some professors grow very squeamish and proudly delicate; they cannot feed on heavenly truth, because forsooth they see defects in the style of the preacher, or in the manner of the service. Some of you need a dose of bitters to keep you from quarrelling with your food. When the word was found by my soul I did not stand to remark upon an inelegant expression or a misplaced word, but I seized at once the marrow of the truth, and left the bones to the dogs. I drank in the expressed juice of the sacred clusters, and left the husks to the swine. I was greedy for the truth. My soul hungered even to ravenousness to be fed upon the bread of heaven.

The expression also implies cheerful reception. "I did eat them." I was so in love with thy word that I not merely held it, rejoiced in it, and embraced it, but I received it into my inner man. I was not in a frame of mind to judge God's word, but I accepted all without demur; I did not venture to sit in judgment upon my judge, and become the reviser of the

unerring God. Whatever I found to be in his word I received with intense joy. The stamp of divine authority upon any teaching is enough for the believer. Proud self-will demands to have doctrines proved by reasoning, but faith lets the declaration of Jehovah stand in the place of argument. Others may cry, "Let us spin our creed out of our own bowels like the spiders; let us find in the easings of the great the grounds of our beliefs, or let us remain in a state of suspense, to be moulded by fresh discoveries;" but we are committed to revelation, our minds are made up; we confess that we have eaten God's word and intend still to feed upon it—upon the whole of it, and upon nothing else. Open your mouths, ye wild asses of the wilderness, and snuff up wind; our food is more substantial, and we will not leave it to wander with you.

The expression signifies also an intense belief. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." He did not say, "Perhaps it is true, and if it be so it is of no great consequence," but he made practical use of it at once. He set about testing the power of the word to nourish his soul; he brought it into the most intimate contact with his being, and allowed it to operate upon his vital parts. We have heard that God's word is life; be it ours to possess that life abundantly. The truth makes men strong, free, pure, god-like. Let us then eat it, that it may purify, strengthen, liberate and elevate us. Whatever God's word by his Spirit can do for man, it should be our desire to experience for ourselves. Blessed is that man who is so humbled as to become like a little child in the submission of his mind, his judgment, and all his faculties to the operation of the word of divine truth; he has eaten it, and shall live by it.

The language before us means besides both the diligent treasuring up of the truth and the inward digestion of the same. Food eaten does not long continue as it was; the juices of the body operate upon it, and the substance is dissolved and absorbed, so that it becomes a part of the man's body. So when we find God's truth, we delight to meditate, contemplate, and consider. We let it dwell in our hearts richly till at last its sustaining, upbuilding, nourishing influence is felt, and we grow thereby. It is not a hasty swallowing of the word which is blessed to us, but a deliberate eating of it. Our inward life acts upon the truth, and the truth acts upon our life. We become one with the truth, and the truth one with

us. I would to God we were all more given to feeding and lying down in the green pastures of God's word; the sheep fattens as it chews the cud at peace, and so do we. Establishment in the gospel is the result of meditation, and nothing is more desirable at this present crisis than that all believers should more constantly study and weigh the word of God. Neglect in this matter has weakened, is weakening, and will weaken the church. We want at this time not merely persons who have been aroused by solemn exhortation, and led to give their hearts to Christ under the influence of deep emotion, but Christians well instructed in the things which are verily believed among us, rooted and grounded in gospel doctrines. Many professing Christians think very lightly of Scriptural knowledge, and especially of an experimental acquaintance with divine truth. Few nowadays have studied the doctrines of grace so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. Too often converts are made by excitement, and, as a consequence, when the excitement is gone, they grow cold; some of them go back to the world, and prove that they were never taught of God, and others linger on in a half-starved condition, because soul-sustaining truth is hidden from them. The man who knows the truth, and feels that the truth has made him free, is the man who will continue a free man at all hazards. There are enemies of the faith about nowadays; error is put in very tempting forms. Those who try to subvert the gospel are exceedingly dextrous, and know how to make every falsehood fascinating. These will rend and devour, but who will be their victims? Not the instructed saints, not those who can say "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," but the mixed multitude in nominal union with the church, who scarce know what they believe, or knowing it merely in the letter have no inward vital acquaintance therewith. We read in the word of God of certain deceivers who would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, from which we gather that the elect cannot be deceived, and that for this reason—that the truth is not held in the hand of the elect man as a staff which can be wrenched from him, but he has eaten it: it has entered into his vital substance. You cannot tear away from a man what has become assimilated to himself. You might draw the silken thread out of a piece of tapestry, and in so doing injure the material, but you cannot remove the truth which is interwoven into the fabric of our new-born nature by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is dyed ingrain with the truth—he wears no flying nor fading colors; he can as

soon cease to be as cease to believe what he has learned by the Spirit's teaching. In olden times, the fury of persecutors has failed to make the servants of Christ deny the faith. The saints were taken to the stake, but the fires which devoured their bodies only burned their testimonies into the hearts of other witnesses. They were faithful even unto death. This glorious firmness in the faith is greatly needed now to resist the insidiousness of error. Besides, dear friends, it may in the providence of God happen that some of you will be taken away from the ministry which now feeds you, and what will you do if the word of God be not in your inmost souls? I have observed many who did run well when under a gospel ministry, who, when they have been removed into a barren region, have lagged and loitered in the race. Some whose principles were never very deep have given them up when placed in society which despised them. I pray you get such a hold of the gospel, that you need not be dependent upon the preacher or upon earnest companions. Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. No truth will be of any use to you unless it is branded into you; yea, and made to penetrate the marrow of your being. If you could give up truth you have never received it. He only has the truth of God who so holds it that he could never part with it. A person takes a piece of bread and eats it. He who gave it to him demands it back. If he had put that bread upon a shelf, or laid it in a cupboard, he can hand it down; but if he can reply, "I have eaten it," there is an end to the request; no human power can reproduce what is already eaten. "Give up justification by faith and trust in sacraments," says the Ritualist. "Give up faith and follow reason," cries the Infidel. We are utterly unable to do either. And why? Because our spiritual nature has absorbed the truth into itself, and none can separate it from us, or us from it. To live upon the truth is the sure method to prevent apostacy. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." May you all be rooted and built up in Christ Jesus, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Besides, good friend, you cannot be very useful to others if you are an unintelligent Christian. To do much good, we must have truth ready to



hand, and be apt to teach. I desire that you may grow up, you who are new-born into the Christian family, to become fathers and mothers in Israel; but this cannot be, unless you as new-born babes desire the unadulterated milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. O for a race of Bible-reading Christians! We have long had a society for selling the Bible, but who shall found a society for getting the Bible read? A young man who never had read his Bible was tempted to do so, and led to conversion by the gift of a bookmark, presented to him by a relative. The gift was made upon the condition that it should be put into his Bible, but should never stop two days in a place. He meant to shift it, and not to read the book, but his eye glanced on a text; after awhile he became interested, by-and-by he became converted, and then the bookmark was moved with growing pleasure. I am afraid that even some professors cannot say that they shift their bookmark every day. Probably of all the books printed, the most widely circulated, and the least read volume, is the word of God. Books about the Bible are read, I fear, more than the Book itself. Do you believe we should see all these parties and sects if people studiously followed the teaching of inspiration? The Word is one; whence these many creeds? We cry, "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants;" but it is not true of half the Protestants. Some overlay the Bible with the Prayer-book, and kill its living meaning; others read through the spectacles of a religious leader, and rather follow man's gloss than God's text. Few indeed come to the pure fount of gospel undefiled. A second-hand religion suits most, for it spares them the trouble of thinking, which to many is a labor too severe while to be taught of man is so much easier than to wait upon the Holy Spirit for instruction. Remember ye, my beloved children in Christ, the words of David, and make them your own. "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." "My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee."

III. Thirdly, the text tells us of HAPPY CONSEQUENCES. "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." He who has spiritually

found God's word, and consequently feeds upon it, is the happy man. But in order to get joy from God's word we must receive it universally. Jeremiah first speaks of God's "words," then he changes the number and speaks of God's "word." We are not only to receive parts of the gospel, but the whole of it, and then it will afford us great joy. That man's heart is right with God who can honestly say that all the testimonies of God are dear to him. "But," saith one, "that is impossible: parts of the Bible are full of terrible denunciations; can they afford us joy?" In this way, brethren. If God appoints that sin should be punished, we are not to rebel against his righteous ordinance, nor to close our minds to the consideration of divine justice: God's judgments are right, and what is right we must rejoice in. Moreover, by the threatenings of the word many are led to forsake their sin, and thus the warning itself is a means of grace. To tender-hearted Jeremiah I have no doubt it was a trial to say, "Your city will be destroyed, and your women and your children will be slain." But when he considered that some might be led to repentance he would with tearful vehemence deal out the thunder of the Lord. But, brethren, God's word is not all threatening. How much of it consists of exceeding great and precious promises? grace drops from it like honey from the comb. How would even Jeremiah brush away the falling tear, while that face usually so clouded would beam as the sun when he spoke of the Messiah? Surely, if there be anything in the whole range of truth which can make our hearts leap for joy, it is the part of it which touches upon the lovely person and finished work of our adorable Redeemer, to whom be honor and glory for ever. Receive the whole of God's word. Do not cut a single text out of Scripture or desire to pervert its meaning. Hold the truth in its entirety and harmony, and then as a matter of certainty it will become to you the joy and rejoicing of your spirit.

Allow me to interject another thought. No word of God to Jeremiah would have given him joy if he had not been obedient to it. If he had kept back a part of his Master's message, it would have been a burden intolerable to his conscience. What a wound it makes in the heart if we have inwardly to confess, "I have been unfaithful. I have neglected a command of the Host High." Never, I beseech you, allow any text of Scripture to accuse you of having neglected its teaching or denied its obvious meaning. There are ordinances to which some of you have not

submitted yourselves which you know to be the will of Jesus Christ. How can the Scriptures be a joy and rejoicing to you when their pages accuse you of disobedience to your Master's will? In order to have the full joy of the testimony of God, your mind must yield itself to what God reveals as the plastic clay to the potter's touch, your willing spirit must be prompt to run as with winged feet in the ways of obedience to all that Christ commands. Then the word being found, and you having eaten it, it will be to you a song in the house of your pilgrimage.

Let me refresh your memories for a moment by reminding you of certain choice truths in God's word which are brimming with comfort. There is the doctrine of election: the Lord has a people whom he has chosen, and whom he loved before the foundations of the world. I will suppose that you have found it out for yourself, and have read the riddle, and like the apostle Paul, can say, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." I will suppose that you know yourself to be called, and therefore know yourself to be predestinated. Is not this the joy and rejoicing of your heart? Is it not to you a very heaven below to believe that ere the hills were made God loved you, ere sin was born or Satan fell, your name was in his book, and he regarded you with infinite affection? Could any doctrine be a more abundant table, spread for you in the presence of your enemies? Take the other doctrine, the doctrine of the immutability of divine love. Before you knew the secret of it, it was a mere dogma; but now you understand that Jesus never changes, and therefore the promises are yea and amen, you will, you must rejoice. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end. Is not this music to your ear? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," is not this a heavenly assurance? As you sit down and consider for yourself, "God has loved me, for he has given me salvation in Jesus Christ, and the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace cannot depart from me;" will not your cup run over, and your soul dance before the ark of God? Of course it will not be so till you have found the word for yourself, and have eaten it, but then it shall be marrow and fatness to you. Thousands of God's people live in doubts and fears, because they have not eaten God's word as they should; they do not know the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. How many are in

bondage through the fear that after all though they have been for years believers they are not yet saved, whereas if they read the Scriptures, and received their meaning, they would know that the moment the sinner believes in Christ he is saved in that very instant he has passed from death into life, and shall never come into condemnation. If they read the Scriptures, would they endure such doubts about being left to perish after having believed? The thing is impossible. The people of his choice Jehovah cannot cast away. No members of Christ's body shall be suffered to perish, or else the body of Christ would be mangled, and he himself would be the head of a dismembered frame. To have a clear understanding of the gospel, to know the covenant which like a mighty rock underlies all gospel blessings, to know Christ and our union with him, to know his righteousness, his perfection and our perfection in him, to know the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, these things must inevitably make us strong in the joy of the Lord. Half our doubts and fears would vanish if we had more acquaintance with the Lord's statutes. Other knowledge brings sorrow, but this wisdom is the joy and rejoicing of the heart.

Beloved, if there is a quarrel between you and any text of Scripture, end the dispute by giving way at once, for the word of God is right, and you are wrong. Do not say, "We have always been of one way of thinking, and our parents were so before us." Have respect unto God, and sit at Jesus' feet. The Lord's teaching is in this Book, and may be opened to you by his Spirit. Test everything by the word; prove the spirits whether they be of God. Do not be such fools as to take your religion from fallible men when you may have it from the infallible God. Some who do so are not fools in other matters, but in this case it may be said of them as it was once said of the people of an Italian city, "They were not fools, but they acted as if they were." Persons who would not take the opinion of anybody else as to the goodness of a half-crown, will leave their religion to be settled by an Act of Parliament, or by convocation, or by conference. What are brains given to us for? Are we for ever to be the slaves of majorities and follow a multitude to do evil? God forbid! Stand upright, O Christian man, and be a man. God has given you a judgment, and his Spirit waits to enlighten it. Search the Scriptures! See whether the things handed down by tradition came from the devil or from God, for many an ancient maxim may be

traced to the infernal pit. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them. May we have grace given us like Ezekiel to receive the roll from the Lord's hand, to eat it, and to find it in our mouth as honey for sweetness.

IV. The fourth point is A DISTINGUISHING TITLE. "I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." This may not appear to some of you a very joyful thing—to Jeremiah it was pre-eminently so. In Jeremiah's day the name of the Lord God of hosts was despised. The God of hosts was the subject of derision among the rabble of Jerusalem, and the weeping prophet of mournful countenance, who spoiled their mirth, came in for his full share of scorn. Now, Jeremiah, instead of feeling it a hard thing to be associated with the Lord in this contempt of the wicked, was glad to be so honored. The reproaches of them that reviled the Lord fell upon his poor servant, and he was content to have it so. O you who love Jesus Christ, never shun the scandal of his cross! Count it glory to be despised for his sake. Let fear be far from you. Remember Moses, of whom it is written, "he esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." It does not say he esteemed Christ to be greater riches, an ordinary believer would do that; but he reckoned the worst thing connected with Christ to be better than the best thing about the world. The reproach of Christ he esteemed above Pharaoh's crown. Disciples of Jesus, be willing to bear all the contumely the wicked pour upon you for your Lord's sake, for in so doing they help to make you blessed. Through the mire, and through the slough, march side by side with truth, for those who share her pilgrimage shall share her exaltation. Be content to abide with Christ in his humiliation, for only so may you be sure that you shall be with him in his glory. It was a comfort to Jeremiah that he bore the name of the despised God. It made him the object of very much persecution as well as contempt; the king put him in the dungeon; he was made to eat the bread of affliction, and was in tribulations oft, but he took it all joyfully for the Lord's sake. And if to serve Christ to-day, and bear his name, should entail suffering extreme, as in the days of Rome's tyranny, yet, my brethren, we ought to be cheerful in the bearing of it, and glad that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

Yet I am afraid I am speaking to some who do not count it a fair thing to bear the name of the Most High. I gather this from their conduct. They have a belief in Jesus, they hope they have, but they have never avowed Christ's name. You have missed, then, that which was a comfort to the prophet. Why have you missed it? Because you imagined that it would be a source of discomfort to you? Are you wiser than the prophet? To him it was consolation that he was called by God's name. Do you think it would be a sorrow to you? "Oh!" saith one, "I could not bear the world's rebuke." Can you bear Christ's rebuke, when he will say to those who did not confess him before men, "I never knew you"? But you say you could not live up to a profession; you are afraid your life might fall short of what it should be—a very salutary fear; but do you hope to improve your life by beginning with disobedience! If I own my Savior's name, it is Christ's business to keep me; but if I am so overwise that I think I am safer in the path of disobedience, then I cannot reckon upon grace to preserve me. The warfare is arduous, but we do enter upon it at our own charges, there is one who has promised to help us. Well, if you will be cowards, I will part company with you. If you were every one of you this day enemies of Christ, or if you were all of you lovers of Christ in secret, and none of you gloried in him, I, for my part, could not fire a moment without being an avowed Christian. I say not this in egotism, but as fact. My heart might sooner cease to beat than cease to own the Lord. It is a sneaking thing, and utterly degrading that my Lord should die upon the cross for me to save my soul from hell, and I should be ashamed to wear his livery; that he should honor me by redeeming me with his blood, and I should deny to him the little honor that my poor name could give when it is enrolled with his people. Nay, though least of all his followers, put down my name, O recording angel, and there let it stand, and if all men revile and devils rage so let it be. It shall be my heaven to suffer hell for Christ, if such must needs be. I cannot comprehend how so many believers remain outside the visible church of Christ. I would not question the safety of any man who has believed in Jesus, but I do avow that I would not run the risk that non-confessors run. For what is the gospel? "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him should be saved." How dare you leave out one half of the gospel command? What was the gospel which according to the Evangelist Mark is to be preached to every creature? It runs thus: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be

saved." I do not question the safety of the soul that has believed, but I do say again, I would not run the risk of the man who, having believed, refuses to be baptised. It is plainly his Master's will. I question the genuineness of his faith if he starts back from obedience to the known command of Jesus Christ. My dear brother, to confess Christ is so easy a burden, it involves so temporary a loss, and so real a gain, that I would have you say, "I have found God's word, and I have eaten it: it is the joy and rejoicing of my soul; and now from this day let others do as they will, but I will serve the Lord. I bow my willing back to his cross. I will be buried with him in baptism unto death, I would die to the world, and rise to newness of life through his Spirit." Blessed are they who go to their Lord without the camp, leaving the world's religion as well as its sin, in obedience to that sacred call: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." The Lord deal graciously with you, beloved, and lead you in a plain path, because of your enemies, for his name's sake. Amen.

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## **High Doctrine**

And all things are of God. - 2 Corinthians 5:18

Would have you look on this text as being a summary of all the things which we have preached to you these years. It has been my endeavour, constantly and continually, to maintain that salvation is of God's good will, and not of man's free will; that man is nothing, and that Jesus Christ is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And I think I may truly say, "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum"—"all things are of God." And oh my brethren, what a large summary it is! it contains words which grasp the compass of everything that your mind can think upon—"all things;" and it proclaims him to whom all things owe their being—"God." Grasp this total if you are able, "All things!" What is here omitted? Surely whatsoever the Christian can desire is to be found in those words "all things." But lest even that

should not be comprehensive enough, our summary contains a still greater word, one which is supreme over all, inasmuch as all things spring from his loins, and yet he remaineth still the same, as full as ever. "All things are of God." If we be thirsty, here are streams that never can be exhausted. If we be hungry, surely here is bread enough and to spare. If we be poor, here are treasures and riches that are utterly inexhaustible, for here we have all things, and all things in God.

I shall hope this morning to do two things; first, to lay down clearly and distinctly, the doctrine of this sentence, and then secondly, to shew the excellent practical tendency of such doctrine.

I. To begin with THE DOCTRINE ITSELF:—"All things are of God." In enlarging upon that doctrine, I shall have need to sub-divide it, taking it first as to what, and then as to how, and then as to why.

"All things are of God!" What is meant here by the term, "all things?" The reply is to be found in the context—all things of the new creation are of God. It is not necessary for us to remind you that all the things of the old creation are of God. None but the infidel will ever for a moment affirm, that there is anything which exist, apart from the Creator. We believe that he hath laid the beams of his chambers in the waters, he hath spread out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, the isles have been created by his hand, and the winds still are, as they ever were, under his guidance and control; nothing is, and nothing shall be, but that which he ordains, determines, and supports. Concerning the matter of the new creation, it is wonderful that there ever should have been any controversy. Do we call that man an infidel who should teach that some things of the old creation were of man? What name shall I give to the being who will dare to say that anything in the new creation of grace is of man? Surely if the first be an heresy, the second must be an heresy equally damnable, and perhaps more so. For the one doth but touch the external works of God, while the other thrusts its sacrilegious hand into the internal works of his grace, plucks the brightest jewel from his crown, and treads it in the dust. We hold, and ever must maintain, that all things, without exception, in the new creation, are of God, and of God alone.

"What things?" do you say again. We answer, all things that refer to the



new nature—all things that refer to our new privileges and to our new actions—whatsoever things refer to the new nature are of God. The personal desire after Christ which is found in the sinner's contrite heart is of God. The first new hope which gilds the darkness of the poor benighted mind is of God. The first glimpse of new faith, when that man turns his eye to the Saviour, is of God. The first beginnings of divine love in the soul are of God. Leave men to themselves, and the corruption of their nature may fester, and rot, and breed the fungus of a vile imagination. But the life of God never yet sprung naturally from a dead heart. Whatsoever thing is good in its beginning, as well as in its perfecting, "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Some seem to teach, that man is to take the first step in salvation, and God will take the rest. No, sirs, if man can take the first, he can take the last, and take the whole. If man, dead in trespasses and sins, can quicken himself, he certainly can maintain the life of which he is himself the author. If man, corrupt, debased, and cast away from God, can say, unawakened by grace, "I will repent, I will change my ways and turn to God." and if he can carry out that resolution to himself, and by his own unaided mind, then there is no room for God in salvation at all. Let man have the whole of it, and let him have all the glory. But know thou my hearer, if thou hast but one good thought in thy heart it is of God; if there be a something which says to thee, "Arise and go to thy Father," that voice is God's voice. If thy bowels begin to yearn towards the Father, whom thou hast angered and aggrieved, and if thy feet desire to leave the mountains of sin and vanity, and to tread the right road, it is a Father's hand that draws thee, it is a Saviour's voice that sweetly impels thee to seek his face, for " All things are of God."

Everything moreover with regard to the new nature is of God, not merely as to its first implanting, but as to its subsequent outworking and full development. Has the believer strength—it is of God. Does he stand, and is he kept from falling—his standing is of God. Is he preserved in the midst of temptation true to his covenant, and does he stand in the day of trial firm to his Master—his integrity is of God. There is nothing in him by nature apart from God, which is not vile and deceitful. "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." If there be anything good in my nature, if I have been transformed by the renewing of my mind, if I am

regenerate, if I have passed from death unto life, if I have been taken out of the family of Satan, and adopted into the family of God's dear Son, and if I am now no more an heir of wrath, but a child of heaven, then all these things are of God, and in no sense, and in no degree whatever are they of myself.

Still further, as the new nature is of God, so the new privileges of the new nature are all of God; and what are these? Rich and precious assuredly they are. There is pardon, the washing away of all my sins, and who shall say that is not of God? There is justification, the being robed about with a snow-white garment, which shall make me meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and is not that of God? There is sanctification, which cuts out the very root of sin, and treads the old Adam-nature beneath the feet of the new-born babe in Christ; is not that of God? There is the privilege of adoption, which the Father has given to as many as believe on his only begotten Son, that they may have power to become the sons of God. O Lord, surely this adoption is of thee! There is communion, by which through Christ Jesus we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. But whoever dared to think of communion apart from the unspeakable grace of the Most High? I am sure, my brethren, you who have traced the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of covenant mercies and covenant privileges, have never yet met with a single privilege which was not of God. You have walked the broad acres of God's rich grace, but you have not seen there a plant or a flower which was not of his sowing and of his rearing. When you have gone into the treasure house, and have taken down those shoes of iron and of brass, and that helmet of proof, that sword of steel, when you have laid hold upon that crown of eternal life that fadeth not away, you have been constrained joyfully to confess that all these things are of God. You cannot imagine such a thing as a single boon of grace, a single gift of mercy, which is of yourselves and not of God.

Once again, to conclude this summary, all the actions of the new nature are of God. See yonder missionary, leaving house and home, and all the comforts of his native land, to go and do battle for Christ among a people who will scorn him, mistrust his motives, and repay his self-denial with persecution. Do you see him with his life in his hand venturing even unto

death? That man, oppressed with fever incidental to the land in which he has come to live, as he lies on his bed, with a melancholy interval for reflection, never repents of the step which he has taken. He recovers strength enough to crawl out beneath a tree and there he stands, and instead of recanting the vows he made of dedication to his Master, he confirms them yet afresh, by once again preaching the Word. He continues to labour until worn out, he commits his body to the earth far from his father-land and the homestead of his native land, a witness against the unbelievers, that God hath sent the gospel to them. Shall we applaud the man? Shall we with clamorous songs sing his praise? Let us give him his meed of tribute; he hath done valiantly. But let us remember that everything in him that was good, was of God. He would have been idle and indifferent, and careless to the souls of men had not God made him what he was. Does the martyr burn at the stake? Does the confessor lie and rot in the dungeon? Does the heroic child of God do battle against the current of his times, and seem to stem the flood with his own strong arm? Are Christians prepared to suffer contumely and scorn, and rebuke and reproof, for Jesus' sake? Surely all these things are of God. Is there a Christian munificent, generous, thoughtful of the woes of others? Is there another mighty in prayer and diligent in service? Can you meet with a third who lives so near to Christ that his face seems to shine with the lustre of Jesus' love,—all these things are of God. Set down no virtue to man. Good things are exotics in the human heart. They are not like the weeds which spring up naturally in such poor soil as human hearts are made of, but they are rare choice flowers brought down of the Spirit's hand from above and then planted in this unkindly soil. Oh! let us ever know that anything, we can ever do or feel or think that is right, is of God. My brethren, discard for ever with detestation and abhorrence any doctrine which would lead you to think that any work, or grace, anything just, pure, lovely, or of good report, in man, is of man himself. Depend upon it, though it come to you in the garb of earnestness, and paint its cheeks, and look fair enough to you, it is the harlot of Popery in another dress. Only let such doctrine be pushed to its fair conclusion, and you come at once to salvation by works. Ever stand by the good old Calvinistic banner, the banner which Augustine waved of old, and which Paul handed down to us direct from our master Jesus; and hold, believe, and affirm, never swerving from it, that all things in the new creation are of

God.

2. But the second division of the doctrine was to be How! How and in what respect are all things of God? All things in the new creation are of God in the planning. God from before all worlds planned the new creation with as much exactitude and wisdom as he did the old. There are some men who seem to think that God does his work bit by bit; altering and making additions as he goes on. They cannot believe that God had a plan ; they believe that the most ordinary architect on earth has prefigured to himself some idea of what he meant to build, though it were but a mud cottage, but the Most High God, who created the heavens and the earth, when he says, " Behold I make a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," hath no plan but what is left to the caprice of manhood; he is to have no decrees, no purposes, no determinations, but men are to do as they will, and so virtually man is to usurp the place of God, and God is to become the dependant of man. Nay, my brethren, in all the work of salvation, God is the sole and supreme designer. He planned the time when, and the manner how, each of his people should be brought to himself; he did not leave the number of his saved ones to chance, or to what was worse than chance—to the depraved will of man; he did not leave the choice of the persons to mere accident, but on the stones of the eternal breastplate of the great High Priest he engraved the names of those he chose. He did not leave so much as one tent-pin, one single line or yard of canvas to be afterwards arranged; the whole of the tabernacle was given by pattern in the holy mount. In the building of the temple of grace every stone was squared and chiselled in the eternal decree, its place ordained and settled, nor shall that stone be dug from its quarry till the hour ordained, nor shall it be placed in any other position than that which God, after the counsel of his own will hath ordained. Everything in the new creation is of God in the planning.

Alas for us, however. if God had simply planned and left the execution to us! Everything in the new creation is of God in the purchase, and of God in the procuring. One price hath bought his people: that price—the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who contributed so much as a mite to that wealth of treasure which bought our souls? Did he not tread the wine-press alone? Had his people a part in enduring the load, the

intolerable load of guilt that overwhelmed our suffering Lord, when he his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree? What arm helped him, or what other foot but his did tread the foeman down? Nay, O Lord! thou hast redeemed us by thy blood; we have not contributed thereto; thou art Alpha and Omega in this, and unto thee be all the honour.

And as it was of God in the planning, and of God in the purchasing, so it is all of God in the applying and bringing of it home to each individual conscience. The cross of Christ is not put up there merely for every man to look at, and then left to chance as to whether men will look or no. There stands the cross free to every soul that lives, but, nevertheless, God has determined that it shall not be neglected. There is a number that no man can number, who shall by all-constraining grace be brought to clasp that cross as the hope of their souls. Jesus shall not die in vain, and that because God will make men willing in the day of his power. They are hardened; he can break their hearts: they are stubborn; he can bend their knees; they will not come; but he can make them come. He hath a key that can wind up the human heart, and make it run at his pleasure. Think not that man is an independent being, so free that God cannot control him; that were to make man God, deify humanity, and undeify the Godhead. Man is free to be responsible, but he is not free from a perpetual bias and inclination to evil. But man is subject to the restraint or the constraint of God. If he doeth right, then it is God's constraint, and not his free-will. When he doeth wrong, God hath left him to himself; but as sure as ever he doeth good, it is because a Master-hand hath got him now. Man by nature is as a wild horse dashing yonder to the precipice; if he be restrained in his course and turn thitherward away from danger, it is because he hath a mighty rider, and one that knows how to pull the bit and guide him as he pleases; and though he kick and plunge, and long to turn away, his rider can pull him up upon his very haunches, and turn him round, and make him go as He wills, and lead him as He pleases. In this matter is it true that all the bringing home of the gospel to the soul of man is of God.

Nor is this all. The works of the new creation are of God, not only in the planning, procuring, and applying, but in the maintaining of them. Leave the Christian to himself to maintain the grace already begun, and he is

gone. The candle is alight, but the devil's breath would blow it out. The gas is burning—cut the connection between it and the great gasometer, and the light is quenched. The Christian lives, but it is because Christ lives, and because he is one with Christ. O Lord, if thou shouldst cease to send forth the streams of thy grace, thy glorious Church, with all her beauty, must be as a fading flower; all her strength would be fainting weakness, and she herself, though she be as a tower in her glory, must crumble down to the very earth, and lie with the base stones of the valley. All is of grace then, and all of God, in the maintaining.

Still more must it be all of grace in the completing. When you and I shall go up the celestial hills to the gates of Paradise, those last steps shall be of God as much as the first steps. And when we shall stand upon the golden streets, and wear the white robe, I am sure we shall not have a word to sing about free-will, or about self, but our cry will be, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood"—unto him be all the glory for ever. Men may hold what doctrine they like on earth, they cannot hold any doctrine in heaven but that of free, rich, and sovereign grace. The song never was divided yet, and it never will be. There shall be no selfishness to mar its melody, but every heart shall send forth the same melodious notes of music, and every tongue shall mingle in the same undivided song—"Thou hast done it; O Lord, thou hast done it -

'Grace all the work shall crown,  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise.'

3. My third point upon the doctrine was to be the "Why." Why is it that "all things are of God?" How can we clearly see this? I shall use no arguments but such as would be manifest and palpable to us all.

Everything in grace must be of God because we are quite clear there cannot be anything of man. Man is in such a position that there can be nothing of him. Lazarus was laying a corpse in his tomb; he comes forth quickened; the grave clothes are taken from him; he lives, he breathes; do tell me that his resurrection was in part owing to himself? Well, sir, your mind must be strangely deluded indeed. What could that dead man do

towards his own. resurrection? Surely it must be a fact in philosophy which might strike every rational man, that that which does not exist, cannot put itself into existence. And so my new nature which did not exist before God gave it to me, could not bring itself into being. And yet you say a dead man makes himself alive, or at least does something towards it. Oh, sir, you cannot mean it; you cannot mean it. To reason with you were ridiculous. You must feel that if a man be dead there is nothing he can do; it must be a work of some superior power that can give him life. So with the sinner dead in sin, what can that sinner do? Unless the Scripture be an exaggeration, unless you are prepared to cast overboard that passage where we are spoken of as being dead in trespasses and sins, I cannot see how you can dream that man is capable of doing anything in the work of grace. He may work when God sets him working, and he will; he may move when God gives him power to move, and move he will then with joyful alacrity, but till then -

"How helpless guilty nature lies,  
Unconscious of her load,  
The heart unchanged can never rise  
To happiness and God."

Till the stone shall of itself fly upwards towards the sun, till the sea shall of itself beget fire, and until fire shall by its own nature distil the shower from its own bowels, then and not till then shall depraved humanity breathe goodness within itself. It must be grace; it must be grace alone.

Let me give you another reason why we are quite sure that all things in the work of grace are of God. It is expressly told us that every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh from above. Now, that word "every" is very comprehensive; it does not exclude a single case. Is there any good gift? I am not told that some good gifts, and some perfect gifts are from above, but every one; and I am quite sure this rule must apply to any good gift you have—any good gift in fact, that is in the heart of any man living upon the face of the earth. God were only in part the Father of lights, if there were light streaming from somewhere else; God were only in part the world's benefactor, if there were other fountains out of which the world could draw, and other helpers who could raise up souls to heaven.

Yet again, we are quite certain that all things are of God, because all the glory is God's. Now, if all the glory be God's it stands to reason that the work must have been his; for where the work is, there must be the merit. If man hath done it, man can claim the honour. If I have been my own Saviour, I will claim the honour and the dignity; and nothing but superior force can wrest from me the glory which I deserve. But if God hath done it, and if I must feel that I have been passive in his hands until he made me active, then must I lay all my honours at his feet, and crown him Lord of all. I am quite certain we do not differ here about God's having all the honour, and yet if we should differ about his doing all the work, we might have fair ground on which to dispute his right to take all the glory.

Oh, men and brethren, if I want argument, your own experience shall bear witness. You as Christians are compelled to feel—"Thou hast wrought all our works in us." You can say, "We are his workmanship, created of God in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Set it down then for a certainty—I have tried to explain it as best I can—"All things are of God." Grasp every mercy of the covenant, and every blessing of grace, but say that all things in all senses, are wholly and entirely of God, the great giver of all.

II. And now I am proposing in the second part of my subject, briefly, to show THE EXCELLENT TENDENCIES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

There is one thing about the doctrines of the gospel which to my mind always commends them, they always enlist the attention of men, and rouse them to think. If you hear a sermon in which God's grace is magnified, you are perhaps offended you are angry because the doctrinal sentiments are not in keeping with your own carnal pride. For you to be angry is one of the healthiest things that can happen to you. Do not imagine that the sermon has been wasted when it has made you 'Vexed; conceive not that it has been lost upon you when it has made you angry with it. Perhaps there was but that joint of the harness through which the arrow could reach you, namely, your own anger against the truth. I have known many who have frankly confessed, that after they have been to this place, they felt disturbed; they could not sleep. They hated the preacher, and they hated the subject, yet, in about a month's time, they felt they must come again; they disliked it so much they were compelled to hear



again of this matter. They could not quite see it, in fact, they would not; they would still hold to their own opinion, but they said within themselves, "I never thought so much about religion in all my life." There is a something in these doctrines that drives right into the soul of man. Other forms of doctrine run off like oil down a slab of marble, but this chisels them, cuts into the very quick. They cannot help feeling there is something here, which if they kick against, it has nevertheless force, and they must ask themselves, "Is the thing true or not?" They cannot be content with buffing it, and making themselves easy; It takes hold of their thinking powers, and wakes them up to enquiry whether these things are so or not. And it is remarkable that wherever the doctrine, that salvation is of God, and God alone, has been revived; it has always happened that God has sent a revival of true religion. To give you a practical illustration—on the Continent I have been informed, by many who have had good reason to judge, that the Lutheran church is to a very great extent, fallen from its faith, and becoming Unitarian or Neological and the like, but the Calvinistic churches never,—there they stand just the same. There is a salt in these doctrines which preserves truth; there is a savouriness and pungency about them which keeps the constitution of men right. It is a great big sheet anchor; it may seem cumbrous, and in these modern times it may be said to be rather rusty, but in days of storm, that great big bower anchor will have to be thrown out into the sea again. The more I preach the more am I concerned not to give a double testimony about this matter, but to lay it down clearly and distinctly that salvation is of God; that all things, in fact, in the new creation of grace, are of God, and God alone.

And oh! what enthusiasm these truths will stir up in the minds of those who believe them. I have heard them preached by simple, uneducated, unlearned men, and the congregations have been bathed in tears. There has been no stolidness upon the countenances of the hearers. They have heard as if they were hearing the very Word of God and felt the power of it. I have preached during this week in the simplest manner I could these truths to somewhere about twenty or thirty thousand Welsh people in one congregation, and such a sight I never saw, when all as one man they kept crying out, "Aha! Amen! Amen—Gogoniant ;" the whole sermon through, carried away with enthusiasm because they heard again the

good old truths that Christmas Evans used to thunder out to them, and which the Welsh still hold intact, even though the English may choose to reject and scorn them. There is something in them that would nerve men on to do mighty deeds. Cromwell's sword was so sharp and his arm so strong, because he knew the Lord of hosts and trusted in his mighty power, and believed in God's overcoming grace. This made the Ironsides invincible; there were never such men as they. The Calvinist's arm is always strong; he that is of God and knows not man, he who looks to God's purpose and grace and gives him all the glory, is not a man to bow before a tyrant, or to lick the feet of any being. He knows himself chosen of God, and he stands upright, and yet while standing he is full of a fire, of an enthusiasm that makes him work, and compels him to serve the cause of God and truth.

That, however, perhaps, is but by-the-bye. I have other tendencies to mention concerning this doctrine. The fact, that conversion and salvation are of God, is a humbling truth. It is because of its humbling character that men do not like it. To be told that God must save me if I am saved, and that I am in his hand, as clay is in the hands of the potter, "I do not like it," saith one. Well, I thought you would not; whoever dreamed you would? If you had liked it, perhaps it had not been true; your not liking it is an indirect evidence of its truthfulness. To be told that "he must work all my works in me," who can bring me so low as that? Where is boasting then! It is excluded. By what law? the law of works? No, but by the law of grace. Grace puts its hand on their boasting mouth, and shuts it once for all; and then it takes its hand off from the mouth, and that mouth now does not fear to speak to man, though it trembles at the very thought of taking any honour and glory from God. I must say—I am compelled to say—that the doctrine which leaves salvation to the creature and tells him that it depends upon himself, is the exaltation of the flesh, and a dishonouring of God. But that which puts in God's hand man, fallen man, and tells man that though he has destroyed himself, yet his salvation must be of God, that doctrine humbles man in the very dust, and then he is just in the right place to receive the grace and mercy of God. It is a humbling doctrine.

Again, this doctrine gives the death-blow to all self-sufficiency. What the

Arminian wants to do is to arouse man's activity; what we want to do is to kill it once for all, to show him that he is lost and ruined, and that his activities are not now at all equal to the work of conversion; that he must look upward. They seek to make the man stand up; we seek to bring him down, and make him feel that there he lies in the hand of God, and that his business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, "Lord, save, or we perish." We hold that man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel that he can do nothing at all. When he says, "I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other," marks of self-sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow. But when he comes to his knees and cries, -

"Oh for this no strength have I,  
My strength is at thy feet to lie,"

then we think that God has blessed him, and that the work of grace is in his soul. O sinner! think not that thy own unaided arm can get the victory. Cry unto God, and beg him to take your soul in hand, for you cannot be saved unless he doth it for you. Bless him for the promise which says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Oh ! cry to him, "Lord, draw me by thy grace, that I may run after thee; work all my works in me, and bring me to thyself and save me!" Not to yourself do we bid you look, nor to your prayers, nor to your faith, but to Christ and to his cross, and to that God who is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

And there is in this doctrine some consolation for the troubled heart. If all things be of God, my soul, let not thy spirit be ruffled and affrighted by the tempest. "All things are of God;" if there were one thing of me, I were a lost man. If you were about to build a great bridge, and would let me have the placing of one stone, you shall build it as you please, and it will fall. Let me have the management of the keystone, and I will undertake that it shall not stand. So if in the work of salvation there is one thing left dependent upon myself, it must all fall; but if everything be guaranteed and settled by Eternal wills and shalls, then it stands fast and rests secure. Oh! joyous thought to the Christian, his soul is safe, he has given himself up into Christ's hand to be kept, and now the keeping rests with Christ, he has surrendered himself to his Lord and Master to be preserved, and now he knows that come what may, Christ is his buckler

and his shield, and nothing will hurt him. because Jesus keeps daily watch and ward, and will preserve him safely to the end. I do not know where our Arminian brethren get their consolation from. I know, if I believed their doctrine, I should be driven to distraction; but believing as I do, that those whom God begins to save, he will completely save, and that there is not a single stone in the entire building that can ever fail or give way, my soul can sing,

"This covenant stands secure,  
Though earth's old columns bow;  
The strong, the feeble, and the weak  
Are one in Jesus now."

I have one more thing to say about this doctrine. It encourages the sinner. Sinner, sinner! come to Jesus; for "all things are of God." You are naked; the robe in which you shall be dressed is of God. You are filthy; the washing is of God. Come, and be washed. But you are unworthy; your worthiness must be of God. Come as you are, and he will cleanse you. You are guilty; your pardon is of God. Come to him, and his pardon shall be freely given. But you say, you are hard-hearted; a new heart is of God. Come to him; he will give you the heart of flesh, and take away the heart of stone. But, you say, "I cannot pray as I would." True prayer is of God; he will pour out upon you the Spirit of supplication. But you say, my very coming must be of God. Ay, blessed be God for that. And, therefore, if now you feel something saying to you, "Let me go and trust in Christ," that is of God. Oh ! come with cheerfulness; for there is nothing wanted of you, everything is of God. Is your heart barren? Fruitfulness is of God. Is your heart stubborn? Obedience is of God. Can you not repent? He is exalted on high to give you repentance. Repentance is of God. Do you say, "I cannot believe?" Faith is of God ; it is one of his unspeakable gifts. But do you say, "I am afraid I shall not be able to persevere! Perseverance is of God. All you are bidden to do is simply to be a receiver. Come with your empty pitcher, and hold it now to the flowing fountain; come with your empty lap, and receive the golden store; come with a hungry mouth to feed, and with thirsty lips to drink. You are asked to do nothing; you are asked to be nothing. Cease from thyself, O man, and begin with God. Leave off now to do, and feel, and be, and come and trust in him who did,

and was, and felt for you ; and then afterwards, being saved, you shall begin to be, and to feel, and to act, through a new energy, leading to a new life. To live to Christ, you must first die to yourself. Every hope of mortal nurture must be killed before you can receive a divine hope within you. Come, bruised and mangled, crushed and broken, come and take Christ to be your all in all; and if thou canst not stretch out thine hand of thyself, as indeed thou canst not—I speak in my Master's name, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by his Spirit's power, believe. It is the duty of God's servants not only to exhort, but with divine authority to command. Man with the withered hand! in the name of Jesus, stretch out thine hand. Thou who hast never believed or repented! "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Dost thou receive the command? The power goes with it. Art thou willing to obey it? That will is God's gift: the power is with the will. Believe Christ; trust Christ; take him to be everything, and you are saved; your sins are washed away; you are an heir of paradise, and you may rejoice. Clap your wings ye angels; tune your harps anew ye seraphs, ye redeemed! louder, louder, let your strains of music rise toward heaven. O, ye cherubim and seraphim! sing loud unto his name, of whom, and to whom, and by whom are all things, unto whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **The High Priest Standing Between The Dead And The Living**

And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. - Numbers 16:47-48

We have attentively read the passage which contains the account of this

transaction. The authority of Moses and Aaron had been disputed by an ambitious man belonging to an elder branch of the family of Levi, who had craftily joined with himself certain factious spirits of the tribe of Reuben, who themselves also sought to attain to power by their supposed rights through Reuben the firstborn. By a singular judgment from heaven, God had proved that rebellion against Moses was a mortal sin. He had bidden the earth open its mouth and swallow up all the traitors, and both Levites and Reubenites had disappeared, covered in a living grave. One would have imagined that from this time the murmurings of the children of Israel would have ceased, or that at least even should they have daring enough to gather in little mutinous knob, yet their traitorous spirit never would have come to so great a height as to develop itself in the whole body openly before the Lord's tabernacle. Yet so was it. On the very morrow after that solemn transaction, the whole of the people of Israel gathered themselves together, and with unholy clamours surrounded Moses and Aaron, charging them with having put to death the people of the Lord. Doubtless they hinged this accusation upon the fact, that whenever Moses prayed God heard him; then would they say, "Had he prayed upon this occasion the people would not have been destroyed; the earth would not have opened her mouth, and they would not have been swallowed up." They would thus attempt to prove the charge which they brought against these two great men of God. Can you picture the scene now in your mind's eye. There is the infuriated mass of people; the spectacle of such a crowd as I see before me in this hall is overpowering, and were all this multitude in tumult against two men, the two might have sufficient cause for trembling, but this would be but as a grain of sand compared with that inconceivable number who were then gathered. A large part of those three millions would come up in one vast tumultuous host; whatever was proposed by any leader of the mob would no doubt have instantly been carried into effect, and had it not been for the awful majesty which surrounded the person of Moses, no doubt they would have torn him to pieces on the spot. But just as they are rushing up like the waves of the sea, the cloudy pillar which hung above the tabernacle descends, and envelopes in its fold, as with a protecting baptism, the whole of the sacred place. Then in the center of this cloud there blazed out that marvellous light called the Shekinah, which was the indication of the presence of Him who cannot be seen, but whose glory

may be manifest. The people stand back a little; Moses and Aaron fall upon their faces in prayer; they beg of God that he would spare the people, for they have heard a voice coming out of the excellent glory, saying, "Get thee up from this people, that I may destroy them in a moment." This time God's blow goes forth with his word, for the destroying angel begins to mow down the outer ranks of the vast tumultuous host, there they fall one upon another; Moses with his undimmed vision, looking over the heads of the people, can see them begin to fall beneath the scythe of death. "Up," saith Aaron, up, and take with thee thy censer; snatch fire from off the holy altar, and run among the people, for the plague has begun." Aaron, a man of a hundred years of age, fills his censor, runs along as if he were a youth, and begins to swing it towards heaven with holy energy, feeling that in his hand was the life of the people; and when the incense is accepted in heaven, death stops in his work. On this side are heaps upon heaps of corpses slain by God's avenging angel, and there stand the crowd of living people, living only because of Aaron's intercession; living simply because he had waved that censor and burned that incense for them; otherwise, had the angel smitten them all, they would all have lain together as the leaves of the forest lie in autumn—dead and sear.

I think you can now in your imaginations picture the scene. I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of men, who "like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way." We shall look at Aaron this morning in a five-fold character. The whole scene is typical of Christ; and Aaron, as he appears before us in each character is a most magnificent picture of the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us look at Aaron as the LOVER of the people. You know who it is to whom we give that name of "Lover of my Soul." You will be able to see in Aaron the lover of Israel; in Jesus the lover of his people.

Aaron deserves to be very highly praised for his patriotic affection for a people who were the most rebellious and stiffnecked that ever grieved the heart of a good man. You must remember that in this case he was the aggrieved party. The clamor was made against Moses and against Aaron,

yet it was Moses and Aaron who intercede and saved the people. They were the offended ones, yet were they the saving ones. Aaron had a special part in the matter, for no doubt the conflict of Korah especially was rather against the priesthood, which belonged exclusively to Aaron, than against the prophetic dispensation which God had granted to Moses. Aaron must have felt when he saw Korah there and the two hundred and fifty men, all of them with their censers, that the plot was against him; that they wished to strip from him his mitre, to take from him his embroidered vest, and the glittering stones that shone upon his breast; that they wished to reduce him to the position of a common Levite, and take to themselves his office and his dignity. Yet, forgetting himself, he doth not say, "Let them die; I will wait awhile till they have been sufficiently smitten." But the old man with generous love hastened into the midst of the people, though he was himself the aggrieved person. Is not this the very picture of our sweet Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonored him? Was he not the Eternal God, and did not sin therefore conspire against him as well as against the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit? Was he not, I say, the one against whom the nations of the earth stood up and said, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us." Yet he, our Jesus, laying aside all thought of avenging himself, becomes the Savior of his people.

"Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste he fled;  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead."

Oh! generous Christ, forgetting the offenses which we have committed against thee, and making atonement by thine own blood for sins which were perpetrated against thine own glory!

Well, you note again, that Aaron in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of his people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood; they were desiring to put him and Moses to death, and yet all thoughtless of danger, he snatches up his censer and runs into their midst with a divine enthusiasm in his heart. He might have stood back, and said, "No, they will slay me if I go into



their ranks; furious as they are, they will charge this new death upon me and lay me low." But he never considers it. Into the midst of their crowd he boldly springs. Most blessed Jesus, thou mightest not only think thus, but indeed thou didst feel it to be true. Thou didst come unto thine own, and thine own received thee not. Thou didst come into the world to save a race that hated thee, and oh, how they proved their hatred to thee, for they did spit upon thy cheeks; they did cast calumny and slander upon thy person; they did take the heir, and said, "Come, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours." Jesus, thou wast willing to die a martyr, that thou mightest be made a sacrifice for those by whom thy blood was spilt. Jesus transcends Aaron; Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people, Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there he stood even in the hour of death, waving his censer, staying the plague, and dividing the living from the dead.

Again, you will see the love and kindness of Aaron, if you look again; Aaron might have said, "But the Lord will surely destroy me also with the people, if I go where the shafts of death are flying they will reach me." He never thinks of it; he exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. There comes the angel of death, smiting all before him, and here stands Aaron in his very path, as much as to say, "Get thee back! get thee back! I will wave my incense in thy face; destroyer of men, thou canst not pass the censor of God's high priest." Oh thou glorious High Priest of our profession, thou mightest not only have feared this which Aaron might have dreaded, but thou didst actually endure the plague of God, for when thou didst come among the people to save them from Jehovah's wrath, Jehovah's wrath fell upon thee. Thou wast forsaken of thy Father. The plague which Jesus kept from us slew him, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The sheep escaped, but, "his life and blood the Shepherd pays, a ransom for the flock."

Oh, thou lover of thy church, immortal honors be unto thee! Aaron deserves to be beloved by the tribes of Israel, because he stood in the gap and exposed himself for their sins; but thou, most mighty Savior, thou shalt have eternal songs, because, forgetful of thyself, thou didst bleed and die, that man might be saved!

I would again for one moment, draw your attention to that other thought which I have already hinted at, namely, that Aaron as a lover of the people of Israel deserves much commendation, from the fact that it is expressly said, he ran into the host. I am not just now sure about Aaron's age, but being older than Moses, who must have been at this time about ninety years of age, Aaron must have been more than a hundred, and probably, a hundred and twenty, or more. It is no little thing to say that such a man, clad no doubt in his priestly robes, ran, and that for a people who had never shown any activity to do him service, but much zeal in opposing his authority. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within. Ah! and was it not so with Christ? Did he not haste to be our Savior? Were not his delights with the sons of men? Did he not often say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His dying for us was not a thing which he dreaded. "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover." He had panted for the moment when he should redeem his people. He had looked forward through eternity for that hour when he should glorify his Father, and his Father might glorify him. He came voluntarily bound by no constraint, except his own covenant engagements,; and he cheerfully and joyfully laid down his life—a life which no man could take from him, but which he laid down of himself. While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ. While I write Aaron down as the lover of his race, I write down Jesus Christ as being the best of lovers—the friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

II. But I now pass on to take a second view of Aaron as he stands in another character. Let us now view Aaron as THE GREAT PROPITIATOR.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, and it is God's law that his wrath shall never stay unless a propitiation be offered. The incense which Aaron carried in his hand was the propitiation before God, from the fact that God saw in that perfume the type of that richer offering which our Great High Priest is this very day offering before the throne.

Aaron as the propitiator, is to be looked at first as bearing in his censor that which was necessary for the propitiation. He did not come empty-handed. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censor, he must fill it with the ordained incense, made with the ordained materials, and then he must light it with the sacred fire from off the altar, and with that alone. With the censor in his hand he is safe; without it Aaron might have died as well as the rest of the people. The qualification of Aaron partly lay in the fact that he had the censor, and that that censor was full of sweet odours which were acceptable to God. Behold, then, Christ Jesus as the propitiator for his people. He stands this day before God with his censor smoking up towards heaven. Behold the Great High Priest! See him this day with his pierced hands, and head that once was crowned with thorns. Mark how the marvellous smoke of his merits goeth up for ever and ever before the eternal throne. 'Tis he, 'tis he alone who puts away the sins of his people. His incense, as we know, consists first of all of his positive obedience to the divine law. He kept his Father's commands; he did everything he should have done; he kept to the full the whole law of God, and made it honorable. Then mixed with this is his blood—an equally rich and precious ingredient. That bloody sweat—the blood from his head, pierced with the crown of thorns, the blood of his hands as they were nailed to the tree; the blood of his feet as they were fixed to the wood; and the blood of his very heart—richest of them all—all mixed together with his merits—these make up the incense—an incense incomparable—an incense peerless and surpassing all others. Not all the odours that ever rose from tabernacle or temple could for a moment stand in rivalry with these. The blood alone speaketh better things than that of Abel, and if Abel's blood prevailed to bring vengeance, how much more shall the blood of Christ prevail to bring down pardon and mercy! Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement, which are as sweet frankincense before the Father's face.

Besides that, it was not enough for Aaron to have the proper incense. Korah might have that too, and he might have the censor also. That would not suffice—he must be the ordained priest; for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others; their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained one—called of God as was Aaron. Settled in

eternity as being the predestinated propitiation for sin, he came into the world as an ordained priest of God, receiving his ordination not from man, neither by man, but like Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Stand back, sons of Korah, all of you who call yourselves priests. I can scarce imagine that any man in this world who takes to himself the title of a priest, except he take it in the sense in which all God's people are priests,—I cannot imagine that a priest can enter heaven. I would not say a thing too stern or too severe; but I do most thoroughly believe that an assumption of the office of priest is so base an usurpation of the priestly office of Christ, that I could as well conceive of a man being saved who called himself God, as conceive of a man being saved who called himself a priest; if he really means what he says, he has so trenched upon the priestly prerogative of Christ, that it seems to me he has touched the very crown jewels, and is guilty of a blasphemy, which, unless it be repented of, shall surely bring damnation on his head. Shake your garments, ye ministers of Christ, from all priestly assumption; come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing. There are no priests now specially to minister among men. Jesus Christ, and he only is the priest of his Church, and he hath made all of us priests and kings unto our God, and we shall reign for ever and ever. If I should have any person here so weak as to depend for his salvation upon the offerings of another man, I conjure him to forego his deception. I care not who your priests may be. He may belong to the Anglican or to the Romish church. Ay, and to any church under heaven. If he claimeth to be anything of a priest more than you can claim yourself—away with him—he imposes upon you; he speaks to you that which God abhors, and that which the Church of Christ should abhor and would detest, were she truly alive to her Master's glory. None but Jesus, none but Jesus; all other priests and offerings we disdain. Cast dirt upon their garments, they are not and they cannot be priests; they usurp the special dignity of Jesus.

But let us note once more in considering Aaron as the great propitiator, that we must look upon him as being ready for his work. He was ready with his incense, and ran to the work at the moment the plague broke out. We do not find that he had need to go and put on his priestly garments;

we do not find that he had to prepare for performing the propitiatory work; but he went there and then as soon as the plague broke out. The people were ready to perish and he was ready to save. Oh, my hearer, listen to this, Jesus Christ stands ready to save thee now; there is no need of preparation; he hath slain the victim; he hath offered the sacrifice; he hath filled the censor; he hath put to it the glowing coals. His breastplate is on his breast; his mitre is on his head; he is ready to save thee now. Trust him, and thou shalt not find need for delay. Rely upon him, and thou shalt not find that he hath to go a day's journey to save thee; "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Ye who know not Christ, hear this! Ye are lost and ruined by the fall. Wrath is gone out from God against you. That wrath must consume you to the lowest hell, unless some one can propitiate God on your behalf. You cannot do it. No man can do it; no prayers of yours; no sacraments, nay, though you could sweat a bloody sweat, it would not avail; but Christ is able to make propitiation. He can do it, and he alone; he can stand between you and God, and turn away Jehovah's wrath, and he can put into your heart a sense of his love. Oh, I pray you, trust him, trust him. You may not be ready for him, but he is always ready to save, and indeed I must correct myself in that last sentence, you are ready for him. If you be never so vile, and never so ruined by your sin, their needs no preparation and no readiness. It was not the merit of the people that saved them, nor any preparation on their part; it was the preparedness of the high priest that saved them. He is prepared. He stands on the behalf of those who believe on him. Would that thou wouldst now believe on him and trust thy soul in his hands; and oh, believe me, thy sins which are many shall be all forgiven; the plague shall be stayed, nor shall God's wrath go out against thee, but thou shalt be saved.

### III. Let me now view Aaron as THE INTERPOSER.

Let me explain what I mean. As the old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moveth along a field of corn." There it came; it began in the extremity; the faces of men grew pale, and swiftly on, on it came, and in vast heaps they fell till some fourteen thousand had been destroyed. Aaron wisely

puts himself just in the pathway of the plague. It came on, cutting down all before it, and there stood Aaron the interposer with arms outstretched and censor swinging towards heaven, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. "If there be darts that must fly," he seemed to say, "let them pierce me; or let the incense shield both me and the people. Death," saith he, "art thou coming on thy pale horse? I arrest thee, I throw back thy steed upon his haunches. Art thou coming, thou skeleton king? With my censor in my hand I stand before thee; thou must march over my body; thou must empty my censor; thou must destroy God's High Priest, ere thou canst destroy this people." Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. The law was about to smite us the whole human race must be destroyed. Christ stands in the forefront of the battle. "The stripes must fall on me," he cries; "the arrows shall find a target in my breast. On me, Jehovah, let thy vengeance fall." And he receives that vengeance, and afterwards upspringing from the grave he waves the censor full of the merit of his blood, and bids this wrath and fury stand back. On which side are you to-day, sinner? Is God angry with thee, sinner? Are thy sins unforgiven? Say, art thou unpardoned? Art thou abiding still an heir of wrath and an inheritor of death? Ah! then would that thou wert on the other side of Christ. If thou dost believe on Christ, then let me ask thee, dost thou know that thou art completely saved? No wrath can ever reach thee, no spiritual death can ever destroy thee, no hell can ever consume thee, and why? What is thy guard, what thy protection? I see the tear, glistening in thine eye as thou sayest, "There is nothing between me and hell save Christ? There is nothing between me and Jehovah's wrath save Christ? There is nothing between me and instant destruction save Christ? But he is enough. He with the censor in his hand—God's great ordained Priest—he is enough." Ah, brothers and sisters, if you have put between you and God, baptisms and communions, fastings, prayers, tears and vows, Jehovah shall break through your refuges as the fire devours the stubble. But if, my soul, Christ stands between thee and Jehovah, Jehovah cannot smite thee; his thunderbolt must first pierce through the Divine Redeemer ere it can reach thee, and that can never be.

My dear hearers, do you perceive this great truth, that there is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that

soul and the just judgment of God? And oh, I put again the personal enquiry to you, are you sheltered behind Christ? Sinner, are you standing to-day beneath the cross? Is that thy shelter? Is the purple robe of Jesus' atonement covered over you?

Are you like the dove which hides in the clefts of the rock? Have you hidden in the wounds of Christ? Say, have you crept into his side, and do you feel that he must be your shelter till the tempest be overpast? Oh, be of good cheer; he for whom Christ is the intercessor, is a rescued man. Oh, soul, if thou art not in Christ, what wilt thou do when the destroying angel comes? Careless sinner, what will become of thee when death arrests thee? Where wilt thou be when the judgment trumpet rings in thine ears, and sounds an alarm that shall wake the dead? Sleepy sinner, sleeping to-day under God's Word, will you sleep then, when Jehovah's thunders are let loose, and all his lightnings set the heavens in a blaze? I know where then you shall seek a shelter! You shall seek it where you cannot find it, you shall bid the rocks fall upon you, and ask the mountains to hide you, but their stony bowels shall know of no compassion, their hearts of adamant shall yield you no pity, and you shall stand exposed to the blast of vengeance and the shower of the hot hail of God's fury, and nothing shall protect you, but as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed from off the face of the earth, so must you be destroyed, and that for ever and ever, because ye believed not on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

IV. But we cannot tarry longer here; we must again pass to another point. We have viewed Aaron in three characters—as the lover, the propitiator, and the intercessor; now, fourthly, let me view him as THE SAVIOR.

It was Aaron Aaron's censor, that saved the lives of that great multitude. If he had not prayed the plague had not stayed, and the Lord would have consumed the whole company in a moment. As it was, you perceive there were some fourteen thousand and seven hundred that died before the Lord. The plague had begun its dreadful work, and only Aaron could stay it. And now I want you to notice with regard to Aaron, that Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Savior. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron to wave his censor. The people

could not demand it of him. Had they not brought a false accusation against him? And yet he saves them. It must have been love and nothing but love. Say, was there anything in the voices of that infuriated multitude which could have moved Aaron to stay the plague from before them? Nothing! nothing in their character! nothing in their looks! nothing in their treatment of God's High Priest! and yet he graciously stands in the breach, and saves them from the devouring judgment of God! Oh! brothers and sisters—if Christ hath saved us he is a gracious Savior indeed. Often as we think of the fact that we are saved, the tear falls down our cheek; for we never can tell why Jesus hath saved us.

"What was there in you that could merit esteem!  
Or give the Creator delight?  
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' you ever must sing  
'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'"

There is no difference between the glorified in heaven and the doomed in hell, except the difference that God made of his own sovereign grace. Whatever difference there may be between Saul the apostle and Elymas the sorcerer, has been made by infinite sovereignty and undeserved love. Paul might still have remained Saul of Tarsus, and might have become a damned fiend in the bottomless pit, had it not been for free sovereign grace which came out to snatch him as a brand from the burning. Oh, sinner, thou sayest "There is no reason in me why God should save me," but there is no reason in any man. Thou hast no good point, nor hath any man. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God. We are all such sinners, that hell is our deserved portion; and if any of us be saved from going down into the pit, it is God's undeserved sovereign bounty that doth it, and not any merits of ours. Jesus Christ is a most gracious Savior.

And then again, Aaron was an unaided Savior. Even Moses did not come with Aaron to help him. He stood alone in the gap with that censer—that one solitary stream of smoke dividing between the living and the dead. Why did not the princes of Israel come with him? Alas! they could have done nothing, they must have died themselves. Why did not all the Levity come with him? They must have been smitten if they had dared to stand



in the place of God's High Priest. He stands alone, alone, alone! and herein was he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." Do not think, then, that when Christ prevails with God, it is because of any of your prayers, or tears, or good works. He never puts your tears and prayers into his censor. They would mar the incense. There is nothing but his own prayers, and his own tears, and his own merits there. Do not think that you are saved because of anything that you have ever done or can ever do for Christ. We may preach, and we may be made in God's hand the spiritual fathers of thousands of souls, but our preaching doth in no way help to turn away the wrath of God from us. Christ doth it all, entirely and alone, and no man must dare to stand as his helper. Sinner, dost thou hear this, thou art saying, "I cannot do this or that." He asks thee not to do anything, thou sayest, "I have no merits." Man, he does not want any, if thou wouldst help Christ thou wilt be lost, but if thou wilt leave Christ to do it all, thou shalt be saved. Come now, the very plan of salvation is this, to take Christ to be thine all in all; he will never be a part-Savior; he never came to patch our ragged garments; he will give us a new robe, but he will never mend the old one. He did not come to help build the palace of God, he will quarry every stone and lay it on its fellow, he will have no sound of hammer, or help in that great work. Oh that this voice could ring through the world while I proclaim again those words, the deathblow of all Popery, legality, and carnal merit, "Jesus only, Jesus only." "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Nor doth he need a helper; "He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

He was, then, you will perceive, a gracious Savior, and all unaided one; and, once more, Aaron as a Savior was all-sufficient. Death came up to the very feet of Aaron; there lay a dead man, there lay a mother, a child, a prince, a hewer of wood, a drawer of water,—there they lay. There stood a strong man in his agony, and implored that he might not die, but he fell backward a corpse. There stood up a prince of Israel and must he die? Yes, he must fall. All-devouring death, like a hungry lion, came howling onward, amidst the screams and shrieks of the people, but there he stood; that censor seemed to say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

What a miracle that the censer should stop the reign of death. Up to this mark the waves of that shoreless sea are flowing; there men stand on the terra firma of life. Aaron stands, and as God's High Priest with that censer alone, he puts back grim death; the whole host of Israel, if they had been armed and had carried bows, could not have driven back the pestilence; nay, all the hosts of armed men that ever stained the earth with blood could not have driven back God's plagues. Death would have laughed at them, yea, he would have trodden in among their ranks and cut them in pieces, but Aaron alone is enough, fully sufficient, and that through the burning of the incense. Oh sinner, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, able to save; you cannot save yourself, but he can save you. Oh sinner, all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; it mattereth not how base and vile you may have been, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Though the remembrance of thy sin bring scarlet into thy face, dost thou blush to think what a wretch thou hast been, has thy life been foul adultery, has it been blasphemy, lying, hatred of God's people, and what not,—I add to this another, if thou wilt,—or lasciviousness, debauchery, murder,—if all these crimes were there, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, would be able still to cleanse thee from all sin. Though thou had committed every crime in the catalogue of iniquity, sins which we cannot mention, yet "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow." And thou sayest, "How can I partake of this?" Simply by trusting Christ with thy soul. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved he that believeth not shall be damned." This was Christ's commission to the apostles, he bid them go forth and preach this great truth, and again I proclaim it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not must be damned." He that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, he that believeth shall never be lost, though his skis may have been never so many. Trust thou thy soul with Christ, and thy sins are at once forgiven, at once blotted out.

V. And now I come to my last point, and that is, Aaron as THE DIVIDER—the picture of Christ.

Aaron the anointed one stands here; on that side is death, on this side

life; the boundary between life and death is that one man. Where his incense smokes the air is purified, where it smokes not the plague reigns with unmitigated fury. There are two sorts of people here this morning, we forget the distinction of rich and poor, we know it not here there are two sorts of people, we forego the distinction of the learned and unlearned we care not for that here; there are two sorts here, and these are the living and the dead, the pardoned, the unpardoned, the saved, and the lost. What divides the true Christian from the unbeliever? Some think it is that the Christian takes the Sacrament, the other not. It is no division, there be men who have gone to hell with sacramental bread in their mouths; others may imagine that Baptism makes the difference, and indeed it is the outward token, the baptismal pool is the means by which we show to the world that we are buried in Christ's grave, in type that we are dead to the world and buried in Christ; we rise up from it in testimony that we desire to live in newness of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He who is baptized does in that way cross the Rubicon, he draws the sword and throws away the scabbard, he is the baptized one, and has a sign that can never be eradicated from him. He is dedicated through that baptism to Christ, but it is but an outward sign, for many have there been who have been baptized with water, who not having the baptism of the Holy Ghost, have afterwards been baptized in the fiery sufferings of eternal torment. No! no! the one division, the one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is Christ. A man in Christ is a Christian; a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, he that believeth not is lost." Christ is the only divider between his people and the world. On which side, then, art thou to-day, my hearer? Come, let the question go individually to you. Young man, on which side are you? Are you Christ's friend and servant, or are you his enemy? Old man, thou with the grey head yonder, thou hast but a little while to live, on which side art thou? Art thou my Master's blood-bought one, or art thou still a lost sheep? And thou matron, thou who art busied, perhaps, even now in thy thoughts upon thy children, think not of them for a moment, on which side art thou? Hast thou believed, hast thou been born again, or art thou still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? Ye that stand yonder, let the question penetrate your thick rank now, where are you? Can you take the name of Christ upon your lips, and say, "Jesus, I am

thine, and thou art mine, thy blood and righteousness are my hope and trust;" for if not, my hearer, thou art among the spiritually dead, and thou shalt soon be among the damned unless divine grace prevent, and change, and renew thee.

Please remember, brothers and sisters, that as Christ is the great divider now, so will he be in the day of judgment. Do you never think of that, he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. It is the Shepherd's person that divideth the sheep from the goats. He stands between them, and in that last day of days for which all other days were made, Christ shall be the great divider. There the righteous clad in white, in songs triumphant glorified with him; and there the lost, the unbelieving, the fearful, the abominable. What divides them from you bright host? Nothing but the person of the Son of Man, on whom they look, and weep, and mourn, and wail because of him. That is the impenetrable barrier that shall shut out the damned from eternal bliss. The gate which may let you in now will be the fiery gate which shall shut you out hereafter. Christ is the door of heaven; oh, dreadful day when that door shall be shut, when that door shall stand before you, and prevent you entering into the felicity which you shall then long for, when you cannot enter into it.

Oh! on which side shall I be, when all these transitory things are done away with, when the dead have risen from their graves, when the great congregation shall stand upon the land, and upon the sea, when every valley, and every mountain, and every river, and every sea, shall be crowded with multitudes standing in thick array? Oh! when he shall say, "Separate my people, thrust in the sickle, for the harvest of the world is ripe;" my soul, where shalt thou be? Shalt thou be found among the lost? Shall the dread trumpet send thee down to hell, while a voice that rends thine ear, shall call after thee "Depart from me, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, grant that I may not be there, but among thy people may I stand. So may it be; may we be on the right hand of the Judge to all eternity, and remember that for ever and ever Christ will be the divider, he shall stand between the lost and the saved, he shall interpose for ever between the damned and the glorified. Again I put it to you, give me your

ears just for one moment while I speak. What say you, sirs, shall this congregation be rent in twain? The hour is coming when our wills and wishes shall have no forge. God will divide the righteous from the wicked then, and Christ shall be the dread division, I say, are we prepared to be separated eternally? Husband, are you prepared to renounce to-day your wife for ever, are you prepared when the clammy sweat gathers on her brow to give her the last kiss, and say, "Adieu, adieu, I shall never meet with thee again." Child, son, daughter, are you ready to go home and sit down at the table of your mother, and ere you eat, say, "Mother, I now forswear you once for all, I am determined to be lost and as thou art on the side of Christ, and I will never love him, I will part with you for ever." Surely the ties of kinship make us long to meet in another world, and do we wish to meet in hell? Do you wish all of you to meet there—a grim company to lie in the midst of the flames. Will you abide in the devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burning? No, your wishes are that you may meet in heaven, but you cannot unless you meet in Christ, you cannot meet in Paradise unless you meet in him. Oh that now the grace of God were poured upon you, that you might come unto Jesus.

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## **His Name - The Counsellor**

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor. - Isaiah 9:6

Last Sabbath morning we considered the first title, "His name shall be called Wonderful:" this morning we take the second word, "Counsellor." I need not repeat the remark, that of course these titles belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we cannot understand the passage except by referring it to Messiah—the Prince. It was by a Counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the

fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a Counsellor to destroy it. It was by counsel that it fell and certainly, without counsel it never could have arisen. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counsellor. 'Tis easy to counsel mischief; but how hard to counsel wisely! To cast down is easy, but to build up how hard! To confuse this world, and bring upon it all its train of ills was, an easy thing. A woman plucked the fruit and it was done; but to restore order to this confusion, to sweep away the evils which brooded over this fair earth, this was work indeed, and "Wonderful" was that Christ who came forward to attempt the work, and who in the plentitude of his wisdom hath certainly accomplished it, to his own honor and glory, and to our comfort and safety.

We shall now enter upon the discussion of this title which is given to Christ, a title peculiar to our Redeemer; and you will see why it should be given to him and why there was a necessity for such a Counsellor.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Counsellor in a three-fold sense. First, he is God's Counsellor; he sits in the cabinet council of the King of heaven; he has admittance into the privy chamber, and is the Counsellor with God. In the second place, Christ is a Counsellor in the sense which the Septuagint translation appends to this term. Christ is said to be the angel of the great council. He is a Counsellor in that he communicates to us in God's behalf, what has been done in the great council before the foundation of the world. And thirdly, Christ is a Counsellor to us and with us, because we can consult with him, and he doth counsel and advise us as to the right way and the path of peace.

I. Beginning then, with the first point, Christ may well be called Counsellor, for he is a COUNSELLOR WITH GOD. And here let us speak with reverence, for we are about to enter upon a very solemn subject. It hath been revealed to us that before the world was, when as yet God had not made the stars, long ere space sprang into being, the Almighty God did hold a solemn conclave with himself; Father, Son and Spirit held a

mystic council with each other, as to what they were about to do. That council, although we read but little of it in Scripture, was nevertheless most certainly held; we have abundant traces of it, for though it is a doctrine obscure through the effulgence of that light to which no man can approach, and not simply and didactically explained, as some other doctrines are, yet we have continual tracings and incidental mentionings of that great, eternal and wonderful council, which was held between the three glorious persons of Trinity before the world began. Our first question with ourselves is, why did God hold a council at all? And here, we must answer, that God did not hold a council because of any deficiency in his knowledge, for God understandeth all things from the beginning; his knowledge is the sum total of everything that is noble, and infinite is that sum total, infinitely above everything that is counted noble. Thou, O God, hast thoughts that are unsearchable, and thou knowest what no mortal ken can ever attain unto. Nor, again, did God hold any consultation for the increase of his satisfaction. Sometimes men, when they have determined what to do, will nevertheless seek counsel of their friends, because they say, "If their advice agrees with mine it adds to my satisfaction. and confirms me in my resolution." But God is everlastingly satisfied with himself, and knoweth not the shadow of a doubt to cloud his purpose; therefore, the council was not held with any motive or intent of that sort. Nor, again, was it held with a view of deliberation; Men take weeks and months and sometimes years, to think out a thing that is surrounded with difficulties; they have to find the clue with much research; enveloped in folds of mystery, they have to take off first one garment and then another, before they find out the naked glorious truth. Not so God. God's deliberations are as flashes of lightning; they are as wise as if he had been eternally considering, but the thoughts of his heart, though swift as lightning, are as perfect as the whole system of the universe. The reason why God is represented as holding a council, if I think rightly, is this: that we might understand how wise God is. "In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom." It is for us to think that in the council of the Eternal Three, each Person in the undivided Trinity being omniscient and full of wisdom, there must have been the sum total of all wisdom. And again, it was to show the unanimity and co-operation of the sacred persons: God the Father hath done nothing alone in creation or salvation. Jesus Christ hath done nothing alone; for even the

work of his redemption, albeit that he suffered in some sense alone, needed the sustaining hand of the Spirit, and the accepting smile of the Father, before it could be completed. God said not, "I will make man," but "Let us make man in our own image." God saith not merely, "I will save," but the inference from the declarations of Scripture is, that the design of the three persons of the blessed Trinity was to save a people to themselves, who should show forth their praise. It was, then, for our sakes, not for God's sake, the council was held—that we might know the unanimity of the glorious persons, and the deep wisdom of their devices.

Yet another remark concerning the council. It may be asked, "What were the topics deliberated upon at that first council, which was held before the day-star knew its place, and planets ran their round?" We reply, "The first topic was creation." We are told in the passage we have read, (Proverbs viii,) that the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents himself as Wisdom, was with God before the world was created, and we have every reason to believe that we are to understand this as meaning, that he was not only with God in company, but with God in co-operation. Besides, we have other Scriptures to prove that "all things were made by him and without him was not any thing made that was made." And to quote yet another passage that clinches this truth. God said, "Let us make man;" so that a part of the consultation was with reference to the making of worlds, and the creatures that should inhabit them. I believe that in the sovereign council of eternity, the mountains were weighed in scales, and the hills in balances; then was it fixed in sovereign council how far the sea should go, and where should be its bounds—when the sun should arise and come forth, like a giant from the chambers of his darkness, and when he should return again to his couch of rest. Then did God decree the moment when he should say, "Let there be light," and the moment when the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into a clot of blood. Then did he ordain the form and size of every angel, and the destinies of every creature; then did he sketch in his infinite thought, the eagle as he soared to heaven and the worm as he burrowed into the earth. Then the little as well as the great, the minute as well as the immense, came under the sovereign decree of God. There was that book written, of which Dr. Watts sings -



"Chained to his throne a volume lies,  
With all the fates of men,  
With every angel's form and size,  
Drawn by th' eternal pen."

Christ was a Counsellor in the matter of creation; with none else took he counsel; none else instructed him. Christ was the Counsellor for all the wondrous works of God.

The second topic that was discussed in this council was the work of Providence. God does not act towards this world like a man who makes a watch, and lets it have its own way till it runs down; he is the controller of every wheel in the machine of providence. He has left nothing to itself. We talk of general laws, and philosophers tell us that the world is governed by laws, and then they put the Almighty out of the question. Now, how can a nation be governed by laws apart from a sovereign, or apart from magistrates and rulers to carry out the laws? All the laws may be in the statute book, but put all the police away, take away every magistrate, remove the high court of parliament, what is the use of laws? Laws cannot govern without active agency to carry them out; nor could nature proceed in its everlasting cycles, by the mere force of law. God is the great motive-power of all things; he is in everything. Not only did he make all things, but by him all things consist. From all eternity, Christ was the Counsellor of his Father with regard to providence—when the first man should be born, when he should wander, and when he should be restored—when the first monarchy should rise, and when its sun should set—where his people should be placed, how long they should be placed, and where they should be moved. Was it not the Most High who divided to the nations their inheritance? Hath he not appointed the bounds of our habitation? Oh! heir of heaven, in the day of the great council Christ counselled his Father as to the weight of thy trials, as to the number of thy mercies, if they be numerable, and as to the time, the way, and the means whereby thou shouldst be brought to himself. Remember, there is nothing that happens in your daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counselled by Jesus Christ for your good and in your behalf, that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit. But, my friends, what unfathomable depths of wisdom must have been

involved, when God consulted with himself with regard to the great book of providence! Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object. and yet to us, he often seems to go round about. Ah! Jacob, the Lord is about to provide for thee in Egypt, when there is a famine in Canaan, and he is about to make thy son Joseph great and mighty. Joseph must be sold for a slave; he must be accused wrongfully, he must be put into the pit, and in the round-house prison he must suffer. But God was going straight to his purpose all the while: he was sending Joseph before them into Egypt that they might be provided for, and when the good old patriarch said, "All these things are against me," he did not perceive the providence of God, for there was not a solitary thing in the whole list that was against him, but everything was ruled for his weal. Let us learn to leave providence in the hand of the Counsellor, let us rest assured that he is too wise to err in his predestination, and too good to be unkind, and that in the council of eternity, the best was ordained that could have been ordained—that if you and I had been there, we could not have ordained half so well, but that we should have made ourselves eternal fools by meddling therewith. Rest certain, that in the end we shall see that all was well, and must be well for ever. He is "Wonderful, the Counsellor," for he counselled in matters of providence.

And now with regard to matters of grace. These were also discussed in the everlasting council. When the Three Divine Persons in the solemn seclusion of their own loneliness consulted together with reference to the works of grace, one of the first things they had to consider was, how God should be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly—how the world should be reconciled unto God. Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage—"The council of peace shall be between them both." The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer, he must be the substitute, must bear his people's sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son's substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people

whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council. But O my brethren, if it had not been for that council, what a question would have been left unsolved? Neither you nor I could ever have thought how the two should meet together—how mercy and justice should kiss each other over the mountain of our sins. I have always thought that one of the greatest proofs that the gospel is of God, is its revelation that Christ died to save sinners. That is a thought so original, so new so wonderful; you have not got it in any other religion in the world; so that it must have come from God. As I remember to have heard an un-schooled and illiterate man say, when I first told him the simple story of how Christ was punished in the stead of his people: he burst out with an air of surprise, "Faith! that's the gospel, I know; no man could have made that up; that must be of God." That wonderful thought, that a God himself should die, that he himself should bear our sins, that so God the Father might be able to forgive and yet exact the utmost penalty, is super-human, super-angelic; not even the cherubim and seraphim could have been the inventors of it: but that thought was first struck out from the mind of God in the councils of eternity, when the "Wonderful, the Counsellor," was present with his Father.

Again, another part of the great council was this—who should be saved, Now my friends, you that like not old Calvinistic doctrine will perhaps be horrified but that I cannot help; I will never modify a doctrine I believe to please any man that walks upon earth; but I will prove from Scripture that I have the warrant of God in this matter, and that it is not my own invention. I say that one part of the council of eternity was the predestination of those whom God had determined to save, and I will read you the passage that proves it. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The predestination of everyone of God's people was arranged at the eternal council, where God's will sat as the sovereign umpire and undisputed president. There was it said of each redeemed one, "At such an hour I will call him by my grace, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and by my lovingkindness will I draw him." There was it originated when the peace-speaking blood shall be laid to that elect one's conscience, when the Spirit

of the living God shall breathe joy and consolation into his heart. There was it settled how that chosen one should be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and there was it determined and settled by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that everyone of these should be eternally saved, beyond the shadow of a risk of perishing. The apostle Paul was not like some preachers, who are afraid to say a word about the everlasting council, for he says in his epistle to the Hebrews—"God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath." Now, you hear some talk about the immutability of the promise: that is good. But the immutability of God's counsel,—that is to fathom to the very uttermost the doctrines of grace. The council of God from all eternity is immutable; not one purpose has he ever altered, not one decree has he ever changed, he has nailed his decrees against the pillars of eternity, and though the devils have sought to rend them down from the posts of his magnificent palace, yet, saith he, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;" the decree shall stand; I will do all my pleasure. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth, thou, Lord, in the beginning hast made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, thou hast determined thy plans and purposes, and they stand fast for ever and ever.

I think I have sufficiently declared how Christ was the Counsellor, in the transcendent affairs of nature, providence, and grace, in the everlasting council-chamber of eternity. But now I would have you notice what a mercy it was that there was such a Counsellor with God, and how fit Christ was to be the Counsellor. Christ himself is wisdom. He chargeth his angels with folly; but he is God only wise himself. If a fool undertake to be a counsellor, his counsel is folly, but when Christ counselled, his counsel was full of wisdom. But there is another qualification necessary for a counsellor. However wise a man be, he has no right to be a counsellor with a king, unless he has some dignity and standing. There may happen to be in my congregation some person of great talent, but if my friend should present himself at the cabinet council and give his advice, he would most probably be unceremoniously dismissed, for they would say, "Art thou of the king's council; if not, what right hast thou to stand here?" Now Christ was glorious; he was equal with his Father, therefore he had a right to counsel God—to counsel with God. Had an

angel offered his advice to God it would have been as insufferable impertinence; had the cherubim or seraphim volunteered to give so much as one word of counsel it would have been blasphemy. He would take no counsel from his creatures. Why should wisdom stoop from its throne, to counsel with created folly? But because Christ was far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, therefore he had a right, not only from his wisdom, but from his rank, to be a Counsellor with God.

But there is one thing that is always necessary in a man, before we can rejoice in his being a counsellor. There are some counsellors concerning the legislation of our country in whom you or I could not rejoice much, because we feel that in their counsels the most of us would be forgotten. Our farming friends would probably rejoice in them; they will consult their interests, there is not much doubt; but whoever heard of a counsellor yet who counselled for the poor? or who has these many years heard as much as an inkling of the name of a man who really counselled for economy and for the good of his nation. We have plenty of men who promise us that they will counsel for us—abundance of men who, if we would but return them to parliament would most assuredly pour forth such wisdom in our behalf that without doubt we should be the most happy and enlightened people in the world according to their promise. but alas! when they get into office they have no hearty sympathy with us; they belong to a different rank from the most of us, they do not sympathize with the wants and the desires of the middle class and of the poor. But, with regard to Christ, we can put every confidence in him, for we know that in that council from eternity he sympathized with man. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy men to have a counsellor who delights in them! Moreover, he then though he was not man, yet foresaw that he was to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," and therefore in the counsels of eternity he pleaded his own cause when he pleaded our cause, for he well knew that he was to be tempted in all points like as we are, and was to suffer our sufferings and to be our covenant head in union with ourselves. Sweet Counsellor! I love to think thou wast in the everlasting council, my friend, my brother born for adversity!

II. Having thus discussed the first point, I shall proceed to consider briefly the second, according to the translation of the Septuagint. Christ is THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL. Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the great council of eternity? Yes, we do. I will defy any man, whoever he may be, not to want to know something about destiny. What means the ignorance of the common people, when they appeal to the witch, the pretender? when they enquire of the astrologer, and read the book of the pretended soothsayer? Why, it means that man wants to know something about the everlasting council. And what mean all the perplexing researches of certain persons into the prophecies? I consider very often that the inferences drawn from prophecy are very little better, after all, than the guesses of the Norwood gipsey, and that some people who have been so busy in foretelling the end of the world, would have been better employed if they had foretold the end of their own books, and had not imposed on the public by predictions, assaying to interpret the prophecies, without the shadow of a foundation. But, from their credulity we may learn, that among the higher class as well as among the more ignorant, there is a strong desire to know the councils of eternity. Beloved, there is only one glass through which you and I can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past, and read the counsels of God, and that glass is the person of Jesus Christ. Do I want to know what God ordained with regard to the salvation of man from before the foundation of the world? I look to Christ; I find that it was ordained in Christ that he should be the first elect, and that a people should be chosen in him. Do you ask the way in which God ordained to save? I answer, he ordained to save by the cross. Do you ask how God ordained to pardon? The answer comes, he ordained to pardon through the sufferings of Christ, and to justify through his resurrection from the dead. Everything that you want to know with regard to what God ordained, everything that you ought to know, you can find out in the person of Jesus Christ. And again, do I long to know the great secret of destiny? I must look to Christ. What mean these wars, this confusion, these garments rolled in blood? I see Christ born of a virgin, and then I read the world's history backwards, and I see that all this led to Christ's coming. I see that all these leaned one upon another, as I have sometimes seen clusters of rocks leaning on each other, and Christ the great leading rock bearing up the superincumbent mass of all past history. And if I want to read the future I look at Christ,

and I learn that he who has gone up to heaven, is to come again from heaven in like manner as he went up to heaven. So all the future is clear enough to me. I do not know whether the Pope of Rome is to obtain universal empire or not; I do not mind whether the Russian empire is to swallow up all the nations of the continent; there is one thing I know, God will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he shall come whose right it is to reign; and I know that though the worms devour my body, yet when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, in my flesh shall I see God, and there is enough in that for me. All the rest of history is unimportant compared with its end, its issues, its purpose. The end of the first Testament is the first advent of Christ; the end of this second Testament of modern history is the second advent of the Saviour and then shall the book of time be closed. But none could open the Old Testament history and make it out, except through Christ. Abraham could understand it, for he knew that Christ was to come; Christ opened the book for him. And so modern history is never to be understood except through Christ. None but the Lamb can take the book and open every seal; but he who believeth in Christ and looks for his glorious advent, he may open the book and read therein, and have understanding, for in Christ there is a revelation of the eternal councils.

"Now," says one, "Sir, I want to know one thing, and if I knew that, I would not care what happened. I want to know whether God from all eternity ordained me to be saved." Well, friend, I will tell you how to find that out, and you may find it out to a certainty. "Nay," says one, "but how can I know that? You cannot read the book of fate; that is impossible." I have heard of some divine, of a very hyper school indeed, who said, "Ah! blessed be the Lord, there are some of God's dear people here; I can tell them by the very look of their faces. I know that they are among God's elect." He was not half so discreet as Rowland Hill, who when he was advised to preach to none but the elect, said, "He would certainly do so if some one would chalk them all on the back first." That was never attempted by anybody, so Rowland Hill went on preaching the gospel to every creature, as I desire to do. But you may find out whether you are among his chosen ones. "How?" says one. Why, Christ is the angel of the covenant, and you can find it out by looking to him. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. Beloved you cannot know

your election, except as you see it in Christ. If you want to know your election, thus shall you assure your hearts before God.—Do you feel yourself this morning to be a lost, guilty sinner? go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Christ that, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, "That him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." Tell him that he has said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom you are chief." Look to Christ and believe on him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest thou art elect. If thou wilt give thyself wholly up to Christ and trust him, then thou art one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," that is impossible. If there be something covered up, and I say, "Now, before you can see this you must lift the veil;" and you say, "Nay, but I want to see right through that veil," you cannot. Lift the veil first and you shall see. Go to Christ guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about thy election alone. Go straight away to Christ, just as you are, black, naked, penniless and poor, and say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Now do notice this. Christ was at the everlasting council: he can tell you whether you were chosen or not, but you cannot find that out anyhow else. You go and put your trust in him, and I know what the answer will be. His answer will be—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn thee." There will be no doubt about his having chosen you, when you shall feel no doubt about having chosen him.

So much for the second point. Christ is the Counsellor. He is the angel of the council, because he tells out God's secrets to us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

III. The last point was, Christ is A COUNSELLOR TO US. And here I shall want to give some practical hints to God's people. Some how or other,



brethren, it is not good for man to be alone. A lonely man must be, I think, a miserable man, and a man without a Counsellor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. "Where there is no counsellor," says Solomon, "the people fall." I think most persons will find it so. A man says, "Well, I'll have my own way, and I will ask nobody." Have it, sir,—have it—and you will find that in having your own way you have probably had the worst way you could. We all feel our need at times of a counsellor. David was a man after God's own heart and dealt much with his God; but he had his Ahithophel, with whom he took sweet council, and they walked to the house of God in company. Kings must have some advisers. Woe unto the man that hath got a bad counsellor. Rehoboam took counsel of the young men, and not of the old men, and they counselled him so that he lost twelfthths of his empire. Some take counsel of stocks and stones. We know many who counsel at the hands of foolish charms, instead of going to Christ. They shall have to learn that there is but one Christ, who is to be trusted; and that however necessary a Counsellor may be, yet none other shall be found to fulfill the necessity, but Jesus Christ the Counsellor. Let me make a remark or two with regard to this Counsellor, Jesus Christ.

And, first, Christ is a necessary Counsellor. So sure as we do anything without asking counsel of God we fall into trouble. Israel made a league with Gibeon, and it is said, they took of their victuals, and they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, and they found out that the Gibeonites had deceived them. If they had asked counsel first, no cunning deception could have imposed on them in the matter. Saul, the son of Kish, died before the Lord upon the mountains of Gilboa, and in the book of Chronicles it is written, he died because he asked not counsel of God, but sought unto the wizards. Joshua, the great commander, when he was appointed to succeed Moses, was not left to go alone, but it is written, "And Eliezer the priest shall be his counsellor, and he shall ask counsel of the Lord for him." And all the great men of olden times, when they were about to do an action, paused, and they said to the priest, "Bring hither the ephod," and he put on the Urim and the Thummim, and appealed to God, and the answer came, and sound advice was vouchsafed. You and I will have to learn how necessary it is always to take advice of God. Did you ever seek God's advice on your knees about a difficulty and then go amiss? Brethren, I can testify for my God that when I have submitted my

will to his directing Spirit, I have always had reason to thank him for his wise counsel. But when I have asked at his hands, having already made up my own mind, I have had my own way, but like as he fed the Israelites with the quails of heaven, while the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Let us take heed always that we never go before the cloud. He that goes before the cloud goes a fool's errand, and will be glad to get back again. An old puritan used to say, "He that carves for himself will cut his fingers. Leave God to carve for you in providence, and all shall be well. Seek God's guidance and nothing can go amiss." It is necessary counsel.

In the next place, Christ's counsel is faithful counsel. When Ahithophel left David, it proved that he was not faithful, and when Hushai went to Absalom and counselled him, he counselled him craftily, so that the good counsel of Ahithophel was brought to nought. Ah! how often do our friends counsel us craftily! We have known them do so. They have looked first to their own advantage, and then they have said, "If I can get him to do so-and-so it will be the best for me." That was not the question we asked them. It was what would be best for ourselves. But we may trust Christ, that in his advice to us there never will be any self-interest. He will be quite certain to advise us with the most disinterested motives, so that the good shall be to us, and the profit to ourselves.

Again, Christ's counsel is hearty counsel. I hate to go to a lawyer above all people, to talk with him upon matters of business. The worst kind of conversation is, I think, conversation with a lawyer. There is your case! Dear me, what an interest you feel in it! You spread it out before him, and he says, "There is a word upon the second page not quite correct." You look at it, and you say, "Ah! that is totally unimportant; that does not signify." He turns to another clause and he says, "Ah! there is a good deal here!" "My dear fellow, you any, "I do not care about those petty clauses, whether it says lands, properties, or hereditaments: what I want you to do is to set this difficulty right in point of law." "Be patient" he says; you must go through a great many consultations before he will come the point, and all the while your poor heart is boiling over because you feel such an interest in the main point. But he is as cool as possible; you think you are asking counsel of a block of marble. No doubt his advice will

come out all right at last, and it is pretty certain it will be good for you; but it is not hearty. He does not enter into the sympathies of the matter with you. What is it to him whether you succeed or not—whether the object of your heart shall be accomplished or not. It is but a professional interest he takes. Now, Solomon says, "As ointment for perfume, so is hearty counsel." When a man throws his own soul into your ease, and says, "My dear friend, I'll do anything I can to help you. let me look at it," and he takes as deep an interest in it as you do yourself. "If I were in your position," he says, "I should do so-and-so, by-the-bye, there is a word wrong there." Perhaps he tells you so, but he only tells you because he is anxious to have it all right; and you can see that his drift is always towards the same end you are seeking, and that he is only anxious for your good. Oh! for a Counsellor that could tie your heart into unison with his own! Now Christ is such a Counsellor as that. He is a hearty Counsellor. His interests and your interests are bound up together, and he is hearty with you.

But there is another kind of counsel still. David says of one, who afterwards became his enemy, "We took sweet counsel together." Christian, do you know what sweet counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble, and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before him. You have laid your case before him, with all its difficulties, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and you have felt, that though Christ was not there in flesh and blood, yet he was there in spirit, and he counselled you. You felt that his was counsel that came from the very heart. But he was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with his counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fullness of fellowship, that you said, " Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as this!" Christ is the Counsellor whom I desire to consult every hour, and I would that I could sit in his secret chamber all day and all night long, because to counsel with him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel, and wise counsel, all at the same time. Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you, and you will say, "Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really cannot trust his judgment." You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment, and yet you say of him, "Certainly, he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I cannot find out his sympathy; I never get at his heart, if he were ever so

rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart," But we go to Christ, and we get wisdom; we get love, we get sympathy, we get everything that can possibly be wanted in a Counsellor.

And now we must close by noticing that Christ has special councils for each of us this morning, and what are they? Tried child of God, your daughter is sick; your gold has melted in the fire; you are sick yourself, and your heart is sad. Christ counsels you, and he says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Young man, you that are seeking to be great in this world, Christ counsels you this morning. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I shall never forget Midsummer Common. I was ambitious; I was seeking to go to college, to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something great; and as I was walking there that text came with power to my heart—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I suppose about forty pounds a year was the sum total of my income, and I was thinking how I should make both ends meet, and whether it would not be a great deal better for me to resign my charge and seek something for the bettering of myself, and so forth. But this text ran in my ears "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." "Lord," said I, "I will follow thy counsel and not my own devices;" and I have never had cause to regret it. Always take the Lord for thy guide, and thou shalt never go amiss. Backslider! thou that hast a name to live, and art dead, or nearly dead, Christ gives thee counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." And sinner! thou that art far from God, Christ gives thee counsel. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Depend on it, it is loving counsel. Take it. Go home and cast yourself upon your knees. Seek Christ, obey his counsel, and you shall have to rejoice that you ever listened to his voice, and heard it, and lived.

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## His Name - The Mighty God

The mighty God. - Isaiah 9:6

OTHER TRANSLATIONS of this divine title have been proposed by several very eminent and able scholars. Not that they have any of them been prepared to deny that this translation is after all most accurate; but rather that whilst there are various words in the original, which we render by the common appellation of "GOD," it might be possible so to interpret this as to show more exactly its definite meaning. One writer, for example, thinks the term might be translate! "The Irradiator," - he who gives light to men. Some think it bears the meaning of "The Illustrious," - the bright and the shining one. Still there are very few, if any, who are prepared to dispute the fact that our translation is the most faithful that could possibly be given - the mighty God."

The term here used for God, El, is taken from a Hebrew root, which, as I take it, signifies strength; and perhaps a literal translation even of that title might be, "The Strong one," the strong God. But there is added to this an adjective in the Hebrew, expressive of mightiness, and the two taken together express the omnipotence of Christ, his real deity and his omnipotence, as standing first and foremost among the attributes which the prophet beheld. "The mighty God." I do not propose this morning to enter into any argument in proof of the divinity of Christ, because my text does not seem to demand it of me. It does not say that Christ shall be "the mighty God," - that is affirmed in many other places of Sacred writ; but here it says, "He shall be called Wonderful," called "Counsellor," called, "The mighty God;" and I think that therefore I may be excused from entering into any proof of the fact, if I am at least able to establish the truth of that which is here foretold, inasmuch as Christ is indeed called at this day, and shall be called to the end of the world, "the mighty God."

First, this morning, I shall speak for a moment on the folly of those who profess to be his followers, but who do not call him "the mighty God." In

the second place I shall try to show how the true believer practically calls Christ "the mighty God," in many of the acts which concern his salvation; and then I shall close by noticing how Jesus Christ has proved himself to be indeed "the mighty God " to us, and in the experience of his church.

I. First let me point out THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, YET DO NOT, AND WILL, NOT, CALL HIM GOD. The question has sometimes been proposed to me, how it is that those of us who hold the divinity of Christ manifest what is called uncharitableness towards those who deny him. We do continually affirm that an error, with regard to the divinity of Christ, is absolutely fatal, and that a man cannot be right in his judgment upon any part of the gospel unless he think rightly of him who is personally the very center of all the purposes of heaven, and the foundation of all the hopes of earth. Nor can we admit of any latitudinarianism here. We extend the right hand of fellowship to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; but we cannot exchange our Christian greetings with those who deny him to be "very God of very God." And the reason is sometimes asked; for say our opponents, "We are ready to give the right hand of fellowship to you, why don't you do so to us?" Our reply shall be given thus briefly: "You have no right to complain of us, seeing that in this matter we stand on the defensive. When you declare yourselves to believe that Christ is not the Son of God, you may not be conscious of it, but you have charged us with one of the blackest sins in the entire catalogue of crime. "The Unitarians must, to be existent, charge the whole of us, who worship Christ, with being idolators. Now idolatry is a sin of the most heinous character; it is not an offense against men it is true, but it is an intolerable offense against the majesty of God. We are ranked by Unitarians, if they be consistent, with the Hottentots. "No," say they, "we believe that you are sincere in your worship." So is the Hottentot; he bows down before his Fetich, his block of wood or stone, and he is an idolator; and although you charge us with bowing before a man, yet we do hold that you have laid at our door a sin insufferably gross, and we are obliged to repel your accusation with some severity. You have so insulted us by denying the Godhead of Christ, you have charged us with so great a crime, that you cannot expect us to sit coolly down and blandly smile at the imputation. It matters not what a Man worships, if it be not God, he is

an idolater. There is no distinction in principle between worship to a god of mud and a god of gold, nay further, there is no distinction between the worship of an onion and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. These are alike idolatries. And though Christ be confessed by the Socinian to be the best of men, perfection's own self; yet if he be nothing more, the vast mass of the Christian world is deliberately assailed with the impudent accusation of being idolaters. Yet those who charge us with idolatry, expect us to receive them with cordial kindness. It is not in flesh and blood for us to do so, if we take the low ground of reason; it is not in grace or truth to do so, if we take the high ground of revelation. As wren, we are willing to shew them respect, we regard them, we pray for them, we have no anger or enmity against them. But when we come to the point of theology, we cannot as we profess to be followers of Christ, tamely see ourselves charged with an offense so dreadful and so heinous as that of idol worship.

I confess I would almost rather be charged with a religion that extenuated murder, than with one that justified idolatry. Murder, great as the offense is, is but the slaying of man; but idolatry is in its essence the killing of God; it is the attempt to thrust the Eternal Jehovah out of his seat, and to foist into his place the work of his own hang, or the creature of my own conceit. Shall a man charge me with being so besotted as to worship a mere man shall he tell me I am so low and groveling in my intellect, that I should stoop down to worship my own fellow - creature? and yet does he expect me after that to receive him as a brother professing the same faith? I cannot understand his presumption. The charge against our sanctity of heart is so tremendous, the accusation is so frightful, that if there have been some severity and bitterness of temper in the controversy, the sin lies upon our opponent, and not on us. For he has charged us with a crime so dreadful, that an upright man must repel it as an insult. But to go further; if Jesus Christ be not a Divine person - if I could once imagine that he was no more than a mere man, I should prefer Mahomet to Christ; and if you ask me why, I think I could clearly prove to demonstration, that Mahomet was a greater prophet than Christ. If Jesus Christ be not the Son of God, coequal, co-eternal with the Father, he so spoke as to induce that belief in the minds of his own disciples, and of his adversaries likewise. Mahomet, with regard to the unity of the Godhead,

is so clear and so distinct, that there is no Mahometan to this day, that has ever fallen into idolatry. You will find that throughout the whole of the Mahometan world the cry is still sternly uttered and faithfully believed, "There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet." Now, if Christ were but a good man and a prophet, why did he not speak more decisively? Why has he not left on record a war cry for the Christian, which would be as explicit and decisive as that of Mahomet? If Christ did not mean to teach that he himself is God, at least he was not very clear and definite in his denial and he has left his disciples extremely in the dark, the proof whereof is to be found in the fact, that at the present day, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the whole of the professed followers of Christ, do receive him, and bow down before him, as being the very God. And if he it not God, I deny his right to be esteemed as a prophet. If he is not God, he was an impostor, the grandest, the greatest of deceivers that ever existed. This, of course, is no argument to the man who denies the faith, and does not avow himself to be a follower of Christ. But to the man that it Christ's follower, I do hold that the argument is irresistible, that Christ could not have been a good and great prophet, if he were not what he certainly led us to believe himself to be, the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, - he very God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that is made.

I will say yet another thing, which may startle the believer, but which is intended rather to reduce the heterodox doctrine of Christ not being God, to an absurdity, If Christ were not the Son of God, his death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin, was a death most richly and righteously deserved. The Sanhedrim before which He was tried was the recognized and authorised legislature of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrim, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned him to die, because he made himself the Son of God. Now, I do not hesitate honestly to aver, that if I had been called on to plead in that case, I should have pleaded an avowal, and that moreover, I should have stood up, and said and felt, that I had a clear case before me, which nothing but lying and perjury could ever have put on one side, if Jesus of Nazareth had been charged with having declared himself to be the Son of God. Why, his whole preaching seemed to derive from thence



it's unrivalled authority. There was continually in his actions and in his words, a claim to be something more than man ever could lay claim to. And when he was brought before the Sanhedrim, witnesses enough might have been found, to prove that he had made himself the Son of God; if he were not so, his condemnation for blasphemy was the justest sentence that ever was pronounced, and his crucifixion on Calvary, was absolutely the most righteous execution that ever was performed by the hand of the government. It is his being verily God, that frees him from the charge of blasphemy, It is the fact that he is God. and that his Godhead is not to be denied, that makes his death an unrighteous decide at the hand of apostate man, and renders it, as before God, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all the people whom he redeemed with his most precious blood But if he be not God, I do repeat, that there is no reason whatever, Why we should have had a New Testament written; for there would be then nothing in the sublime central-fact of that New Testament but the righteous execution of one, who certainly deserved to die.

Do you remember, my dear friends, when the apostle Paul was preaching on the resurrection of the dead, in his letter to the Corinthians, how he uses an ex post facto argument, to show, the natural consequences, if it were possible to overturn the truths He says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and ye are yet in your sins." Now, I may fairly use the apostle's line of argument in reference to the Godhead and Sonship of Christ, of which his resurrection gave such a palpable demonstration: "If Christ be not the Son of God, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and ye are yet in your sins all our visions of heaven are blasted and withered; the brightness of our hope is quenched for ever; that rock on which our trust is built, turns out to be nothing better than mere sand if the divinity of Christ be not proved. All the joy and consolation we ever had in this world, in our belief that his blood was sufficient to atone for sin, has been but a dream of fancy and a "figment of idle brains;" all the communion we have ever had with him has been but an illusion and a trance, and all the hopes we have of beholding his face in glory, and of being satisfied when we awake in his likeness, are but the foulest delusions that ever cheated the hopes of man. Oh, my brethren, and can any of you believe that the blood of all the martyrs has been shed as a witness to a lie? Have all those who have

rotted in Roman dungeons, or have been burned at the stake because they witnessed that Christ was God, died in vain? Verily, if Christ be not God, we are of all men the most miserable. To what purpose is the calumny and abuse that we have had to endure day after day; to what purpose are our repentance, our sighs, our tears; to what purpose is our faith; to what purpose have our fears and bodings been supplanted by our hope and confidence; to what purpose our joy and our rejoicing, if Christ be not the Son of God? Will you put yourselves all down for fools; can you imagine that God's Word has misguided you; that prophets and apostles, and martyrs and saints, have all leagued together to lead you into a trap and to delude your souls? God forbid that we should think such a thing. There is no folly in the world that has in it so much as a do it of madness, compared with the folly of denying the divinity of Christ, and then professing to be his followers. No, beloved:

"Let all the forms that men devise,  
Assault our faith with treacherous art;  
We'll call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to our heart!"

We will write this on the forefront of our banner, - Christ is God; co-equal and co-eternal with his Father; very God of very God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God."

II. This brings me to the second part of the subject: HOW DO WE CALL CHRIST "THE DIGNITY GOD?" Here there is no dispute whatever; I am now about to speak of matters of pure fact. Whether Christ be mighty God or not, it is quite certain that we are in the constant habit of calling him so. Not, I mean, by the mere utterance of the term, but we do so in a stronger way - in fact; - and actions speak louder than words.

Now, beloved, I will soon prove that you and I are in the habit of calling Christ God. And I will prove it first, because it is our delight, and our joy and our privilege to attribute to him the attributes of Deity.

In hours of devout contemplation, how often do we look up to him as being the Eternal Son. You and I sit down in our chambers, and in our house of prayer, and as we muse upon the great covenant of grace, we are

in the habit of speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ's everlasting love to his people. This is one of the jewels of our life, one of the ornaments with which we array ourselves as a bride doth. This is a part of the manna that tasteth like wafers made with honey upon which our souls are wont to feed. We speak of God's eternal love, of our names having been inscribed in his eternal book, and of Christ's having borne them from before the foundation of the world upon his breast, as our great high-priest, our remembrancer before the throne of heaven. In so doing, we have virtually called him the mighty God; because none but God could have been from everlasting to everlasting. As often as we profess the doctrine of election, we call Christ the mighty God; as often as we talk of the eternal covenant, ordered in all things and sure, so often do we proclaim him to be God: because we speak of him as an everlasting one, and none could be from everlasting but one who is self-existent, who is God.

Again: how frequently do we repeat over to ourselves that precious verse, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." We are always in the habit of ascribing to him immutability. Some of our choicest hymns are founded on that circumstance, and our richest hopes flow from that attribute. We know that all things will change. We are convinced that we ourselves are mutable as the winds, and as easily moved as the sand by the waves of the sea; but we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we cannot entertain a suspicion of any change in his love, his purpose, or his power How often do we sing: -

"Immutable his will

Though dark may be my frame,

His loving heart is still Unchangeably the same.

My soul through many changes goes:

His love no variation knows!"

Do you not see that you have in fact called him God, because none but God is immutable? The creature changes. This is written on the forefront of creation - "Change!" The mighty ocean, that knows no furrows on its brow, changeth at times, and at times shifteth its level. It moveth hither and thither, and we know that it is to be licked up with forked tongues of flame, and yet we ascribe to Christ immutability. We do, then, in fact, ascribe to him, divinity; for, none but the divine can be immutable.

Is it not also our joy to believe that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is he in the midst of them? Do we not repeat it in all our prayer-meetings? Perhaps some minister in Australia began the solemnities of public worship this day with the reflection that Jesus Christ was with him, according to his promise, and I know that as I came here the same reflection comforted me, "Yea, I am with you always even to the end of the world," - That wherever a Christian is found, there God is. And though there be but two or three met in a barn, or on the greensward under the canopy of God's blue sky, yet there Christ vouchsafes his presence. Now I ask you, have we not ascribed to Christ, omnipresence; and who can be omnipotent but God? Have we not thus in fact then, though not in words, called Christ "God?" How is it possible for us to dream of Him as being here, and there, and everywhere; in the bosom of his Father, with the angels, and in the hearts of the contrite all at the same time, if he be not God? Grant me that he is omnipresent, and you have said that he is God, for none but God can be present everywhere. Again, are we not also wont to ascribe to Christ omniscience? You believe when your heart is aching that Christ knows your pains, and that he reckons every groan; or at least if you do not believe it, it is always my satisfaction to know that -

"He feels at his heart,  
All my sighs and my groans."

And so he does yours. Wherever you are, you believe that he hears your prayers that he sees your tears, that he knows your wants, that he is ready to pardon your sins; that you are better known to him, than you are to yourself. You believe that he searches your hearts, and tries your reins, and that you never can come to him without finding him full of sympathy, and full of love. Now do you not see that you have ascribed conscience to him. and therefore, though not in words, you have, in accents louder than words, called him the mighty God, for you have assumed that he is omniscient; and who can be omniscient but the very God of very God?

I shall not stop to descant upon the other attributes, but I think we might prove that we have each of us ascribed to Christ all the attributes of the Godhead in our daily life and in our constant trust and intercession. I am

sure that it is true of many loving hearts of God's own children here. We have called him the mighty God, and it others have not called him so, nevertheless the text is verified by our faith. "He shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God." So he is, and so he shall be, world without end.

And now I have another proof to offer, that Christ is called "the mighty God." We call him so in many of his offices. We believe this morning that Christ is the mediator between God and man. If we would understand the term mediator or daysman, we must interpret it as Job did; one "that might lay his hand upon us both." We are accustomed to say that Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, and we offer our prayers to God through him, because we believe that he mediates between us and the Father. Let it once be granted then that Christ is the mediator, and you have asserted his divinity. You have virtually called him the Son of God; and you have granted his humanity, for he must put his hand upon both; therefore he must put his hand upon man in our nature, he must be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and be in all points like as we are. But he is not a mediator unless he can put his hand upon God, unless as fellow of the Eternal One he shall be able without blasphemy to place his hand upon the divine Being. There is no mediatorship unless the hand is put on both and who could put his hand on God but God? Can cherubim or seraphim talk of laying their hands on the Divine? Shall they touch the Infinite? "Dark with insufferable light his skirts appear" - then what is He Himself in the glorious Essence of Deity? - an all-devouring and consuming fire. Only God can put his hand on God, and yet Christ hath this high prerogative, for mark, there is no mediatorship established, there cannot be, unless the two are linked. If you wished to build a bridge you might commence on this aide of the river, but if you have not connected it with the other aide, you have not built the bridge. There can be no mediatorship unless the parties are fully linked. The ladder must have its feet on earth but it must reach to heaven, for if there were a single breach we should fall from its summit and perish. There must be entire communication between the two. Do you not see therefore that in calling Christ mediator we have in fact called him the mighty God.

But again, we call Christ our Saviour. Now, have any of you that foolish

credulity which would lead you to trust in a man for the everlasting salvation of your soul? If you have, I pity you: your proper place is not in a Protestant assembly, but among the deluded votaries of Rome. If you can commit the keeping of your soul to one like yourself, I must indeed mourn over you, and pray that you may be taught better. But you do trust your salvation to him whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, do you not, O follower of Jesus? Can you not say all your hope is fixed on him, for he is all your salvation and all your desire? Does not your spirit rest on that unbuttressed pillar of his entire satisfaction, his precious death and burial, his glorious resurrection and ascension? Now, observe, you are either resting on man, or else you have declared Christ to be "the mighty God." When I say I put my faith in him, I do most honestly declare that I dare not trust even to him, if I did not believe him to be God. I could not put my trust in any being that was merely, created. God forbid that my folly should ever go to such an extent as that. I would sooner trust myself than trust any other man, and yet I dare not trust myself, for I should be accursed. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. "And would the Socinian have me to believe that I am to preach faith in Christ, and that yet, if my hearers trust Christ, they will be accursed, as they assuredly must be, if he is nothing but man, for again I repeat it, "cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." You get a blessing by faith in Jesus, but how? Is it not because - "Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is? "Christ is very Jehovah, and therefore the blessing comes to those who trust in him. So, then, as often as ye put your trust in Jesus, for time and eternity, ye have called him "the mighty God."

This subject is capable of the greatest expansion, and I do believe there is sufficient interest attaching to it to warrant me in keeping you to a late hour this day, but I shall not do so. There has been enough said, I think, to prove at least, that we are in the habit continually of calling Christ "the mighty God."

III. My third proposition is to explain to you now CHRIST HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO US TO BE "THE MIGHTY GOD." And here beloved, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, for the passage from which the text is taken says, "Unto us a child is born." A child! what

can that do? A child it totters in its walk, it trembles in its steps - and it is a child newly born. Born! what an infant hanging on its mother's breast, an infant deriving its nourishment from a woman? That! can that work wonders? Yea, saith the prophet, "Unto us a child is born." But then it is added, "Unto us a Son is given." Christ was not only born, but given. As man he is a child born, as God he is the Son given. He comes down from on high; he is given by God to become our Redeemer. But here behold the wonder! "His name is name," this child's name, "shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." Is this child, then, to us the mighty God? If so, o brethren, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness indeed! And yet, just let us look, look through the history of the church, and discover whether we have not ample evidence to substantiate it. This child born, this Son given, came into the world to enter into the lists against sin. For thirty years and upwards he had to struggle and wrestle against temptations more numerous and more terrible than man had ever known before. Adam fell when but a woman tempted him; Eve fell when but a serpent offered fruit to her, but Christ, the second Adam, stood invulnerable against all the shafts of Satan though tempted he was in all points, like as we are. Not one arrow out of the quiver of hell was spared; the whole were shot against him. Every arrow was aimed against him with all the might of Satan's are here, and that is no little! And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than conqueror he stood. Foot to foot with Satan, in the solitude of the wilderness hand to hand with him on the top of the pinnacle of the temple; side by side with him in the midst of a busy crowd - yet ever more than conqueror. He gave him battle wherever the adversary willed to meet him, and at last, when Satan gathered up all his might, and seized the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemne, and crushed him till he sweat as it were great drops of blood, then when the Saviour said, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt," the tempter was repulsed. "Hence, hence!" Christ seemed to say; and away the tempter fled, nor dare return again. Christ, in all his conquests over sin, does seem to me to have established his Godhead. I never heard of any other creature that could endure such temptation as this. Look at the angels in heaven. How temptation entered there I know not; but this I know, that Satan, the great archangel, sinned, and I know that he became the tempter to the rest of his companions, and drew with him a third part of the stars of heaven. Angels were but little tempted, some of them not

tempted at all, and yet they fell. And then look at man; slight was his temptation, yet he fell. It is not in a creature to stand against temptation; he will yield, if the temptation be strong enough. But Christ stood, and it seems to me, that in his standing he proved Himself to have the omniradiant purity, the immaculate holiness of Him before whom angels veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

But these proofs might appear insufficient, if he did not accomplish more than this. We know also that Christ proved himself to be the "mighty God" from the fact that at last all the sins of all his people were gathered upon his shoulders, and "he bare them in his own body on the tree." The heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity, and every drop of the sins of his people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as hell, and shoreless as eternity. All these met, as it were, in Christ's heart, and yet he endured them all. With many a sign of human weakness, but with convincing signs of divine omnipotence, he took all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. The divinity within strengthened his manhood, and though wave after wave rolled over his head, till he sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and all Gods waves and his billows had gone over him, yet did he lift up his head, and snore than a conqueror, at length, he put the sins of his people to a public execution. They are dead. They have ceased to be; and, if they be sought for, they shall not be found any more for ever. Certainly if this be true, he is "the mighty God" indeed.

But he did more than this, he descended into the grave, and there he slept, fast fettered with the cold chains of death. But the appointed hour arrives - the sunlight of the third day gave the warning, and he snapped the bands of death as if they were but tow, and came forth to life as "the Lord of life and glory." His flesh did not see corruption, for he was not able to be holden by the bands of death. And who shall be the death of death, the plague of the grave, the destroyer of destruction, but God? Who but immortal life, who but the Self-existent, shall trample out the fires of hell; who, but he whose Being is eternal, without beginning, and without end, shall burst the shackles of the grave? He proved himself then, when he led captivity captive, and crushed death and ground his iron limbs to powder - he proved himself then to be the mighty God.



Oh, my soul, thou canst say, that he has proved himself in thy heart to be a mighty God. Sins, many hath he forgiven thee and relieved thy conscience of the keen sense of guilt, griefs innumerable hath he assuaged, temptations insurmountable hath he overcome; virtues once impossible hath he implanted, grace in its fullness hath he promised, and in its measure hath he given. My soul bears record that what has been done for me could never have been done by a mere man; and you would rise from your seats, I am sure, if it were needful, and say, "Yes, he that hath loved me, washed me from my sins, and made me what I am, must be God, none but God could do what he has done, could bear so patiently, could bless so lavishly, forgive so freely, enrich so infinitely. He is, he must be, we will crown him such - "The mighty God."

And, in conclusion, lest I weary you, permit me now to say, I beg and beseech of you all present, as God the Spirit shall help you, come and put your trust in Jesus Christ, he is "the mighty God." Oh, Christians, believe him more than ever, east your troubles constantly on him; he is "the mighty God;" go to trim in all your dilemmas, when the enemy cometh in like a flood, this mighty God shall make a way for your deliverance; take to him your griefs, this mighty God can alleviate them all; tell him your backslidings and sins, this mighty God shall blot them out. And, O sinners, ye that feel your need of a Saviour, come to Christ and trust him for he is "the mighty God." Go to your houses, and fall on your knees and confess your sins, and then cast your poor, guilty, helpless, naked, defenceless souls before his omnipotence, for he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, because when he died he was not manhood, without divinity, but he was "the mighty God." This, I say, we will write on our banners, from this day forth and for ever; this shall be our joy and our song - the child bow and the son given is to us "the mighty God."

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**His Name - Wonderful!**

His name shall be called Wonderful. - Isaiah 9:6

One evening last week I stood by the sea-shore when the storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters; and who was I that I should tarry within doors, when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of his lightnings, and listen to the glory of his thunders. The sea and the thunders were contesting with one another; the sea with infinite clamor striving to hush the deep-throated thunder, so that his voice should not be heard; yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God, as he spoke with flames of fire, and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night, and the sky was covered with thick clouds, and scarce a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest; but at one particular time, I noticed far away on the horizon, as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold. It was the moon hidden behind the clouds, so that she could not shine upon us; but she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought as I read this chapter last evening, that the prophet seemed to have stood in a like position, when he wrote the words of my text. All round about him were clouds of darkness; he heard prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot—one place where the clear shining came down from heaven. And he sat down, and he penned these words: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" and though he looked through whole leagues of space, where he saw the battle of the warrior "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in futurity, and he declared, that there he saw hope of peace, prosperity and blessedness; for said he, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shad be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful."

My dear friends, we live to-day upon the verge of that bright spot. The world has been passing through these clouds of darkness, and the light is gleaming on us now, like the glintings of the first rays of morning. We are

coming to a brighter day, and "at evening time it shall be light." The clouds and darkness shall be rolled up as a mantle that God needs no longer, and he shall appear in his glory, and his people shall rejoice with him. But you must mark, that all the brightness was the result of this child born, this son given, whose name is called Wonderful; and if we can discern any brightness in our own hearts, or in the world's history, it can come from nowhere else, than from the one who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God."

The person spoken of in our text, is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a child born, with reference to his human nature; he is born of the virgin, a child. But he is a son given, with reference to his divine nature, being given as well as born. Of course, the Godhead could not be born of woman. That was from everlasting, and is to everlasting. As a child he was born, as a son he was given. "The government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful." Beloved, there are a thousand things in this world, that are called by names that do not belong to them; but in entering upon my text, I must announce at the very opening, that Christ is called Wonderful, because he is so. God the Father never gave his Son a name which he did not deserve. There is no panegyric here, no flattery. It is just the simple name that he deserves, they that know him best will say that the word doth not overstrain his merits, but rather falleth infinitely short of his glorious deserving. His name is called Wonderful. And mark, it does not merely say, that God has given him the name of Wonderful—though that is implied; but "his name shall be called" so. It shall be; it is at this time called Wonderful by all his believing people, and it shall be. As long as the moon endureth, there shall be found men, and angels, and glorified spirits, who shall always call him by his right name. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

I find that this name may bear two or three interpretations. The word is sometimes in Scripture translated "marvellous." Jesus Christ may be called marvellous; and a learned German interpreter says, that without doubt, the meaning of miraculous is also wrapt up in it. Christ is the marvel of marvels, the miracle of miracles. "His name shall be called Miraculous," for he is more than a man, he is God's highest miracle. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." It may

also mean separated, or distinguished. And Jesus Christ may well be called this; for as Saul was distinguished from all men, being head and shoulders taller than they, so is Christ distinguished above all men; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and in his character, and in his acts he is infinitely separated from all comparison with any of the sons of men. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." He is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." "His name shall be called the Separated One," the distinguished one, the noble one, set apart from the common race of mankind.

We shall, however, this morning, keep to the old version, and simply read it thus, "His name shall be called Wonderful." And first I shall notice that Jesus Christ deserveth to be called Wonderful for what he was in the past; secondly, that he is called Wonderful by all his people for what he is in the present; and in the third place, that he shall be called Wonderful, for what he shall be in the future.

I. First, Christ shall be called Wonderful for **WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST**. Gather up your thoughts, my brethren. for a moment, and center them all on Christ, and you will soon see how wonderful he is. Consider his eternal existence, "begotten of his Father from before all worlds," being of the same substance with his Father: begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute, "very God of very God." For a moment remember that he who became an infant of a span long, was no less than the King of ages, the everlasting Father, who was from eternity. and is to be to all eternity. The divine nature of Christ is indeed wonderful. Just think for a moment, how much interest clusters round the life of an old man. Those of us who are but as children in years, look up to him with wonder and astonishment, as he tells us the varied stories of the experience through which he has passed; but what is the life of an aged man—how brief it appears when compared with the life of the tree that shelters him. It existed long before that old man's father crept a helpless infant into the world. How many storms have swept over its brow! how many kings have come and gone! how many empires have risen and fallen since that old oak was slumbering in its acorn cradle! But what is the life of the tree compared with the soil on which it grows? What a wonderful story that soil might tell! What changes it has passed

through in all the eras of time that have elapsed since "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There is a wonderful story connected with every atom of black mould which furnishes the nourishment of the oak. But whilst is the history of that soil compared with the marvellous history of the rock on which it rests—the cliff on which it lifts its head. Oh! what stories might it tell, what records lie hidden in its bowels. Perhaps it could tell the story of the time when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth." Perhaps it might speak and tell us of those days when the morning and the evening were the first day, and the morning and the evening were the second day, and could explain to us the mysteries of how God made this marvellous piece of miracle,—the world. But what is the history of the cliff, compared with that of the sea that rolls at its base—that deep blue ocean, over which a thousand navies have swept, without leaving a furrow Upon its brow! But what is the history of the sea, compared with the history of the heavens that are stretched like a curtain over that vast basin! What a history is that of the hosts of heaven—of the everlasting marches of the sun, moon, and stars! Who can tell their generation, or who can write their biography? But what is the history of the heavens, compared with the history of the angels? They could tell you of the day when they saw this world wrapped in swaddling bands of mist—when, like a newborn infant, the last of God's offspring, it came forth from him, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But what is the history of the angels that excel in strength, compared with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ? The angel is but of yesterday, and he knoweth nothing; Christ, the Eternal One, chargeth even his angels with folly, and looks upon them as his ministering spirits, that come and go at his good pleasure. Oh, Christians, gather with reverence and mysterious awe around the throne of him who is your great Redeemer; for "his name is called Wonderful," since he has existed before all things, and "by him all things were made; and without him was not anything made that was made."

Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ, and you will rightly say, that his name deserveth to be called "Wonderful." Oh! what is that I see? Oh! world of wonders, what is that I see? The Eternal of ages, whose hair is white like wool, as white as snow, becomes an infant. Can it be? Ye

angels, are ye not astonished? He becomes an infant, hangs at a virgin's breast, draws his nourishment from the breast of woman. Oh wonder of wonders! Manger of Bethlehem, thou hast miracles poured into thee. This is a sight that surpasses all others. Talk ye of the sun, moon, and stars; consider ye the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars that he hath ordained; but all the wonders of the universe shrink into nothing, when we come to the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvellous thing when Joshua bade the sun to stand still, but more marvellous when God seemed to stand still, and no longer to move forward, but rather, like the sun upon the dial of Ahaz, did go back ten degrees, and veil his splendor in a cloud. There have been sights matchless and wonderful, at which we might look for years, and yet turn away and say, "I cannot understand this; here is a deep into which I dare not dive; my thoughts are drowned; this is a steep without a summit; I cannot climb it; it is high, I cannot attain it!" But all these things are as nothing, compared with the incarnation of the Son of God. I do believe that the very angels have never wondered but once and that has been incessantly ever since they first beheld it. They never cease to tell the astonishing story, and to tell it with increasing astonishment too, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary, and became a man. Is he not rightly called Wonderful? Infinite, and an infant—eternal, and yet born of a woman—Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast supporting the universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms—king of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph—heir of all things and yet the carpenter's despised son. Wonderful art thou O Jesus, and that shall be thy name for ever.

But trace the Saviours course, and all the way he is wonderful. Is it not marvellous that he submitted to the taunts and jeers of his enemies—that for a long life he should allow the bulls of Bashan to gird him round, and the dogs to encompass him? Is it not surprising that he should have bridled in his anger when blasphemy was uttered against his sacred person? Had you or I been possessed of his matchless might, we should have dashed our enemies down the brow of the hill, if they had sought to cast us there; we should never have submitted to shame and spitting; no, we would have looked upon them, and with one fierce look of wrath, have dashed their spirits into eternal torment. But he hears it all—keeps in his

noble spirit—the lion of the tribe of Judah, but bearing still the lamb-like character of

"The humble man before his foes,  
A weary man, and full of woes."

I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the king of heaven, and yet he was a poor, despised, persecuted, slandered man; but while I believe it I never can understand it. I bless him for it; I love him for it; I desire to praise his name while immortality endures for his infinite condescension in thus suffering for me; but to understand it, I can never pretend. His name must all his life long be called Wonderful.

But see him die. Come O my brothers, ye children of God, and gather round the cross. See your Master. There he hangs. Can you understand this riddle: God was manifest in the flesh, and crucified of men? My Master, I cannot understand how thou couldst stoop thine awful head to such a death as this—how then couldst take from thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird the temples astonishes me far more. That thou shouldst cast away the mantle of thy glory, the azure of thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend; but how thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for awhile, and then be bowed to by impious men, who mocked thee as a pretended king, and how thou shouldst be stripped naked to thy shame, without a single covering, this is still more incomprehensible. Truly thy name is Wonderful. Oh thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of woman. Was ever grief like thine? Was ever love like thine, that could open the flood gates of such grief. Thy grief is like a river; but was there ever spring that poured out such a torrent? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? Here is matchless love—matchless love to make him suffer, matchless power to enable him to endure all the weight of his Father's wrath. Here is matchless justice, that he himself should acquiesce in his Father's will, and not allow men to be saved without his own sufferings; and here is matchless mercy to the chief of sinners, that Christ should suffer even for them. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

But he died. He died! See Salem's daughters weep around. Joseph of Arimathea takes up the lifeless body after it has been taken down from the cross. They bear it away to the sepulcher. It is put in a garden. Do you can him Wonderful now?

"Is this the Saviour long foretold  
To usher in the age of gold?"

And is he dead? Lift his hands! They drop motionless by his side. His foot exhibits still the nail-print; but there is no mark of life. "Aha," cries the Jew, "is this the Messiah? He is dead; he shall see corruption in a little space of time. Oh! watchman, keep good ward lest his disciples steal his body. His body can never come forth, unless they do steal it; for he is dead. Is this the Wonderful the Counsellor?" But God did not leave his soul in Hades; nor did he suffer his body—"his holy one"—to see corruption? Yes, he is wonderful, even in his death. That clay-cold corpse is wonderful. Perhaps this is the greatest wonder of all, that he who is "Death of death and hell's destruction" should for awhile endure the bonds of death. But here is the wonder. He could not be holden of those bonds. Those chains which have held ten thousand of the sons and daughters of Adam, and which have never been broken yet by any man of human mould, save by a miracle, were but to him as green withes. Death bound our Samson fast and said, "I have him now, I have taken away the locks of his strength; his glory is departed, and now he is mine; but the hands that kept the human race in chains were nothing to the Saviour; the third day he burst them, and he rose again from the dead, from henceforth to die no more. Oh! thou risen Saviour—thou who couldst not see corruption—thou art wonderful in thy resurrection. And thou art wonderful too in thine ascension—as I see thee leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

Pause here one moment, and let us think—Christ is surpassingly wonderful. The little story I have told you just now—not little in itself, but little as I have told it—has in it something surpassingly wonderful. All the wonders that you ever saw are nothing compared with this. As we have passed through various countries we have seen a wonder, and some older



traveler than ourselves has said, "Yes this is wonderful to you. but I could show you something that utterly eclipses that." Though we have seen some splendid landscapes, with glorious hills, and we have climbed up where the eagle seemed to knit the mountain and the sky together in his flight, and we have stood and looked down, and said, "How wonderful!" Saith he, "I have seen fairer lands than these, and wider and richer prospects far." But when we speak of Christ, none can say they ever saw a greater wonder than he is. You have come now to the very summit of everything that may be wondered at. There are no mysteries equal to this mystery, there is no surprise equal to this surprise; there is no astonishment, no admiration that should equal the astonishment and admiration that we feel when we behold Christ in the glories of the past. He surpasses everything.

And yet again. Wonder is a short-lived emotion; you know, it is proverbial that a wonder grows gray-headed in nine days. The longest period that a wonder is found to last is about that time. It is such a short-lived thing. But Christ is and ever shall be wonderful. You may think of him through three-score years and ten, but you shall wonder at him more at the end than at the beginning. Abraham might wonder at him, when he saw his day in the distant future; but I do not think that even Abraham himself could wonder at Christ so much as the very least in the kingdom of heaven of to-day wonders at him, seeing that we know more than Abraham, and therefore wonder more. Think again for one moment, and you will say of Christ that he deserves to be called Wonderful, not only because he is always wonderful, and because he is surpassingly wonderful, but also because he is altogether wonderful. There have been some great feats of skill in the arts and sciences; for instance, if we take a common wonder of the day, the telegraph—how much there is about that which is wonderful! But there are a great many things in the telegraph that we can understand. Though there are many mysteries in it, still there are parts of it that are like keys to the mysteries, so that if we cannot solve the riddle wholly, yet it is disrobed of some of the low garments of its mystery. But now if you look at Christ anyhow, anywhere, anyway, he is all mystery, he is altogether wonderful, always to be looked at and always to be admired.

And again, he is universally wondered at. They tell us that the religion of Christ is very good for old women. I was once complimented by a person, who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks—for negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, "Well sir, if it is suitable for blacks I should think it would be very suitable for whites; for there is only a little difference of skin, and I do not preach to people's skins, but to their hearts." Now, of Christ we can say that he is universally a wonder, the strongest intellects have wondered at him. Our Lockes and our Newtons have felt themselves to be as little children when they have come to the foot of the cross. The wonder has not been confined to ladies, to children, to old women and dying men, the highest intellects, and the lustiest minds have all wondered at Christ. I am sure it is a difficult task to make some people wonder. Hard thinkers and close mathematicians are not easily brought to wonder: but such men have covered their faces with their hands and cast themselves in the dust, and confessed that they have been lost in wonder and amazement. Well then may Christ be called Wonderful.

II. "His name shall be called Wonderful." He is wonderful for WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. And here I will not diverge, but will just appeal to you personally. Is he wonderful to you? Let me tell the story of my own wonderment at Christ, and in telling it, I shall be telling the experience of all God's children. There was a time when I wondered not at Christ. I heard of his beauties, but I had never seen them; I heard of his power, but it was nought to me; it was but news of something done in a far country—I had no connection with it, and therefore I observed it not. But once upon a time, there came one to my house of a black and terrible aspect. He smote the door; I tried to bolt it—to hold it fast. He smote again and again, till at last he entered, and with a rough voice he summoned me before him; and he said, "I have a message from God for thee; thou art condemned on account of thy sins." I looked at him with astonishment; I asked him his name. He said, "My name is the Law." and I fell at his feet as one that was dead. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." As I lay there, he smote me. He smote me till every rib seemed as if it must break, and the bowels be poured forth. My heart was melted like wax within me; I seemed to be stretched upon a rack—to be pinched with hot irons—to be beaten with

whips of burning wire. A misery extreme dwelt and reigned in my heart. I dared not lift up mine eyes, but I thought within myself, "There may be hope, there may be mercy for me. Perhaps the God whom I have offended may accept my tears and my promises of amendment, and I may live." But when that thought crossed me, heavier were the blows and more poignant my sufferings than before, till hope entirely failed me, and I had nought wherein to trust. Darkness black and dense gathered round me; I heard a voice as it were, of rushing to and fro, and of wailing and gnashing of teeth. I said within my soul, "I am cast out from his sight, I am utterly abhorred of God, he hath trampled me in the mire of the streets in his anger." And there came one by, of sorrowful but of loving aspect, and he stooped over me, and he said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I arose in astonishment, and he took me, and he led me to a place where stood a cross, and he seemed to vanish from my sight. But he appeared again hanging there. I looked upon him as he bled upon that tree. His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, looking at him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed; the gaping wounds were cured; the broken bones rejoiced; the rags that had covered me were all removed; my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off north; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through him that did hang upon the tree. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I wondered that he should be able to pardon such sins as mine; such crimes, so numerous and so black, and that after such an accusing conscience he should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. His name then to my spirit was Wonderful. But, brethren and sisters, if you have felt this, you can say you thought him wonderful then—if you are feeling it, a sense of adoring wonder enraptures your heart even now.

And has he not been wonderful to you since that auspicious hour, when first you heard Mercy's voice spoken to you? How often have you been in sadness, sickness, and sorrow! But your pain has been light, for Jesus Christ has been with you on your sick-beds; your care has been no care at all, for you have been able to cast your burden upon him. The trial which

threatened to crush you, rather lifted you up to heaven, and you have said "How wonderful that Jesus Christ's name should give me such comfort, such joy, such peace, such confidence." Various things bring to my recollection a period now removed by the space of nearly two years. Never shall we forget, beloved, the judgments of the Lord, when by terrible things in righteousness he answered our prayer that he would give us success in this house. We cannot forget how the people were scattered—how some of the sheep were slain, and the shepherd himself was smitten. I may not have told in your hearing the story of my own woe. Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity, and yet came away unharmed. I have walked by that fire until these locks seemed to be crisp with the heat thereof. My brain was racked. I dared not look up to God, and prayer that was once my solace, was cause of my affright and terror, if I attempted it. I shall never forget the time when I first became restored to myself. It was in the garden of a friend. I was walking solitary and alone, musing upon my misery, much cheered as that was by the kindness of my loving friend, yet far too heavy for my soul to bear, when on a sudden the name of Jesus flashed through my mind. The person of Christ seemed visible to me. I stood still. The burning lava of my soul was cooled. My agonies were hushed. I bowed myself there, and the garden that had seemed a Gethsemane became to me a Paradise. And then it seemed so strange to me, that nought should have brought me back but that name of Jesus. I thought indeed at that time that I should love him better all the days of my life. But there were two things I wondered at. I wondered that he should be so good to me, and I wondered more that I should have been so ungrateful to him. But his name has been from that time "Wonderful" to me, and I must record what he has done for my soul.

And now, brothers and sisters, you shall all find, every day of your life, whatever your trials and troubles, that he shall always be made the more wonderful by them. He sends your troubles to be like a black foil, to make the diamond of his name shine the brighter. You would never know the wonders of God if it were not that you find them out in the furnace. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep," and we shall never see the wonders of God except in that deep; we must go into the

deeps before we know how wonderful his power and his might to save.

I must not leave this point without one more remark. There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, "His name is wonderful indeed, for we have been by it transported entirely above the world, and carried upward to the very gates of heaven itself." I pity you, beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken, and his wings are loosed, and he begins to fly; and up he soars, till he forgets earth's sorrows and leaves them far behind, and up he goes till he forgets earth's joys, and leaves them like the mountain tops far below, as when the eagle flies to meet the sun; and up, up, up he goes, with his Saviour full before him almost in vision beatific. His heart is full of Christ; his soul beholds his Saviour, and the cloud that darkened his view of the Saviour's face seems to be dispersed. At such a time the Christian can sympathise with Paul. He says, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell—God knoweth!" but I am, as it were, "caught up to the third heaven." And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Ah, no. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. By the name of Jesus. That one name is all sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless day.

III. I have no more time to stay upon this point, although the text is infinite, and one might preach upon it for ever. I have only to notice that his name shall be called Wonderful IN THE FUTURE.

The day is come, the day of wrath, the day of fire. The ages are ended; the last century, like the last pillar of a dilapidated temple, has crumbled to its fall. The clock of time is verging to its last hour. It is on the stroke. The time is come when the things that are made must disappear. Lo, I see earth's bowels moving. A thousand hillocks give up the slumbering dead. The battle fields are clothed no more with the rich harvests that have been manured with blood; but a new harvest has sprung up. The fields are thick with men. The sea itself becomes a prolific mother, and though she hath swallowed men alive, she gives them up again, and they stand

before God, an exceeding great army. Sinners! ye have risen from your tombs; the pillars of heaven are reeling; the sky is moving to and fro; the sun, the eye of this great world, is rolling like a maniac's, and glaring with dismay. The moon that long has cheered the night now makes the darkness terrible, for she is turned into a clot of blood. Portents, and signs, and wonders past imagination, make the heavens shake, and make men's hearts quail within them. Suddenly upon a cloud there comes one like unto the Son of Man. Sinners! picture your astonishment and your wonder when you see him. Where art thou, Voltaire? Thou saidst, "I will crush the wretch." Come and crush him now! "Nay" saith Voltaire, "he is not the man I thought he was." Oh how will he wonder when he finds out what Christ is! Now, Judas, come and give him a traitor's kiss! "Ah! nay," says he, "I knew not what I kissed: I thought I kissed only the son of Mary, but lo! he is the everlasting God." Now, ye kings and princes, that stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us!" Come now, take counsel once more; rebel against him now! Oh! can ye picture the astonishment, the wonder the dismay, when careless, godless infidels and Socinians find out what Christ is? "Oh!" they will say, "this is wonderful, I thought not he was such as this;" while Christ shall say to them, "thou thoughtest that I was altogether such as yourselves; but I am no such thing; I am come in all my Father's glory to judge the quick and dead."

Pharaoh led his hosts into the midst of the Red Sea. The path was dry and shingly, and on either shore stood like a wall of alabaster the clear white water stiff as with the breath of frost, consolidated into marble. There it stood. Can ye guess the astonishment and dismay of the hosts of Pharaoh, when they saw those walls of water about to close upon them? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Such will be your astonishment, when Christ, whom ye have despised to-day—Christ, whom ye would not have to be your Saviour—Christ whose Bible ye left unread, whose Sabbath ye despised—Christ, whose gospel ye rejected, shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. Ay, then indeed will ye "behold, and wonder, and perish," and you shall say, "His name is Wonderful."

But perhaps, the most wonderful part of the day of judgment is this, do you see all the horrors yonder—the black darkness the horrid night, the clashing comets the pale stars, sickly and wan, falling like figs from the fig tree? Do you hear the cry, "Rocks, hide us, mountains, on us fall?" "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise;" but there never was a battle like this. This is with fire and smoke indeed. But do ye see yonder? All is peaceful all serene and quiet. The myriads of the redeemed, are they shrieking, crying, wailing? No; see them! They are gathering—gathering round the throne. That very throne that seems to scatter, as with a hundred hands, death and destruction on the wicked, becomes the sun of light and happiness to all believers. Do you see them coming robed in white, with their bright wings? while gathering round him they veil their faces. Do ye hear them cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, for thou wast slain, and thou hast risen from the dead; worthy art thou to live and reign, when death itself is dead?" Do ye hear them? It is all song, and no shriek. Do ye see them? It is all joy, and no terror. His name to them is Wonderful; but it is the wonder of admiration the wonder of ecstasy, the wonder of affection, and not the wonder of horror and dismay. Saints of the Lord! ye shall know the wonders of his name, when ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the day of his appearing. Oh! my enraptured spirit, thou shalt bear thy part in thy Redeemer's triumph, unworthy though thou art, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of saints. Thine eye shall see him and not another; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh! make your selves ready, ye virgins! Behold the bridegroom cometh. Arise and trim your lamps, and go ye out to meet him. He comes—he comes—he comes; and when he comes, you shall well say of him as you meet him with joy, "Thy name is called Wonderful. All hail! all hail! all hail!"

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## **His Own Funeral Sermon**

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep. - Acts 13:36

It is remarkable that David should say, in the sixteenth Psalm, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," and yet that Paul should say concerning him, when preaching at Antioch, that he "saw corruption." The key to this apparent contradiction is the fact that David did not speak of himself, but of his Lord. Peter, in his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, quotes the words of the psalmist, applies them to his risen Redeemer, and distinctly affirms that, in the Psalm, "David speaketh concerning him."

It is worthy of notice that Peter and Paul both use the same argument about this statement of David. These two apostles did not always agree; but however much they might differ about other matters, they were of one mind about the resurrection of Christ. I hope that, whatever differences there may be among true preachers of the gospel, they will always be one in declaring the resurrection of our Lord. This corner-stone of the gospel must never be displaced or dishonoured. The good news we are commissioned to declare is the same that Paul received and delivered, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Chief among the Scriptures fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ stands this word, which David, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote so long before the event: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The resurrection of Christ is the top-stone of our faith. Because "he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption," Paul was able to say this to his hearers, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that before are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The argument of the apostle is this. David could not have meant himself when he said, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" because David died, and his body was buried, and it did see corruption. He must therefore have referred to Christ, who is indeed God's "Holy One." Of him the prophetic word was true, for God did not suffer him "to



see corruption." He died, and was laid in the grave, but he rose again on the third day. In that climate there was, while Christ lay in the grave, plenty of time for his body to become corrupt. The spices with which they perfumed the precious body would not have sufficed to keep back corruption; they would have helped conceal the unpleasant odour which putrefaction brings, but they would not have stopped the process of decay. But Christ rose again, and no corruption had come to his body, for that body was a holy thing; it had no defect, nor taint of sin, as our bodies have. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, it was a pure thing; though born of the Virgin Mary, it was united to the Godhead, and not separated from it even in death; it saw no corruption. There is the apostle's argument, then: David speaking not of himself, but of someone else, says that the Lord will not suffer him to see corruption; and this he spake by the Spirit of the very Christ whom we preach to you as the Author and Finisher of salvation. He is living and reigning to-day, King of kings and Lord of lords; he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and live for ever with his risen, reigning Redeemer.

While Paul was speaking in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, he incidentally used the words of our text: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." That is to be my subject on this occasion; forgetting for the present the main argument, I would only look at this eddy in the current, and draw your attention to the expression which dropped from Paul's lips concerning David. Let us ask, first, What is it to serve our own generation? Secondly, What parts of our generation can we serve? And, lastly, with tender memories of many who have gone from us, let us ask, What will happen to us when our service is done? Even that which happened to David; we shall, like him, "fall on sleep."

I. First, then, WHAT IS IT TO SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION? This is a question which ought to interest us all very deeply. We live in the midst of our own generation, and seeing that we are part of it, we should serve it, that the generation in which our children shall live may be better than our own. Though our citizenship is in heaven, yet as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country.

What, then, is it for a man to serve his own generation?

I note, first, that it is not to be a slave to it. It is not to drop into the habits, customs, and ideas of the generation in which we live. People talk nowadays about *Zeitgeist*, a German expression which need frighten nobody; and one of the papers says, "Spurgeon does not know whether there is such a thing." Well, whether he knows anything about *Zeitgeist* or not, he is not to serve this generation by yielding to any of its notions or ideas which are contrary to the Word of the Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for all generations. It is the faith which needed to be only "once for all delivered to the saints"; it was given stereotyped as it always is to be. It cannot change because it has been given of God, and is therefore perfect; to change it would be to make it imperfect. It cannot change because it has been given to answer for ever the same purpose, namely, to save sinners from going down to the pit, and to fit them for going to heaven. That man serves his generation best who is not caught by every new current of opinion, but stands firmly by the truth of God, which is a solid, immovable rock. But to serve our own generation in the sense of being a slave to it, its vassal, and its varlet—let those who care to do so go into such bondage and slavery if they will. Do you know what such a course involves? If any young man here shall begin to preach the doctrine and the thought of the age, within the next ten years, perhaps within the next ten months, he will have to eat his own words, and begin his work all over again. When he has got into the new style, and is beginning to serve the present world, he will within a short time have to contradict himself again, for this age, like every other, is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." But if you begin with God's Word, and pray God the Holy Ghost to reveal it to you till you really know it, then, if you are spared to teach for the next fifty years, your testimony at the close will not contradict your testimony at the beginning. You will ripen in experience; you will expand in your apprehension of the truth; you will become more clear in your utterance; but it will be the same truth all along. Is it not a grand thing to build up, from the beginning of life to the end of it, the same gospel? But to set up opinions to knock them down again, as though they were ninepins, is a poor business for any servant of Christ. David did not, in that way serve his own generation; he was the master of his age, and not its slave. I

would urge every Christian man to rise to his true dignity, and be a blessing to those amongst whom he lives, as David was. Christ "hath made us kings and priests unto God his Father"; it is not meet that we should cringe before the spirit of the age, or lick the dust whereon "advanced thinkers" have chosen to tread. Beloved, see to this; and learn the distinction between serving your own generation and being a slave to it.

In the next place, in seeking to answer the question, "What is it to serve our own generation? I would say, it is not to fly from it. If any man says, "The world is so bad, that I will avoid coming into contact with it altogether; even the teaching of Christianity has become so diluted, and is so thoroughly on the Down-grade, that I will have nothing to do with it," he is certainly not serving his own generation. If he shall shut himself up, like a hermit, in his cave, and leave the world to go to ruin as it may, he will not be like David, for he served his own generation before he fell asleep. She that goes into a nunnery, and he that enters a monastery are like soldiers who run away, and hide among the baggage. You must not do anything of the sort. Come forward and fight evil, and triumph over it, whether it be evil of doctrine, evil of practice, or evil of any other kind. Be bold for Christ; bear your witness, and be not ashamed. If you do not take your stand in this way, it can never truly be said of you that you served your generation. Instead of that, the truth will be that you allowed your generation to make a coward of you, or, to muzzle you like a dog, and to send you out, into the streets neither to bark nor to bite, nor to do anything by which you might prove that there is a soul within you.

If we ask again, What is it to serve our generation? I answer, it is to perform the common duties of life, as David did. David was the son of a farmer, a sheep-owner, and he took first of all to the keeping of the sheep. Many young men do not like to do the common work of their own father's business. You do not want to drudge, you say, you want to be a king. Well, there are not many openings in that line of business; and I shall not recommend anyone to be eager to enter them if there were. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Before David swayed the sceptre, he grasped the shepherd's crook. He that at home cannot or will not undertake ordinary duties, will not be likely to serve his age. The girl who

dreams about the foreign missionary field, but cannot darn her brother's stockings, will not be of service either at home or abroad. Do the commonplace things, the ordinary things that come in your way, and you will begin to serve your generation, as David served his.

But serving our generation means more than this. It is to be ready for the occasion when it comes. In the midst of the routine of daily life, we should, by diligence in duty, prepare for whatever may be our future opportunity, waiting patiently until it comes. Look at David's occasion of becoming famous. He never sought it. He did not go up and down among his sheep, sighing and crying, "Oh, that I could get away from this dull business of looking after these flocks! My brothers have gone to the camp; they will get on as soldiers; but here am I, buried among these rocks, too looks after these poor beasts." He was wiser than that; he quietly waited God's time. That is always a wise thing to do. If you are to serve God, wait till he calls you to do his work; he knows where to find you when he wants you; you need not advertise yourself to his omniscience. At length the set time came for David. On a certain day, his father bade him go to his brethren, and take them some corn and some loaves, with cheeses for their captain; and he reached the camp just at the time when the giant Goliath was stalking forth, and defying all the armies of Israel to meet him. Now is David's time, and the young man is ready for it. If he had lost the opportunity he might have remained a shepherd all the rest of his days. He tells Saul how he slew both the lion and the bear, and prophesies that the uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God. Disdaining Saul's armour, he takes his sling, and his five smooth stones out of the brook, and soon he comes back with the gory head of the giant in his hand. If you want to serve the church and serve the age, beloved friend, be wide awake when the occasion comes. Jump into the saddle when the horse is at your door; and God will bless you if you are on the look-out for opportunities of serving him.

What is it, again to serve our generation? It is to maintain true religion. This David did. He had grave faults in his later life, which we will not extenuate; but he never swerved from his allegiance to Jehovah the true God. No word or action of his ever sanctioned anything like idolatry, or

turning aside from the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He bore a noble witness to his Lord. He said, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed;" and we may be sure that he was as good as his word, and that when he met with foreign potentates, he vindicated the living God before them. The whole set and current of his life, with the exception of his terrible fall, was to the glory of God in whom he trusted, and to the praise of that God who had delivered him. We, too, shall truly serve those amongst whom we dwell by maintaining true religion. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom, it would have been spared, and the world to-day only escapes the righteous judgment of God because of the presence in it of those who fear him, and tremble at his word. The spread of "pure and undefiled religion" is a certain way to serve those around us. To help true religion, David wrote many Psalms, which were sung all over the land of Israel. A wonderful collection of poems they are; there is none like them under heaven. Not even a Milton, with all his mighty soarings, can equal David in the height of his adoration of God, and the depth of his experience. That man does no mean service for his time who gives the people new songs which they can sing unto their God. While none can equal the inspired psalms of the Hebrew king, which must ever form the choicest praise-book of the church, other men may, in lesser degree serve their own generation, by the will of God, in a similar way, and be blessed in the deed.

To serve our own generation is not a single action, done at once, and over for ever; it is to continue to serve all our life. Notice well that David served "his own generation"; not only a part of it, but the whole of it. He began to serve God, and he kept on serving God. How many young men have I seen who were going to do wonders! Ah, me! They were as proud of the intention as though they had already done the deed. They took a front seat, and they seemed to think that everybody ought to admire them because of what they were going to do; but they were so pleased with the project that they never carried it out. They thought that they might meet with some mishap if they really attempted to do the thing, and the project was so beautiful that they preserved it under a glass shade, and there it is now. Nothing has been accomplished; nothing has been done, though much has been thought of. This is folly. Some, too, begin well, and they serve their God earnestly for a time, but on a sudden their service stops.

One cannot quite tell how it happens, but we never hear of them afterwards. Men, as far as I know them, are wonderfully like horses. You get a horse, and you think, "This is a first-rate animal," and so it is. It goes well for a while, but on a sudden it drops lame, and you have to get another. So it is with church-members. I notice that, every now and then, they get a singular lameness. To very many we have to say, even as Paul said to the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" But David continually served God to the end of his life. May we all, by divine grace, thus serve our whole generation, too!

Yet more is included in this faithful serving of our generation. It is to prepare for those who are to come after us. David served his generation to the very end by providing for the next generation. He was not permitted to build the temple; but he stored up a great mass of gold and silver to enable his son Solomon to carry out his noble design, and build a house for God. This is real service; to begin to serve God in early youth; to keep on till old age shall come; and even then to say, "I cannot expect to serve the Lord much longer, but I will prepare the way as far as I can for those who will come after me." Many years ago, Dr. Rippon, the minister of this church, which then worshipped in New Park Street, was wont to prophesy about his successor. When he was very old, after having been pastor for more than sixty years, it is in the memory of some still living that he was accustomed to pray for the minister who should come after him. The old man was looked forward to one who should come and carry on the work after he was obliged to leave it. So must you and I do. We must be looking ahead as far as ever we can, not with unbelieving anxiety or unholy curiosity; but after the fashion in which David prepared abundantly before his death. If we cannot find a successor to enter upon our service when we have to leave it, yet let us do all we can to make his work the easier when he comes to it.

II. In the second place, let us ask a question even more practical than the first; **WHAT PARTS OF OUR GENERATION CAN WE SERVE?** It is truly written, "None of us liveth to himself:" we either help or hinder those amongst whom we dwell. Let us see to it that we serve our age, and become stepping-stones rather than stumbling-blocks to those by whom we are surrounded. We shall serve our generation best by being definite

in our aim. In trying to reach everybody we may help nobody. The wise man tries to serve somebody in particular: where, then, should we make the effort? In answering that question, I divide the generation in which we live into three parts.

First, there is the part that is setting. Some are like the sun going down in the we set; they will be gone soon. Serve them, dear brethren. You that are in health and vigour, comfort them, strengthen them, and help them all you can. Be a joy to that dear old man, who has been spared to you even beyond the allotted threescore years and ten, and praise God for the grace that has upheld him through his long pilgrimage. Look on his grey hairs as a crown of glory; make his descent to the grave as easy as you can. He once was as young as you are; he once had the vigour that you have. Console him, cheer him, give him the respect that is due to his many years. Do not let him feel that you consider him an old fogey who lingers, superfluous, on the stage; but learn from his experience, imitate his perseverance, and ask God to be with you in your old age, as he is with him.

The second portion of our generation which we can serve is the part that is shining. I mean those in middle life, who are like the sun at its zenith. They are working hard, bearing the burden and heat of the day; as yet their bones are full of marrow, and they are strong men ready for service for the Lord. Seek to sustain their hands in every possible way. Help them all you can. As one of those in middle life, I especially ask the help of all my Christian brethren, members of this church, or of any other church, who can aid me by their sympathies and their prayers. Get closer to one another, and fill up the vacant spaces that death's arrows continue to make in our ranks. Suffer nothing to be left undone which may further the work of Christ, or help the people around you who are so quickly passing away. Many of us have been together for nearly forty years, and when, one after another, our dear brethren are taken away, let it be everybody's ambition to try to make up what shall be lacking through their departure. This is what is due to those who are like the shining part of our generation.

Specially, however, I want to speak to you about serving your own generation in the part that is rising; the young people who are like the sun

in the east, as yet scarcely above the horizon. This part of our generation is specially the care of parents and Sunday-school teachers; but let us not leave it entirely to them. We can, most of us, do something to serve this portion of our generation before we fall asleep. Beloved, I commend to your care and attention the children and young people who abound in our midst. In them lies our hope for the future of God's cause on earth.

In the first place, they are the most reachable. Happily, we can get at the children. The mass of people in London go to no place of worship now; the old habit of attending church or chapel seems to have been given up; but the people will still let the children go to Sunday-school, even if they do it from no better motive than that of getting them out of the way in the afternoon, or in order that the house may be quiet without them. Anyhow, if you open a school anywhere in London, you can quickly get it filled with children. If you cannot do one thing, do another. If you cannot reach the fathers and the mothers, though you should earnestly try to get at them, yet, if you can reach the children, take care that you lose no opportunity of teaching them the things of God. This is the work that lies nearest to you; seek to accomplish it; and "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Moreover, the children are the most impressible. What can we do with the man who is hardened in sin? The grace of God can reach him, I know; but the children as yet have not known these evil ways; they are horrified when they hear about them. Teach them. While yet the clay is soft, mould it for God. May the Lord himself help you, dear Sunday-school teachers, and others who labour amongst the children, to do your work right well! Nobly are you serving your own generation, and the generation to follow.

The salvation of the children ought to be sought with double diligence, for they will last the longest. If a man of sixty or seventy is converted, he will have only a short time for serving God here; for he will soon be gone. If a child is converted, a long life of usefulness may enrich the church of God. Therefore, look after the children. If you had a gathering of Christian men and women, and were to put the question to them, "How many of you were converted before you were one-and-twenty?" you would be greatly surprised to find that probably five out of six would answer that, in early years, they were led to know the grace of God, and trust in Christ as their



Saviour. I tried the experiment one evening with a number of friends who had come together from different places. "How many of you owe your salvation to your father's prayers, your mother's instruction, or your Sunday-school teachers' influence in youth?" I asked; and almost every one out of a company of about five-and-twenty said that it was in early youth that God blessed some instrumentality to their conversion.

Remember, too, that those who are converted when children usually make the best saints. These of whom I have just spoken, who gave the answer that they were converted in their youth, were ministers of the gospel. I do not know whether the same rule is true among ordinary Christians; but among those who have become leaders of men, in nearly every case they yielded to Christ while they were young. Our thoughts at this time cannot but be occupied with our dear friend, William Olney, who has just been taken from us so suddenly, to our unutterable grief. He was as earnest as a youth as he was when he became an old man. Indeed, I never knew a moment when he was not earnest. I never even knew him to be dull or depressed; he seemed to be always joyous and glad. He would almost frighten me sometimes with his jubilation under pain; for when he was in agonies of suffering, and could only sit on the platform for a short time, there was never anything like depression about him. He was just as glad and happy as if he had been in perfect health. I wish that it were so with all of us. Young Christians do become the best Christians. Early piety is usually eminent piety; so seek to catch the children while they are young, and train them for the Lord, then they will be ready to serve their generation in their turn.

We ought to look after the children, again, for they are specially named by Christ. He said, "Feed my sheep;" but he also said, "Feed my lambs." I would almost be inclined to say that the Lord made the same division of the generation as I have done. When he said, the first time, "Feed my sheep," he may have meant the old sheep. When he said, the second time, "Feed my sheep," he may have had specially in mind the middle-aged ones. There is no doubt that when he said, "Feed my lambs," he meant the young people. Christ gave the lambs a place all to themselves: "Feed my lambs." I wish Christians would consider more seriously how the children ought to be looked after by the church. I read, the other day, of a

boy who wished to join in membership with the people of God. His father said that he was too young, and kept him back. He was big enough, however, to be sent out to fold the sheep one night. When he came in, his father said, "Jack have you folded the sheep?" "Yes," he said; "I folded all the sheep," laying great stress on the last word. "And did you put the lambs in?" asked his father. "No," he replied, "I left the lambs outside; they were too young to go in." "Oh, boy!" said the father; "you know more than I do, after all; they were the very ones that needed most to be folded. You may go and see the minister about joining the church as soon as you like." If any believers in Christ need specially to be taken into the church, it is those who have come to Jesus in their youth. I pray you, serve your generation by giving the children and young people your most loving attention and care.

Look after the children of this generation, again, for the dangers around them at the present time are almost innumerable. What a time this is for boys! You cannot read the daily papers without being shocked by the amounts of wrong-doing of mere boys. This is an age which seems to make snares on purpose to entrap them. There are "penny dreadfuls" enough to poison the whole generation; they are full of stories of crime with a false halo about it, so that it is made to seem like heroism. These vile stories are everywhere; perhaps your own boy has one, unknown to you, and is reading it while you are sitting here. Everywhere traps are laid for the feet of our boys. Serve your generation by warning them of their danger and trying to keep them free from the evils by which they are surrounded. Satan gets the advantage over many a young life by causing even right things to be put to wrong uses; and in all sorts of ways he lays traps for young people. Oh, parents and teachers, do try to give your boys a backbone of moral honesty! Try to show them that they have not come into this world merely to please themselves; that there is something better to be done than that. Do not rest till you have led them to the Saviour, for no boy is safe until he is converted. No girl is safe in the streets of this city till she has a new heart and a right spirit. The times are perilous; yet if we speak a word of warning. We are called sour Puritans. It always makes me laugh when I am called a sour Puritan, because you know there is nobody with a quicker eye for fun, or with a deeper vein of mirth than I have. At the same time, I like to have humour, and anything

of cheerfulness and brightness in life, consecrated to God. But when mirth is made a plank on which a man can go into sin and iniquity, then we will saw that plank into pieces. You must be saved from sin, young men; you must be kept from evil, young women, if you are to be truly happy. May God's grace put in your way wise, godly friends, parents, and teachers, who shall serve their generation by leading you in the paths of peace!

III. Now, I have done when I have tried, for just a minute or two, to answer this question: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US WHEN OUR SAVIOUR IS DONE? "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The day's work is done; the worker is weary; he falls on sleep: what can he do better? It was all "by the will of God.: To what part of the sentence do you think that clause belongs? Did David serve his generation by the will of God; or did he fall asleep by the will of God? Both. Guided by the will of God, he did his work on earth; and calmly resigned to the will of God, he prepared to die. Even when passing away, he served his generation by giving Solomon some last charges concerning the kingdom, saying, "I go the way of the earth; be thou strong, and show thyself a man." Over both his life and his death may be written the words, "By the will of God." Oh, that we may all so live, that even in death we may serve our generation; may it be true of us that "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's"! Thus, "the will of God" shall be done both in our service and in our sleep.

David is an example of what will befall those who know Christ, at the end of their service. He did not go to sleep till his work was done. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." Do not want to die till you have done your work. When brethren say, "Oh, I wish I could go to heaven! Oh, when shall I get home?" they remind me of a man who, when he begins work on Monday, says, "I wish it was Saturday night." We do not want servants like that, nor does God either. Be willing to live for two hundred and fifty years, if God wills it. Be willing to live until strength fails you, if God wills it; you can still bear your dying testimony to the Lord's faithful and unchanging love. Do not be in a hurry to go home to heaven. Do not want to go to sleep till you also have served

your generation well. When David had served his generation, he fell on sleep. We are told that, in the early days of Christianity, when believers were falling asleep in Jesus, their friends did not bid them "good-bye," but "good-night." So we say, in the words of that beautiful hymn—

"Sleep on beloved, sleep, and take thy rest;  
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast:  
We love thee well; but Jesus loves thee best—  
Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!

Only 'good-night,' beloved-not 'farewell !'  
A little while, and all his saints shall dwell  
In hallowed union, indivisible—  
Good-night!

Until we meet again before his throne,  
Clothed in the spotless robe he gives his own,  
Until we know even as we are known—  
Good-night!"

But, next we are told that when his work was done, he fell on sleep. Did his soul sleep? By no means. It was not his soul that is spoken of here, for we read that he "saw corruption." Souls do not see corruption. Paul is speaking of David's body. "He fell on sleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption." His body fell into its last, long sleep, and saw corruption. If you like to take the words in the wider sense, he was asleep as far as the world is concerned; he had done with it. No sorrow came to him, no earthly joy, no mingling with the strife of tongues, no girding his harness for the war. "He fell on sleep." He had nothing to do with anything that was under the sun. And that is the case with our dear friend whom we miss from his place to-day, and it will soon be the case also with you and with me. There is not much here worth stopping for; and when our work is finished, like David, we shall fall on sleep. We shall then be asleep to all the declensions of the age, all the strifes of men, and all else which gives us sorrow of heart.

Does this word further mean that his dying was like going to sleep? It usually is so with God's people. Some die with a considerable measure of

pain; but, as a rule, when believers pass away, they just shut their eyes, and open them in heaven. I have had infinitely more pleasure at death-beds than I have had at weddings. I have been to many marriage-feasts, I have gone there at duty's call; but I can confirm what Solomon said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for it is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." I am not aware that I have gained anything at a wedding, but I have gained much at the dying bed, as I have seen the joy and peace and rapture of girls and youths, and men and women, passing away joyfully to be "forever with the Lord." I have known some of our number here who were too bashful and backward to ever say much for Christ when they were well; but when I sent to see them die, there was not a bit of bashfulness about them. They spoke out so boldly that I have said to them, "Why, if you get better, you must preach for me one of these Sundays"; and they have smiled and said that they would never get better. They have known this, and they have rejoiced to think that they were going where they would not need any preacher, but would see their Lord Jesus face to face. How they have brightened up at the mention of his dear name! Some of them have sung then, though I never knew them to sing before; and some of them have told of things which they seemed to see and hear, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, till God has revealed them to the departing spirit. You remember such dying beds, do you not? Was it your mother, or your father, who passed away in that glorious style? Perhaps it was a brother beloved, or a sister, or a friend. Well, if we know Christ, it shall be ours by-and-by to sleep in him. You who believe in Christ ought no more to dread death than you dread going to sleep at night. You will, ere you sleep, commit yourself to God, and as you put your head on the pillow, the similitude of death will be upon you, even sleep which one has called "death's cousin." You will not be afraid of that. Why, then, should any dismay seize you in prospect of that which is but another sleep? Rather sing to yourself:—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay;  
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,  
Since Jesus to glory through death lead the way."

Let us follow where he leads. Perchance some of us may tarry until he comes again. There will be no death for such; they will but change the service of their generation for the service of the glorified. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Then, when the trumpet shall sound, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, those who sleep in Christ shall awake in resurrection splendour, and together we shall serve our Lord day and night in his temple for ever. Meanwhile, serve you own generation by the will of God; and if the Lord tarry, you will fall on sleep, even as David did. May God bless you who believe in Jesus, and save the unsaved who are in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Holiness Demanded**

Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14

One feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet, which he must sometimes blow; for thus saith the Lord unto him, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Times there are when we must ring the tocsin; men must be startled from their sleep, they must be roused up to enquire, "What are we? Where are we? Whither are we going?" Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels, and for the soundest Christians to be sometimes constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning, and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the

Lord."

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the imputed holiness of Christ. Do they not know, when they so speak, that, by an open perversion, they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Now, the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace." We are to follow holiness,—this must be practical holiness; the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow; I mean, if we look at it imputatively. That we have at once; it is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as every one can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God, and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul, by which a man is made like God, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it. There it stands, whether men like it or not. There are some who, for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or gaols; yet there it stands, and it means no other than what it says: "Without holiness,"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness,—"no man shall see the Lord." Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth, and all enjoyment of Christ in heaven, I shall endeavour, first, to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he hath this holiness or not; secondly, to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" and then, thirdly, to plead

hard, in Christ's stead, with those who are lovers of gain, that they may bethink themselves ere time be over, and opportunity past.

I. First, then, brethren, ye are anxious to know whether ye have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that, without perfection of holiness, no man, could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one, who knows his own heart, ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," mark; but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. It may be in the soul as the grain of mustard-seed, and yet not developed; it may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized,—a groaning, a panting, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard-seed shall become a tree. Holiness, in a regenerate heart, is but an infant; it is not matured,—perfect it is in all its parts, but not perfect in its development. Hence, when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the grace of God. This would be altogether contrary to the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as what it is not, I think, while I am endeavouring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness. First, there is the Pharisee. The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses,—his anise, his mint, his cummin,—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed, he gives. He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries, and makes broad the borders of his garment;—in fact, anything and everything that is commanded ceremonially he most punctiliously attends to; but, all the while, he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin, and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God, and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic sinner, hear the death-knell of thy hopes tolled out by this verse: "Without holiness,"—and that is a thing thou knowest. nothing of,—" no man shall see the Lord." Thy ceremonies are vain and frivolous; even if God ordained them, seeing thou putttest thy trust in them, they shall utterly deceive and fail thee, for they do not



constitute even a part of holiness. Thou canst not see God till thy heart be changed, till thy nature be renewed, till thine actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where, not the works of the law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my hearer, that those fine hopes of yours, built upon the manoeuvres of the priests, and upon your own performances, shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them. Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when most you need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness.

Then there is the moralist. He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true; perhaps he even despises them; but he treats his neighbour with integrity, he believes that, so far as he knows, if his ledger be examined, it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the law, he is blameless: no one ever doubted the purity of his manner; from his youth up, his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what every one could desire, and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety. Ah, but this is not holiness before God. Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness; for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objects, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep; holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God, and that it shall beat with love to him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that. Methinks I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse, well washed and robed, and even embalmed with spices; but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life. Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms; holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars. These twain are of opposite nature: the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It

is not said in heaven, "Moral, moral, moral art thou, O God!" but "Holy, holy. holy art thou. O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, how icy cold; the other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality, and such is holiness! Moralist !—I know I speak to many such,—remember that your best morality will not save you; you must have more than this, for without holiness , —and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God, —without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Another individual, who thinks to get on without holiness, and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles, is the experimentalist. You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward; to tell you the truth, there is no life at all; but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, discoursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree; having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go, cutting off everybody's head who was taller than they were, and stretching every man out by the neck who happened to be a little too short. I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist,—a "letter man", I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus, and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing, —not following peace with all men, but stirring up strife against all, —this is the practice of their religion. This is the summit to which they climb, and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are striving to serve God, and to do good in their day and generation. Now I pray you to remember that, against such men as these, there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly levelled; I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt, you may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced; but if your own outward life be unjust, unholy, ungenerous, and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ: "Without holiness, no man shall see the

Lord." The moment you know a man who is drunk on a Saturday night, and then enjoys So-and-so's preaching on a Sunday; the moment you know a man who can tell you what a child of God should be, and then appears himself exactly what he should not be, just quit his company, and let him go to his own place, and where that is, Judas can tell you. Oh, beware of such high-fliers, with their waxen wings, mounting up to the very sun,—how great shall be their fall, when he that searches all hearts shall open the book, and say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. Inasmuch as ye did it not. to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but there are some among us still,—opinionists, who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line,—they think they have got hold of the truth, that they are the men, and that, when they die, the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can -

"A hair divide

Betwixt the west and north-west side."

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D. D." years ago, for they know everything, and are not a little proud that they do. And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion. We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If we could do you good, we might be glad to see you; but you do so much hurt to the rest, and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large, that your room would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon, and sometimes perhaps have the condescension to speak well of the preacher, who wishes you would not. Yet, after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a public-house door just opened at one o'clock, and the brother refreshes himself, and perhaps does so many times. Even if it be the holy day, it is all the same, and yet he is a dear and precious child of God. No doubt he is in his own estimation. And then, during the week, he lives as others live, and

acts as others act, and yet. congratulates himself that he knows the truth, and understands the doctrines of the gospel, and therefore he will surely be saved! Out with thee, man! Out with thee! Down with thy hopes! "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"No big words of ready talkers,  
No mere doctrines will suffice;  
Broken hearts, and humble walkers—  
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work,—this is what the Lord wants. You may perish as well with true doctrines as with false, if you pervert the true doctrine into licentiousness. You may go to hell by the cross as surely as you may by the theatre, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips, and with a sound creed sealed on your very bosom, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now, if any of you belong to either of these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it, and, being destitute of gospel holiness, you have good cause to bewail your character, and tremble for your destiny.

But, to help you still further, brethren, that man is destitute of true holiness who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow. Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at fifteen years of age, but those fifteen years of unregeneracy,—we can never forget them! Others may say, "We did not know him till we were fifty or sixty." Ah, my dear brethren! you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life. I can look back upon God's mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some men recall their past lives, and talk of their old sins, and seem to roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander,—

"He fought his battles o'er again,  
And twice he slew the slain."

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness, or some act of infamy; and, as they think it over, they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled; but they love the thought, and cultivate it with a vicious zest. Thou art no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes thee profound sorrow, and sends thee to thy knees to weep and hope that God, for Christ's sake, has blotted it out.

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation. Have I a man here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh, and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah, sir! if thou canst think of those things that may come in thy way without tremor, I suspect thee: I would thou wouldst suspect thyself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ, we have always woken up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me, and I must confess it; and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God, and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious lustre; but when grey hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end, lest haply in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me, and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind,— "He that thinketh he standeth may yet fall" "I And the very possibility of such a thing,—does it not drive you to God's mercy-seat, and do you not cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe"? There is no doxology in Scripture which I enjoy more than that one at the end of the Epistle of Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to him be glory." I say to you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, methinks you have great cause for questioning, unless your holiness is uniform; I mean, if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home. You must suspect that it is at home that you are what you really are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family, for they, after all, see the most of us, and know the truth about us; and if, sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop, to be amiable, Christian, and God-like to the passer-by, your children should have to mark your unkindness, your want of fatherly affection for their souls, and your wife has to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like, you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart. O sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea! That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light; who does not feel, "If every eye should look upon me, I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me; that which keeps me right is not the judgement and opinions of men, but the eye of the Omnipresent, and the heart of the Lord who loves me." Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know, in the country, maintain a creditable profession in the village where they live; they go to a place of worship, and seem to be very good people: but there is a farmer's dinner once a year, it is only once a year, and we will not say anything about how they get home,—the less that is said, the better for their reputation. "It is only once a year," they tell us; but holiness does not allow of dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who, when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there;" and therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate, it is good for nothing. I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as ever I like; I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he enquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply; "I do not keep away because of any law, for it is no trial to me; but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply,

"I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly; it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society, because I do not join in their revelry and wantonness; it is not my element, and I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be alike repulsive and painful." You are a stranger to holiness if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark, that those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy. We know of some, who will not themselves perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet, if another does so, and there is a laugh excited upon some not over-decent remark, they laugh, and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing, which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy it; they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise; they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there; they are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment; yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go; but, seeing that they do it, you go too, and there you see others engaged in sin, and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance. There are many things, in this world, that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them, and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it, after all; it is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! mind! mind, professor, if thine heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin, it is unsound in the sight. of God; if thou canst even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it that thou wilt soon shut thine eye on thine own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are' with ourselves. There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them. Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we be among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no man can see God. But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany

salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God, feel that we would be holy if we could, that there is not a sin we wish to spare, that we would be like Jesus, —O that we could !—that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin, and displease our God; if our heart be really right in God's statutes, then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness, wherein we may rejoice, and we pray to our gracious God, -

"Finish, then, thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be."

II. Now, then, for the second point very briefly indeed: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" that is to say, no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come, without holiness. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If thou goest with Belial, dost thou think that Christ will go. with thee? Will Christ be a pot companion for thee? Dost thou expect to take the Lord of love and mercy with thee to the haunts of sin? Professor, dost thou think the just and holy One will stand at thy counter to be co-trader with thee in thy tricks? What thinkest thou, O man! wouldst thou make Christ a sharer of thy guilt? and yet he would be so if he had fellowship with thee in it. Nay, if thou wilt go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with thee, or, rather, thou never didst have any fellowship with him. Thou hast gone out from us because thou wert not of us; for, if thou hadst been of us, doubtless thou wouldst have continued with us. And as to heaven, dost thou think to go there with thine unholiness? God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will he let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for him to bear with thine hypocrisies on earth; shall he have them flung in his own face in heaven? What, shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better paradise? No, no; God has sworn by his holiness—and he will not, he cannot lie, —that those who are not holy, whom his Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good, and hate that which is evil, shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous. Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no man shall see him without holiness.



III. I come to my last point, which is, pleading with you. Doubtless, there are some in this vast crowd who have, some sort of longings after salvation and after heaven. My eye looks round; yes, sometimes it has been my wont to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose cases I know. Do I not remember one? He has been very often impressed, and so impressed, too, that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God, and there is only one thing in his way, and that is drink, strong drink! By the time that Wednesday or Thursday comes round, he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes, he has taken the pledge, and kept it three months; but the craving has been too strong for him, and then he has given all resolutions and vows up, and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before. Others I know in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come of a morning, and yet, when you come at night, you feel it very severely; but why not come here in the morning? Because your shop is open, and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, "Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience; but I cannot yet, I cannot yet." And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for want of reasoning with you, and weeping over you. Let me put it to you, —do you say that you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit! Profit, forsooth! "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" 'What profit have you obtained hitherto? You have put it all into a bag full of holes; what you have earned one way, you have spent in another; and you know that, if this life were all, you surely have not been any the better for it. Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I adjure you, lose not gold for dross, lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain!

But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure, it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens to beset you, such an intense longing, and in looking back upon it afterwards, you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is hidden from all hearts but thine own? O soul, what is this pleasure, after all?

Weigh it, weigh it; what does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs thee now, to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor, who had led a loose life, came to die, he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor, and he said, "Find that word, find that word." "What word?" they asked. "Why," he said, "that awful word,—remorse!" He said it again,— "Remorse!" and then, gathering up his full strength, he fairly seemed to shriek it out,— "Remorse!" "Write it," said he, "write it." It was written. "Write it with larger letters, and let me gaze at it; underline it. And now," said he, "none of you know the meaning of that word, and may you never know it; it has an awful meaning in it, and I feel it now,—Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!"

What, I ask, is the pleasure of sin contrasted with the results it brings in this life? and what, I ask, is this pleasure' compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ. We, who believe in him, do have our sorrows; but, blessed be God, we do have our joys, and they are such joys —oh, such joys, with such substance in them, and such reality and certainty, that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except heaven in its fruition.

And then, bethink thee, sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of thy soul? There is a gentleman, high in position in this world, with fair lands and a large estate, who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon,—and he never hears me preach without weeping,—said to me, "O sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool!" "And what for?" I asked. "Why," he said, "for the sake of that court, and of those gaities of life, and of mere honour, and dress, and fashion, I am squandering away my soul. I know," he said, "I know the truth, but I do not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do what is right, but I go on just as I have done before; I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool am," said he, "to choose pleasures that only last a little while, and then to be lost for ever and for ever!" I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain; there was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! alas!

if we had to deal with sane men, our preaching would be easy; but sin is a madness, such a madness that, when men are bitten by it, they would not be persuaded even though one should rise from the dead. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"But," I hear someone say, "it is impossible; I have tried it, and I have broken down; I did try to get better, but I did not succeed; it is of no use, it cannot be done." You are right, my dear friend, and you are wrong. You are right, it is of no use going about it as you did; if you went in your own strength, holiness is a thing you cannot get, it is beyond you. The depth says, "It is not in me;" and the height saith, "It is not in me." You can no more make yourself holy than you could create a world. But you are wrong to despair, for Christ can do it; he can do it for you, and he can do it now. Believe on him, and that believing will be the proof that he is working in you. Trust him, and he that has suffered for thy sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in, and put to rout the lion of the pit. He will bruise Satan under thy feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for him to break. He can turn a lion to a lamb, and a raven to a dove. Trust him to save thee, and he will do it, whosoever thou mayest be, and whatsoever thy past life may have been. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;"—that is, he shall be saved from his sins, and delivered from his evil practices; he shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor soul, that Christ is able to save thee, and he will do it. He will be as good as thy faith, and as good as his own word. May he now add his own blessing to the word I have spoken, and to the people who have heard it, for his own sake! Amen.

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## **The Holy Ghost - The Great Teacher**

Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that

shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. - John 16:13.

This generation hath gradually, and almost imperceptibly, become to a great extent a godless generation. One of the diseases of the present generation of mankind, is their secret but deep-seated godlessness, by which they have so far departed from the knowledge of God. Science has discovered to us second causes; and hence, many have too much forgotten the first Great Cause, the Author of all: they have been able so far to pry into secrets, that the great axiom of the existence of a God, has been too much neglected. Even among professing Christians, while there is a great amount of religion, there is too little godliness: there is much external formalism, but too little inward acknowledgment of God, too little living on God, living with God, and relying upon God. Hence arises the sad fact that when you enter many of our places of worship you will certainly hear the name of God mentioned; but except in the benediction, you would scarcely know there was a Trinity. In many places dedicated to Jehovah the name of Jesus is too often kept in the background; the Holy Spirit is almost entirely neglected; and very little is said concerning his sacred influence. Even religious men have become to a large degree godless in this age. We sadly require more preaching regarding God; more preaching of those things which look not so much at the creature to be saved, as at God the Great One to be extolled. My firm conviction is, that in proportion as we have more regard for the sacred godhead, the wondrous Trinity in Unity, shall we see a greater display of God's power, and a more glorious manifestation of his might in our churches. May God send us a Christ-exalting, Spirit-loving ministry - men who shall proclaim God the Holy Ghost in all his offices and shall extol God the Saviour as the author and finisher of our faith, not neglecting that Great God, the Father of his people, who, before all worlds, elected us in Christ his Son, justified us through his righteousness, and will inevitably preserve us and gather us together in one, in the consummation of all things at the last great day.

Our text has regard to God the Holy Spirit; of Him we shall speak and Him only, if His sweet influence shall rest upon us.

The disciples had been instructed by Christ concerning certain elementary doctrines but Jesus did not teach his disciples more than

what we should call the A B C of religion. He gives his reasons for this in the 12th verse: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." His disciples were not possessors of the Spirit. They had the Spirit so far as the work of conversion was concerned, but not as to the matters of bright illumination, profound instruction, prophecy, and inspiration. He says, "I am now about to depart, and when I go from you I will send the Comforter unto you. Ye cannot bear these things now howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." The same promise that he made to his apostles, stands good to all his children; and in reviewing it, we shall take it as our portion and heritage, and shall not consider ourselves intruders upon the manor of the apostles, or upon their exclusive rights and prerogatives; for we conceive that Jesus says even to us, "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

Dwelling exclusively upon our text, we have five things. First of all, here is an attainment mentioned - a knowledge of all truth; secondly, here is a difficulty suggested - which is, that we need guidance into all truth; thirdly, here is a person provided - "when he, the Spirit shall come, he shall guide you into all truth; "fourthly, here is a manner hinted at - "he shall guide you into all truth;" fifthly here is a sign given as to the working of the Spirit - we may know whether he works, by his "guiding us into all truth," - into all of one thing; not truths, but truth.

I. Here is AN ATTAINMENT MENTIONED, which is a knowledge of all truth. We know that some conceive doctrinal knowledge to be of very little importance, and of no practical use. We do not think so. We believe the science of Christ crucified and a judgment of the teachings of Scripture to be exceedingly valuable; we think it is right, that the Christian ministry should not only be arousing but instructing; not merely awakening, but enlightening: that it should appeal not only to the passions but to the understanding. We are far from thinking doctrinal knowledge to be of secondary importance; we believe it to be one of the first things in the Christian life, to know the truth, and then to practice it. We scarcely need this morning tell you how desirable it is for us to be well taught in things of the kingdom.

First of all, nature itself, (when it has been sanctified by grace,) gives us a

strong desire to know all truth. The natural man separateth himself and intermeddleth with all knowledge. God has put an instinct in him by which he is rendered unsatisfied if he cannot probe mystery to its bottom; he can never be content until he can unriddle secrets. What we call curiosity is something given us of God impelling us to search into the knowledge of natural things; that curiosity, sanctified by the Spirit, is also brought to bear in matters of heavenly science and celestial wisdom. "Bless the Lord," said David, "O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name!" If there is a curiosity within us, it ought to be employed and developed in a search after truth. "All that is within me," sanctified by the Spirit should he developed, And, verily, the Christian man feels an intense longing to bury his ignorance and receive wisdom. If he, when in his natural estate panted for terrestrial knowledge, how much more ardent is the wish to unravel, if possible, the sacred mysteries of God's Word! A true Christian is always intently reading and searching the Scripture that he may be able to certify himself as to its main and cardinal truths. I do not think much of that man who does not wish to understand doctrines; I cannot conceive him to be in a right position when he thinks it is no matter whether he believes a lie or truth, whether he is heretic or orthodox, whether he received the Word of God as it is written, or as it is diluted and misconstrued by man. God's Word will ever be to a Christian a source of great anxiety; a sacred instinct within will lead him to pry into it; he will seek to understand it. Oh! there are some who forget this, men who purposely abstain from mentioning what are called high doctrines, because they think if they should mention high doctrines they would be dangerous; so they keep them back. Foolish men! they do not know anything of human nature; for if they did understand a grain's worth of humanity, they would know that the hiding of these things impels men to search them out. From the fact that they do not mention them, they drive men to places where these and these only, are preached. They say, "If I preach election, and predestination and these dark things, people will all go straight away, and become Antinomians." I am not so sure if they were to be called Antinomians it would hurt them much; but hear me, oh, ye ministers that conceal these truths, that is the way to make them Antinomians, by silencing these doctrines. Curiosity is strong; if you tell them they must not pluck the truth, they will be sure to do it; but if you give it to them as you find it in God's Word, they will not seek to "wrest"

it. Enlightened men will have the truth, and if they see election in Scripture they will say, "it is there, and I will find it out. If I cannot get it in one place, I will get it in another." The true Christian has an inward longing and anxiety after it; he is hungry and thirsty after the word of righteousness, and he must and will feed on this bread of heaven, or at all hazards he will leave the husks which unsound divines would offer him.

Not only is this attainment to be desired because nature teaches us so, but a knowledge of all truth is very essential for our comfort. I do believe that many persons have been distressed half their lives from the fact that they had not clear views of truth. Many poor souls, for instance, under conviction, abide three or four times as long in sorrow of mind as they would require to do if they had some one to instruct them in the great matter of justification. So there are believers who are often troubling themselves about falling away; but if they knew in their soul the great consolation that we are kept by the grace of God through faith unto salvation, they would be no more troubled about it. So have I found some distressed about the unpardonable sin; but if God instructs us in that doctrine, and shows us that no conscience that is really awakened ever can commit that sin, but that when it is committed God gives us up to a scared conscience, so that we never fear or tremble afterwards, all that distress would be alleviated. Depend on this, the more you know of God's truth - all things else being equal - the more comfortable you will be as a Christian. Nothing can give a greater light on your path than a clear understanding of divine things. It is a mangle-mangled gospel too commonly preached, which causes the downcast faces of Christians. Give me the congregation whose faces are bright with joy, let their eyes glisten at the sound of the gospel, then will I believe that it is God's own words they are receiving. Instead thereof you will often see melancholy congregations whose visages are not much different from the bitter countenance of poor creatures swallowing medicine, because the word spoken terrifies them by its legality, instead of comforting them by its grace. We love a cheerful gospel, and we think "all the truth" will tend to comfort the Christian.

"Comfort again?" says another, "always comfort." Ah, but there is another reason why we prize truth, because we believe that a true knowledge of all

the truth will keep us very much out of danger. No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God. Those who have called it a licentious doctrine did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world. There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-bye having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Keep near God's truth; keep near his word; keep the head right, and especially keep your heart right with regard to truth, and your feet will not go far astray.

Again, I hold also that this attainment to the knowledge of all truth is very desirable for the usefulness which it will give us in the world at large. We should not be selfish: we should always consider whether a thing will be beneficial to others. A knowledge of all truth will make us very serviceable in this world. We shall be skillful physicians who know how to take the poor distressed soul aside, to put the finger on his eye, and take the scale off for him, that heaven's light may comfort him. There will be no character, however perplexing may be its peculiar phase, but we shall be able to speak to it and comfort it. He who holds the truth, is usually the most useful man. As a good Presbyterian brother said to me the other day: "I know God has blessed you exceedingly in gathering in souls, but it is an extraordinary fact that nearly all the men I know - with scarcely an exception - who have been made useful in gathering in souls, have held the great doctrines of the grace of God." Almost every man whom God has blessed to the building up of the church in prosperity, and around whom the people have rallied, has been a man who has held firmly free grace from first to last, through the finished salvation of Christ. Do not you think you need have errors in your doctrine to make you useful. We have some who preach Calvinism all the first part of the sermon, and finish up with Arminianism, because they think that will make them useful. Useful nonsense! - That is all it is. A man if he cannot be useful



with the truth, cannot be useful with an error. There is enough in the pure doctrine of God, without introducing heresies to preach to sinners. As far as I know, I never felt hampered or cramped in addressing the ungodly in my life. I can speak with as much fervency, and yet not in the same style as those who hold the contrary views of God's truth. Those who hold God's word, never need add something untrue in speaking to men. The sturdy truth of God touches every chord in every man's heart. If we can, by God's grace, put our hand inside man's heart, we want nothing but that whole truth to move him thoroughly, and to stir him up. There is nothing like the real truth and the whole truth, to make a man useful.

II. Now, again, here is a DIFFICULTY SUGGESTED, and that is - that we require a guide to conduct us into all truth. The difficulty is that truth is not so easy to discover. There is no man born in this world by nature who has the truth in his heart. There is no creature that ever was fashioned, since the fall, who has a knowledge of truth innate and natural. It has been disputed by many philosophers whether there are such things as innate ideas at all; but is of no use disputing as to whether there are any innate ideas of truth. There are none such. There are ideas of everything that is wrong and evil; but in us - that is our flesh - there dwelleth no good thing, we are born in sin, and shapened in iniquity; in sin did our mother conceive us. There is nothing in us good, and no tendency to righteousness. Then since we are not born with the truth, we have the task of searching for it. If we are to be blest by being eminently useful as Christian men, we must be well instructed in matters of revelation; but here is the difficulty - that we cannot follow without a guide the winding paths of truth. Why this?

First, because of the very great intricacy of truth itself. Truth itself is no easy thing to discover. Those who fancy they know everything and constantly dogmatise with the spirit of "We are the men, and wisdom will die with us," of course see no difficulties whatever in the system they hold; but I believe, the most earnest student of Scripture will find things in the Bible which puzzle him; however earnestly he reads it, he will see some mysteries too deep for him to understand. He will cry out "Truth! I cannot find thee; I know not where thou art, thou art beyond me; I cannot fully view thee." Truth is a path so narrow that two can scarce

walk together in it; we usually tread the narrow way in single file, two men can seldom walk arm in arm in the truth. We believe the same truth in the main but we cannot walk together in the path, it is too narrow. The way of truth is very difficult. If you step an inch aside on the right you are in a dangerous error, and if you swerve a little to the left you are equally in the mire. On the one hand there is a huge precipice, and on the other a deep morass; and unless you keep to the true line, to the breadth of a hair, you will go astray. Truth is a narrow path indeed. It is a path the eagle's eye hath not seen, and a depth the diver hath not visited. It is like the veins of metal in a mine, it is often of excessive thinness, and moreover it runneth not in one continued layer. Lose it once, and you may dig for miles and not discover it again; the eye must watch perpetually the direction of the lode. Grains of truth are like the grains of gold in the rivers of Australia - they must be shaken by the hand of patience, and washed in the stream of honesty, or the fine gold will be mingled with sand. Truth is often mingled with error, and it is hard to distinguish it; but we bless God it is said, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

Another reason why we need a guide is, the invidiousness of error. It busily steals upon us, and, if I may so describe our position, we are often like we were on Thursday night in that tremendous fog. Most of us were feeling for ourselves, and wondering where on earth we were. We could scarcely see an inch before us. We came to a place where there were three turnings. We thought we knew the old spot. There was the lamp-post, and now we must take a sharp turn to the left; but not so. We ought to have gone a little to the right. We have been so often to the same place, that we think we know every flag-stone - and there's our friend's shop over the way. It is dark, but we think we must be quite right, and all the while we are quite wrong, and find ourselves half-a-mile out of the way. So - it is with matters of truth. We think, surely this is the right path; and the voice of the evil one whispers, "that is the way, walk ye in it." You do so, and you find to your great dismay, that instead of the path of truth, you have been walking in the paths of unrighteousness and erroneous doctrines. The way of life is a labyrinth; the grassiest paths and the most bewitching, are the farthest away from right; the most enticing, are those which are garnished with wrested truths I believe there is not a counterfeit coin in

the world so much like a genuine one, as some errors are like the truth. One is base metal, the other is true gold; still in externals they differ very little.

We also need a guide, because we are so prone to go astray. Why, if the path of heaven were as straight as Bunyan pictures it, with no turning to the right hand or left - and no doubt it is, - we are so prone to go astray, that we should go to the right hand to the Mountains of Destruction, or to the left in the dark Wood of Desolation. David says, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." That means very often: for if a sheep is put into a field twenty times, if it does not get out twenty-one times, it will be because it cannot; because the place is hurdled up, and it cannot find a hole in the hedge. If grace did not guide a man, he would go astray, though there were hand-posts all the way to heaven. Let it be written, "Miklat, Miklat, the way to refuge," he would turn aside, and the avenger of blood would overtake him, if some guide did not, like the angels in Sodom, put his hand on his shoulders, and cry, "Escape, escape, for thy life! look not behind thee; stay not in all the plain." These, then, are the reasons why we need a guide.

III. In the third place, here is A PERSON PROVIDED. This is none other than God, and this God is none other than a person. This person is "he, the Spirit," the "Spirit of truth;" not an influence or an emanation, but actually a person. "when the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth." Now, we wish you to look at this guide to consider how adapted he is to us.

In the first place, he is infallible; he knows everything and cannot lead us astray. If I pin my sleeve to another man's coat, he may lead me part of the way rightly, but by-and-bye he will go wrong himself, and I shall be led astray with him; but if I give myself to the Holy Ghost and ask his guidance, there is no fear of my wandering.

Again, we rejoice in this Spirit because he is ever-present. We fall into a difficulty sometimes; we say, "Oh, if I could take this to my minister, he would explain it; but I live so far off, and am not able to see him." That perplexes us, and we turn the text round and round and cannot make anything out of it. We look at the commentators. We take down pious

Thomas Scott, and, as usual he says nothing about it if it be a dark passage. Then we go to holy Matthew Henry, and if it is an easy Scripture, he is sure to explain it; but if it is a text hard to be understood, it is likely enough, of course, left in his own gloom; and even Dr. Gill himself, the most consistent of commentators, when he comes to a hard passage, manifestly avoids it in some degree. But when we have no commentator or minister, we have still the Holy Spirit; and let me tell you a little secret: whenever you cannot understand a text, open your Bible, bend your knee, and pray over that text; and if it does not split into atoms and open itself, try again. If prayer does not explain it, it is one of the things God did not intend you to know, and you may be content to be ignorant of it. Prayer is the key that openeth the cabinets of mystery. Prayer and faith are sacred picklocks that can open secrets, and obtain great treasures. There is no college for holy education like that of the blessed Spirit, for he is an ever-present tutor, to whom we have only to bend the knee, and he is at our side, the great expositor of truth.

But there is one thing about the suitability of this guide which is remarkable. I do not know whether it has struck you - the Holy Spirit can "guide us into a truth." Now, man can guide us to a truth, but it is only the Holy Spirit who can "guide us into a truth." "When he, the Spirit of truth, shall come, he shall guide you into" - mark that word - "all truth." Now, for instance, it is a long while before you can lead some people to election; but when you have made them see its correctness, you have not led them "into" it. You may show them that it is plainly stated in Scripture, but they will turn away and hate it. You take them to another great truth, but they have been brought up in a different fashion, and though they cannot answer your arguments, they say, "The man is right, perhaps," and they whisper - but so low that conscience itself cannot hear - "but it is so contrary to my prejudices, that I cannot receive it." After you have led them to the truth, and they see it is true, how hard it is to lead them into it! There are many of my hearers who are brought to the truth of their depravity, but they are not brought into it, and made to feel it. Some of you are brought to know the truth that God keeps us from day to day; but you rarely get into it, so as to live in continual dependence upon God the Holy Ghost, and draw fresh supplies from him. The thing is - to get inside it. A Christian should do with truth as a snail does with his shell

- live inside it, as well as carry it on his back, and bear it perpetually about with him. The Holy Ghost, it is said, shall lead us into all truth. You may be brought to a chamber where there is an abundance of gold and silver, but you will be no richer unless you effect an entrance. It is the Spirit's work to unbar the two leaved gates, and bring us into a truth, so that we may get inside it, and, as dear old Rowland Hill said, "Not only hold the truth, but have the truth hold us."

IV. Fourthly, here is; METHOD SUGGESTED: "He shall guide you into all truth." Now I must have an illustration. I must compare truth to some cave or grotto that you have heard of, with wondrous stalactites hanging from the roof, and others starting from the floor; a cavern, glittering with spar and abounding in marvels. Before entering the cavern you inquire for a guide, who comes with his lighted flambeau. He conducts you down to a considerable depth, and you find yourself in the midst of the cave. He leads you through different chambers. Here he points to a little stream rushing from amid the rocks, and indicates its rise and progress; there he points to some peculiar rock and tells you its name; then takes you into a large natural hall, tells you how many persons once feasted in it; and so on. Truth is a grand series of caverns, it is our glory to have so great and wise a conductor. Imagine that we are coming to the darkness of it. He is a light shining in the midst of us to guide us; and by the light he shows us wondrous things. In three ways the Holy Ghost teaches us: by suggestion, direction, and illumination.

First, he guides us into all truth by suggesting it. There are thoughts that dwell in our minds that were not born there, but which were exotics brought from heaven and put there by the spirit. It is not a fancy that angels whisper into our ears, and that devils do the same: both good and evil spirits hold converse with men; and some of us have known it. We have had strange thoughts which were not the offspring of our souls, but which came from angelic visitants; and direct temptations and evil insinuations have we had which were not brewed in our own souls, but which came from the pestilential cauldron of hell. So the Spirit doth speak in men's ears, sometimes in the darkness of the night. In ages gone by he spoke in dreams and visions, but now he speaketh by his Word. Have you not at times had unaccountably in the middle of your business a

thought concerning God and heavenly things, and could not tell whence it came? Have you not been reading or studying the Scripture, but a text came across your mind, and you could not help it; though you even put it down it was like cork in water, and would swim up again to the top of your mind. Well, that good thought was put there by the Spirit; he often guides his people into all truth by suggesting, just as the guide in the grotto does with his flambeau. He does not say a word, perhaps, but he walks into a passage himself, and you follow him, so the Spirit suggests a thought, and your heart follows it up. Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. I remember sitting one day in the house of God and hearing a sermon as dry as possible, and as worthless as all such sermons are, when a thought struck my mind - how came I to be converted? I prayed, thought I. Then I thought how came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? Why - I did read them, and what led me to that? And then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of all, and that he was the author of faith; and then the whole doctrine opened up to me, from which I have not departed.

But sometimes he leads us by direction. The guide points and says - "There, gentlemen, go along that particular path, that is the way." So the Spirit gives a direction and tendency to our thoughts; not suggesting a new one but letting a particular thought when it starts take such-and-such a direction; not so much putting a boat on the stream as steering it when it is there. When our thoughts are considering sacred things he leads us into a more excellent channel from that in which we started. Time after time have you commenced a meditation on a certain doctrine and, unaccountably, you were gradually led away into another, and you saw how one doctrine leaned on another, as is the case with the stones in the arch of a bridge, all hanging on the keystone of Jesus Christ crucified. You were brought to see these things not by a new idea suggested, but by direction given to your thoughts.

But perhaps the best way in which the Holy Ghost leads us into all truth is by illumination. He illuminates the Bible. Now, have any of you an

illuminated Bible at home? "No," says one, "I have a morocco Bible; I have a Polyglot Bible; I have a marginal reference Bible." Ah! that is all very well but have you an illuminated Bible? "Yes, I have a large family Bible with pictures in it." There is a picture of John the Baptist baptizing Christ by pouring water on his head and many other nonsensical things; but that is not what I mean: have you an illuminated Bible? "Yes, I have a Bible with splendid engravings in it." Yes; I know you may have; but have you an illuminated Bible? "I don't understand what you mean by an illuminated Bible." Well, it is the Christian man who has an illuminated Bible. He does not buy it illuminated originally, but when he reads it

"A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun  
Which gives a light to every age, -  
It gives, but burrows none."

There is nothing like reading an illuminated Bible, beloved. You may read to all eternity, and never learn anything by it, unless it is illuminated by the Spirit; and then the words shine forth like stars. The book seems made of gold leaf; every single letter glitters like a diamond. Oh, it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Ghost. Hast thou read the Bible and studied it, my brother, and yet have thine eyes been unenlightened? Go and say, "O Lord gild the Bible for me. I want an expounded Bible. Illuminate it; shine upon it; for I cannot read it to profit, unless thou enlightenest me." Blind men may read the Bible with their fingers, but blind souls cannot. We want a light to read the Bible by, there is no reading it in the dark. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, by suggesting ideas, by directing our thoughts, and by illuminating the Scriptures when we read them.

V. The last thing is AN EVIDENCE. The question arises, How may I know whether I am enlightened by the Spirit's influence, and led into all truth?

First, you may know the Spirit's influence by its unity - he guides us into all truth: secondly, by its universality - he guides us into all truth. First, if you are judging a minister, whether he has the Holy Ghost in him or not, you may know him in the first place, by the constant unity of his testimony. A man cannot be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who preaches

yea and nay. The Spirit never says one thing at one time and another thing at another time. There are indeed many good men who say both yea and nay, but still their contrary testimonies are not both from God the Spirit, for God the Spirit cannot witness to black and white, to a falsehood and truth. It has been always held as a first principle, that truth is one thing; but some persons say, "I find one thing in one part of the Bible and another thing in another and though it contradicts itself I must believe it." All quite right, brother, if it did contradict itself; but the fault is not in the wood but in the carpenter. Many carpenters do not understand dovetailing, so there are many preachers who do not understand dovetailing. It is very nice work, and it is not easily learnt, it takes some apprenticeship to make all doctrines square together. Some preachers preach very good Calvinism for half-an-hour, and the next quarter-of-an-hour Arminianism. If they are Calvinists, let them stick to it; if they are Arminians, let them stick to it, let their preaching be all of a piece. Don't let them pile up things only to kick them all down again; let us have one thing woven from the top throughout, and let us not rend it. How did Solomon know the true mother of the child. "Cut it in halves," said he. The woman who was not the mother, did not care so long as the other did not get the whole, and she consented. "Ah," said the true mother, "give her the living child. Let her have it, rather than cut it in halves." So the true child of God would say "I give it up, let my opponent conquer; I do not want to have the truth cut in halves. I would rather be all wrong, than have the word altered to my taste. "We do not want to have a divided Bible. No, we claim the whole living child or none at all. We may rest assured of this, that until we get rid of our linsey-wolsey doctrine, and cease to sow mingled seed, we shall not have a blessing. An enlightened mind cannot believe a gospel which denies itself; it must be one thing or the other. One thing cannot contradict another, and yet it and its opposite be equally true. You may know the Spirit's influence then, by the unity of its testimony.

And you may know it by its universality. The true child of God will not be led into some truth but into all truth. When first he starts he will not know half the truth, he will believe it but not understand it; he will have the germ of it but not the sum total in all its breadth and length. There is nothing like learning by experience. A man cannot set up for a theologian



in a week. Certain doctrines take years to develop themselves. Like the aloe that taketh a hundred years to be dressed, there be some truths that must lie long in the heart before they really come out and make themselves appear so that we can speak of them as that we do know; and testify of that which we have seen. The Spirit will gradually lead us into all truth. For instance if it be true that Jesus Christ is to reign upon the earth personally for a thousand years, as I am inclined to believe it is, if I be under the Spirit, that will be more and more opened to me, until I with confidence declare it. Some men begin very timidly. A man says, at first, "I know we are justified by faith, and have peace with God, but so many have cried out against eternal justification, that I am afraid of it." But he is gradually enlightened, and led to see that in the same hour when all his debts were paid, a full discharge was given; that in the moment when its sin was cancelled, every elect soul was justified in God's mind, though they were not; justified in their own minds till afterwards. The Spirit shall lead you into all truth.

Now, what are the practical inferences from this great doctrine? The first is with reference to the Christian who is afraid of his own ignorance. How many are there who are just enlightened and have tasted of heavenly things, who are afraid they are too ignorant to be saved! Beloved, God the Holy Spirit can teach any one, however illiterate, however uninstructed. I have known some men who were almost idiots before conversion, but they afterwards had their faculties wonderfully developed. Some time ago there was a man who was so ignorant that he could not read, and he never spoke anything like grammar in his life, unless by mistake; and moreover, he was considered to be what the people in his neighborhood called "daft." But when he was converted, the first thing he did was to pray He stammered out a few words, and in a little time his powers of speaking began to develop themselves. Then he thought he would like to read the Scriptures, and after long, long months of labor, he learned to read; and what was the next thing? He thought he could preach; and he did preach a little in his own homely way, in his house. Then he thought "I must read a few more books." And so his mind expanded, until, I believe he is at the present day, a useful minister, settled in a country village, laboring for God. It needs but little intellect to be taught of God. If you feel your ignorance do not despair. Go to the Spirit - the great

Teacher - and ask his sacred influence, and it shall come to pass that he "shall guide you into all truth."

Another inference is this whenever any of our brethren do not understand the truth let us take a hint as to the best way of dealing with them. Do not let us controvert with them. I have heard many controversies, but never heard of any good from one of them. We have had controversies with certain men called Secularists, and very strong arguments have been brought against them; but I believe that the day of judgment shall declare that a very small amount of good was ever done by contending with these men. Better let them alone, where no fuel is the fire goeth out; and he that debateth with them puts wood upon the fire. So with regard to Baptism. It is of no avail to quarrel with our Paedobaptist friends. If we simply pray for them that the God of truth may lead them to see the true doctrine, they will come to it far more easily than by discussions. Few men are taught by controversy, for

"A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still."

Pray for them that the Spirit of truth may lead them "into all truth." Do not be angry with your brother, but pray for him; cry, "Lord! open thou his eyes that he may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Lastly, we speak to some of you who know nothing about the Spirit of truth, nor about the truth itself. It may be that some of you are saying, "We care not much which of you are right, we are happily indifferent to it." Ah! but, poor sinner, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it was that spake the truth, thou wouldst not say, "I care not for it;" if thou didst know how essential the truth is to thy salvation, thou wouldst not talk so; if thou didst know that the truth of God is - that thou art a worthless sinner, but if thou believest, then God from all eternity, apart from all thy merits, loved thee, and bought thee with the Redeemer's blood, and justified thee in the forum of heaven, and will by-and-bye justify thee in the forum of thy conscience through the Holy Ghost by faith; if thou didst know that there is a heaven for thee beyond the chance of a failure, a crown for thee, the lustre of which can never be dimmed; - then thou wouldst say, "Indeed the truth is precious to my soul!" Why, my ungodly hearers, these men of error want to take away the truth, which alone can

save you, the only gospel that can deliver you from hell; they deny the great truths of free-grace, those fundamental doctrines which alone can snatch a sinner from hell; and even though you do not feel interest in them now, I still would say, you ought to desire to see them promoted. May God give you to know the truth in your hearts! May the Spirit "guide you into all truth!" For if you do not know the truth here, recollect there will be a sorrowful learning of it in the dark chambers of the pit, where the only light shall be the flames of hell! May you here know the truth! And the truth shall make you free: and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed, for he says, "I am the way, the truth, the life." Believe on Jesus thou chief of sinners; trust his love and mercy, and thou art saved, for God the Spirit giveth faith and eternal life.

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## **Holy Song From Happy Saints**

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved. - Isaiah 5:1

It was a prophet who wrote this, a prophet inspired of God. An ordinary believer might suffice to sing, but he counts it no stoop for a prophet, and no waste of his important time, to occupy himself with song. There is no engagement under heaven that is more exalting than praising God, and however great may be the work which is committed to the charge of any of us, we shall always do well if we pause awhile to spend a time in sacred praise. I would not wish to prefer one spiritual exercise before another, else I think I would endorse the saying of an old divine who said that a line of praise was better than even a leaf of prayer; that praise was the highest, noblest, best, most satisfying, and most healthful occupation in which a Christian man could be found. If these may be regarded as the words of the Church, the Church of old did well to turn all her thoughts in the direction of praising her God. Though the winning of souls be a great

thing, though the edifying of believers be an important matter, though the reclamation of backsliders calls for earnest attention, yet never, never, never may we cease from praising and magnifying the name of the well-beloved. This is to be our occupation in heaven: let us begin the music here, and make a heaven of the Church, even here below. The words of the text are, "Now will I sing," and that seems to give us a starting word.

## I. THE STRAINS OF THE SOUL'S SONG.

"Now will I sing." Does not that imply that there were times when he who spake these words could not sing? "Now," said he, "will I sing to my well-beloved." There were times, then, when his voice, and his heart, and his circumstances were not in such order that he could praise God. My brethren, a little while ago we could not sing to our well-beloved, for we did not love him, we did not know him, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Perhaps we joined in sacred song, but we mocked the Lord. We stood up with his people, and we uttered the same sounds as they did, but our hearts were far from him. Let us blush for those mock psalms; let us shed many a tear of repentance that we could so insincerely have come before the Lord Most High. After that, we were led to feel our state by nature, and our guilt lay heavy upon us. We could not sing to our well-beloved then. Our music was set to the deep bass and in the minor key. We could only bring forth sighs and groans. Well do I remember when my nights were spent in grief, and my days in bitterness. It as a perpetual prayer, a confession of sin, and a bemoaning of myself, which occupied all my time. I could not sing then, and if any of you are in that condition to night, I know you cannot sing just now. What a mercy you can pray. Bring forth the fruit which is seasonable, and in your case the most seasonable fruit will be a humble acknowledgement of your sin, and an earnest seeking for mercy through Christ Jesus. Attend to that, and by and by you, too, shall sing to your well-beloved a song. Brethren in Christ Jesus, it is now some years ago since we believed in Christ, but since then there have been times when we could not sing. Alas! for us, there was a time when we watched not our steps, but went astray, when the flatterer led us from the strait road that leads to heaven, and brought us into sin; and then the chastisement of God came upon us, our heart was broken, until we cried out in anguish, as David did in the 51st Psalm. Then if we did

sing, we could only bring out penitential odes, but no songs. We laid aside all parts of the book of Psalms that had to do with Hallelujah, and we could only groan forth the notes of repentance. There were no songs for us then, till at last Emmanuel smiled upon us once more, and we were reconciled again, brought back from our wanderings and restored to a sense of the divine favour. Besides that, we have had, occasionally had, to sorrow through the loss of the light of God's countenance. It is not always summer weather with the best of us. Though for the most part:

"We can read our title clear,  
To mansions in the skies,"

yet we have our fasting time when the bridegroom is not with us. Then do we fast. He does not intend that this world should be so much like heaven that we should be willing to stop in it; he, therefore, sometimes passes a cloud before the sun, that we in darkness may cry out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat." Even the means of grace at such times will bring us no comfort. We may go to the throne of mercy in private prayer, but we shall perceive but little light even there. If the Lord withdraw himself, there is no merry-making in the soul, but sadness, darkness, and gloom shall cover all. Then we hang our harps upon the willows, and if any require of us a song we tell them we are in a strange land, and the king hath gone—how can we sing? Our heart is heavy, and our sorrows are multiplied. Once more, we cannot very well sing the praises of our well-beloved when the Church of God is under a cloud. I trust we are such true patriots, such real citizens of the new Jerusalem that, when Christ's kingdom does not advance, our hearts are full of anguish. My brethren, if you happen to be members of a church divided against itself, where the ministry appears to be without power, where there are no additions, no conversions, no spiritual life—then, indeed, you will feel that whatever the state of your own heart, you must sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church of God. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning." This is the view of every true citizen of Zion, and however our own hearts may flourish, and our souls be like a well-watered garden, yet if we see the place of worship neglected, the Lord's house dishonoured, the Church diminished and brought low, the gospel held in contempt, infidelity rampant, superstition

stalking through the land, the old doctrines denied, and the cross of Christ made to be on none effect—then, again, we feel we cannot sing; our hearts are not in tune, our fingers forget the accustomed string, and not then can we sing to our well-beloved a song.

With these exceptions, however, I turn to a very different strain, and say that the whole life of the Christian ought to be describable by the text, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." From the first moment in which sin is pardoned, to the last moment in which we are here on earth, it should be evermore our delight to sing to our well-beloved a song. "How can we do that?" say you. Well, we can do it in three or four ways. There is such a thing as thanks-feeling—feeling thankful, and this ought to be the general, universal spirit of the Christian. Suppose, my dear brother, you are not rich, be thankful that you have to eat and to drink, and wherewithal you may be clothed. Suppose, even, that you had not a hope of heaven, I might say to a man, "Be thankful that you are not in hell." But to you, Christian, I would add, "Be thankful that you never will be there, and that, if just now your present joys do not overflow, yet "there remaineth a rest for the people of God": let that console you. Is there ever a day in the year, or ever a moment in the day, in which the Christian ought not to be grateful? Our answer is not slow to give—there is never such a day, there is never such a moment. Always receiving blessings untold, and incalculably precious, let us always be magnifying the hand that gives them. Always, beloved; as we have been, before the foundations of the world with our names engraved on the Saviour's hands, always redeemed by the precious blood, always preserved by the power of God which dwells in the Mediator, always secure of the heritage which is given to us in covenant by oath, by the blood of Christ—let us always be grateful, and, if not always singing with our lips, let us always be singing with our hearts.

Then, brethren, we ought to be always thanks-living. I think that is a better thing than thanksgiving—thanks-living. How is this to be done? By a general cheerfulness of manner, by an obedience to the command of him by whose mercy we live, by a perpetual, constant, delighting ourselves in the Lord, and submission of our desires to his mind. Oh! I wish that our whole life might be a psalm; that every day might be a

stanza of a mighty poem; that so from the day of our spiritual birth until we enter heaven we might be pouring forth sacred minstrelsy in every thought, and word, and action of our lives. Let us give him thankfulness and thanks-living.

But then let us add thanks-speaking with the tongue. We don't sing enough, my brethren. How often do I stir you up about the matter of prayer, but perhaps I might be just as earnest about the matter of praise. Do we sing as much as the birds do? Yet what have birds to sing about, compared with us? Think you, do we sing as much as the angels do? yet were they never redeemed by the blood of Christ. Birds of the air, shall ye excel me? Angels of heaven, shall ye exceed me? Ye have done so, but I do intend to emulate you henceforth, and day by day, and night by night, pour forth my soul in sacred song.

We may sometimes thank God not only by feeling thankfulness and living thankfulness, and speaking our thanks, but by that silent blessing of him which consists in patient suffering and accepting the evil as well as the good from Jehovah's hand. That is often better thanksgiving than the noblest psalm that the tongue could utter. To bow down before him and say, "Not my will, but thine be done," is to render him a homage equal to the Hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. To feel not only resigned, but acquiescent, willing to be anything or nothing, according as the Lord would have it—this is in truth to sing to our well-beloved a song.

Now having put this before you, that there are some times when we cannot sing, but that, as a rule, our life should be praise, let me come to the text again by saying that sometimes on choice occasions appointed by providence and grace our soul will be compelled to say, "Now, now if never before, now beyond all other occasions, I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I only hope that some—that all Christians here—will feel that tonight is one of those occasions. And as you sit here in presence of this table, upon which will soon appear the emblems of your Saviour's passion, I trust you will be saying, "Now tonight I feel I must sing to my well-beloved a song, for if ever I loved him, I love him tonight." Let us ponder now:—

II. SOME OF THE OCCASIONS IN WHICH WE MUST SING TO HIS

NAME.

The first is when our soul first perceives the infinite love of Jesus to us, when we receive the pardon of sin, when we enter into the marriage relationship with Christ as our bridegroom and our Lord. The song becomes the wedding feast. How should it be a marriage without joyfulness? Oh! do you remember, even years ago, do you not remember now that day when first you looked to him and were lightened, and when your soul clasped his hands, and you and he were one? Other days I have forgotten, but that day never can I forget. Other days have mingled with their fellows, and, like coins which have been in circulation, the image and superscription have departed from them. That day when first I saw the Saviour is as fresh and distinct in all its outlines as though it were but yesterday coined in the mint of time. How can I forget it—that first moment when Jesus told me I was his, and my beloved was mine? Were any of you saved last week? Did any of you find Jesus Christ at any of the meetings last week? Have you found him this morning? Did a blessing come to you this afternoon? Then hallow the occasion, pour out your soul before the Most High. Now, if never before, let your well-beloved have your choicest music. "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will wake right early. I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is taken away and thou comfortest me." Other occasions, however, come after our first day, for with Christ it is not all joy the first few weeks. No, blessed be his name! Sometimes, however, we have our high days and holidays, when the King entertains us at a feast. It is often so with my soul at this table. Coming to the Communion supper every Lord's day, I don't find it grow stale and flat with me. On the contrary, I think every time I come I love better than I did before to commemorate my Lord's sufferings in the breaking of bread; and usually when we do come round the table, we, who know what it means, feel, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." 'Twas well that after supper they sang a hymn. We want some such expression for the sacred joy that rises in our soul at this feast. But not only when the emblems are before us, but when you hear a sermon that feeds your soul; when you read a chapter, and the promises are very precious; when you are in private prayer, and are able to get very near to Jesus, I know your hearts then say, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song. He has visited me, and I



will praise him; he has made my soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, and where shall my strength and rapture be spent but at his dear feet, adoring and magnifying his ever blessed name?" Oh! I wish we often had broken through order and decorum, to give to our Lord a song. He well deserves it. Let not cold ingratitude freeze our praises on our lips.

We ought to praise our Lord Jesus Christ, and sing to our well-beloved a song, particularly when we have had a remarkable deliverance. "Thou shalt compass me about," says David, "with songs of deliverance." Were you raised from a bed of sickness? Have you passed through a great pecuniary difficulty? Through God's help has your character been cleared from slander? Have you been helped in some enterprise, and prospered in the world? Have you seen a child restored from sickness, or a beloved wife once more given back to you from the gates of the grave? Have you just experienced the light of Christ's countenance in your own soul? Has a snare been broken? Has a temptation been removed? Are you in a joyous frame of mind? "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Oh! give your well-beloved a song now the sun shines and the flowers bloom. When the year begins to turn and fair weather comes, the birds seem to feel it, and they renew their music. Do so, oh! believer. When the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, fill the earth with your songs of gratitude. But remember, O believer, that you should sing your well-beloved a song chiefly when it is not so with you, when sorrows befall. He giveth songs in the night. Perhaps there is no music so sweet as that which comes from the lip and heart of a tried believer. It is real then. When Job blessed God on the dunghill, even the devil himself could not insinuate that Job was a hypocrite. When Job prospered, then the devil said, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" but when he lost his all, and yet said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," then the good man shone like a star when the clouds are gone. Oh! let us be sure to praise God when things go ill with us. Make certain that you sing then. A holy man, walking one night with a companion, listened to the nightingale, and he said, "Brother, that bird in the darkness is praising her Maker. Sing, I pray you, and let your Lord have a song in the night." But the other replied, "My voice is hoarse and little used to sing." "Then," said the other, "I will sing." And he sang, and the bird seemed to hear him, and to sing louder still, and he sang on, and other birds joined and the night seemed sweet with song. But by and by

the good man says, "My voice fails me, but this bird's throat holds out longer than mine. Would God," said he, "I could even fly away where I could sing on for ever and for ever." Oh! it is blessed when we can praise God when the sun is gone down, when darkness lowers and trials multiply. Then let us say, "I will sing to my well-beloved a song." I will tell you exactly what I mean by that. One of you has just passed through a very terrible trouble, and you are almost broken-hearted, and you are inclined to say, "I will ask the prayers of the Church that I may be sustained." It is quite right, my dear brother, to do that, but suppose you could be a little stronger and say, 'Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song! Oh! it will be grand work: it will glorify God: it will strengthen you. Yes, the dear child is dead: I cannot bring him back again; but the Lord has done it, and he must do right. I will give him a song, even now.'" "Yes, the property has gone, and I shall be brought from wealth to poverty; but now, instead of fretfulness, I will give to my well-beloved extra music from my heart. He shall be praised by me now. Though he slay me, yet will I praise him." This is the part of a Christian. God help us ever to act it.

Beloved friends, we may well sing to our beloved a song when it shall be near the time of our departure. It draweth nigh, and as it draweth nigh we must not dread it, but rather thank God for it. The swan is said to sing her dying song—a myth, I doubt not; but the Christian is God's swan, and he sings sweetest at the last. Like the old Simeon, he becomes a poet at the last, and pours out his soul before God, and I would we each desired, if we are spared to old age, to let our last days be perfumed with thanksgiving, and to bless and magnify the Lord, while yet we linger where mortal ears may hear the strain. Break, O fetters, and divide, ye clouds; be rolled up, O veil that hides the place of mystery from the world. Let our spirits pass into eternity singing. What a song to our well-beloved will we pour out from amidst ten thousand times ten thousand choristers. We will take our part—every note for him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in his own blood; each note undefiled with sin; each note undistracted and undivided by worldly thoughts; each note full of perfection and acceptable to him to whom it shall be presented. O long-expected day, begin! Our hearts are ready to cry out, "Open, ye two-leaved gates, and let my spirit pass through, that I may give to my well-

beloved a song."

Now I just linger here a minute to put it all round to every Christian here. Brother, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Sister, haven't you a song for the well-beloved? Aged friend, will you not give him a note? Young brother full of vigour, haven't you a verse full of praise for him? Oh! if we might all come to the Communion table in the spirit of praise! Perhaps some can dance before the ark like David. Others, perhaps, are, like Ready-to-halt, on their crutches, but even he laid them down, according to John Bunyan, once upon a time when he heard the sweet music of praise. Let us bless the name of the Lord. The day has passed and been full of mercy, and eventide has come, and as the sun goeth down let us magnify him whose mercy lasteth to us through the night and will come again upon us in the morning, and will be with us till nights and days shall no more change the scene. Lift up your hearts, my brethren; let every one of you lift up your hands unto the name of the Most High, and magnify him that liveth for ever. "Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness—for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Now I have just a few observations to make about:—

### III. THE QUALITY OF THE SONG.

I will suppose that every Christian here singing has found that he has got one of the Lord's songs to sing about. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song." Dear brother, the Lord's music has one thing about it—that it is always new. How very frequently we find in the New Testament that saints and angels sing "a new song." Very different from the songs we used to sing; very different from the songs the world still delights in—ours is heart-music, soul-music. Ours is real joy—no fiction—no mere crackling of thorns under a pot. Solid joys and last pleasures make up the new song of the Christian. New mercies make the song always new. There is a freshness in it of which we never weary. Some of you have heard the gospel now for fifty years: has it got flat to you? The name of Jesus Christ was known to you as the most precious of all sounds fifty or sixty years ago: has it become stale now? Those of us who have known and loved him twenty years can only say, "The more we know him the more sweet he is, and the more we enjoy his gospel the more resolved we are to keep to the old-fashioned gospel as long as ever we live." We could, indeed, sing a

new song, though we have sung the self-same praises these twenty years. All the saints' praises have this about them—that they are all harmonious. I do not say that their voices are. Here and there, there is a brother who sings very earnestly through his nose, and very often puts out the rest that are round about him; but it does not matter about the sound of the voice to the ear of man: it is the sound of the heart to the ear of God. If you were in a forest, and there were fifty sorts of birds, and they were all singing at once, you would not notice any discord. The little songsters seem to pitch their songs in keys very different from each other, but yet, somehow or other, all are in harmony. Now the saints, when they pray—it is very strange—they all pray in harmony. So when they praise God. I have frequently attended prayer-meetings where there were brethren of all sorts of Christian denominations, and I would have defied the angel Gabriel to have told what they were when they were on their knees. So is it with praise. I may say, "The saints in praise appear as one:—

"In word, and deed, and mind,  
While with the Father and the Son,  
Sweet fellowship they find."

Though our words be broken and our notes fall short of melody, yet if our hearts are right, our words are acceptable, and our music is harmony in the ears of the Most High. Beloved, be it noticed about the saints' music that it always seems very poor to them. They feel that they must break out. There are some of David's Psalms in which in the Hebrew the words are very much disconnected and broken, as though the poet had strained himself beyond the power of language; and how constantly do you find him calling upon others to help him praise God—not only to other saints, but as if he felt there were not enough of saints, he calls on all creatures that have breath to praise God. How frequently do you find holy men invoking the dwellers above the skies, and earth, and air, and sea, to help them lift high the praise of God, and, as if they were not content with all animated beings, you will hear them bidding the trees of the wood break out and clap their hands, while they invite the sea to roar and the fullness thereof to magnify the Most High. Devout minds feel as though the whole creation were like a great organ with ten thousand times ten thousand pipes, and we little men, who have God within us, come and put our little

hands to the keys and make the whole universe echo with thunders of praise to the Most High, for man is the world's priest, and the man that is blood-washed makes the whole earth his tabernacle and his temple, and in that temple doth every one speak of God's glory. He lights up the stars like lamps to burn before the throne of the Most High, and bids all creatures here below become servants in the temple of the infinite majesty. Oh! brethren, may God give us to feel in this state of mind tonight, and though we should think our praises are like to break down, and feel how mean they are, compared with the majesty of Jehovah and his boundless love, yet shall we have praised him acceptably.

I would be very earnest in the next minute or two to stir up my brethren here to sing to their well-beloved a song, because I am quite sure the exercise will be most fitting and most beneficial. I will speak only for myself, but I will say this—if I did not praise and bless Christ my Lord, I should deserve to have my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth, and I will add—if I did not bless and magnify his name, I should deserve that every stone I tread on in the streets should rise up to curse my ingratitude, for I am a drowned debtor to the mercy of God—over head and ears—to infinite love and boundless compassion am I a debtor. Are you not the same? Then I charge you by the love of Christ, awake, awake your hearts now to magnify his glorious name. It will do you much good, my brethren. There is, perhaps, no exercise that, on the whole, strengthens us to much as praising God. Sometimes, even when prayer fails, praise will do it. It seems to gird up the loins; it pours a holy anointing oil upon the head and upon the spirit; it gives us a joy of the Lord which is always our strength. Sometimes, if you begin to sing in a dull frame, you can sing yourself up the ladder. Singing will often make the heart rise. The song, though at first it be a drag, will by and by come to be wings to lift the spirit with it. Oh! sing more, my brethren, and you will sing more still, for the more you sing the more you will be able to sing the praises of God. It will glorify God; it will comfort yourself; it will also prove an attraction to those who are lingering around the churches. The melancholy of some Christians tends to repel seekers, but the holy joy of others tends to attract them. More flies will always be caught with honey than with vinegar, and more souls will be brought to Christ by your cheerfulness than by your moroseness, more by your consecrated joy

than by your selfish dolour. God grant us to sing the praises of God with heart and life until we sing them in heaven, and I doubt not that, as a church, we should thus become more useful, and more would be led to cast in their lot with us, for they would perceive that God blessed us. If God should make you feel that you must praise him tonight, the purpose that I desire to fulfil will have been accomplished. Oh! I wish I could bid you all say, "I will sing to my beloved a song!" But there are some of you who don't love him, and cannot, therefore, sing to him. In Exeter Hall, some years ago, at one of our services, I gave out the hymn:—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly."

There was one present who was a total stranger to the gospel, but that touching expression, "Jesus, lover of my soul," touched his heart, and he said, "Is Jesus the lover of my soul? Then I will love him too," and he gave his heart to Jesus and cast in his lot with his people. I would that some here would say the same. Then shall they also sing to their beloved a song; but now their fittest duty will be prayer and penitent trust. God help them to seek and find the Saviour—even Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

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## **The Holy Spirit And The One Church**

These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. -  
Jude 1:19

When a farmer comes to thrash out his wheat, and get it ready for the market there are two things that he desires—that there may be plenty of it, of the right sort, and that when he takes it to market, he may be able to carry a clean sample there. He does not look upon the quantity alone; for what is the chaff to the wheat? He would rather have a little clean than he

would have a great heap containing a vast quantity of chaff, but less of the precious corn. On the other hand, he would not so winnow his wheat as to drive away any of the good grain, and so make the quantity less than it need to be. He wants to have as much as possible—to have as little loss as possible in the winnowing, and yet to have it as well winnowed as may be. Now, that is what I desire for Christ's Church, and what every Christian will desire. We wish Christ's church to be as large as possible. God forbid that by any of our winnowing, we should ever cast away one of the precious sons of Zion. When we rebuke sharply, we would be anxious lest the rebuke should fall where it is not needed, and should bruise and hurt the feelings of any who God hath chosen. But on the other hand, we have no wish to see the church multiplied at the expense of its purity. We do not wish to have a charity so large that it takes in chaff as well as wheat: we wish to be just charitable enough to use the fan thoroughly to purge God's floor, but yet charitable enough to pick up the most shrivelled ear of wheat, to preserve it for the Master's sake, who is the husbandman. I trust, in preaching this morning, God may help me so to discern between the precious and the vile that I may say nothing uncharitable, which would cut off any of God's people from being part of his true and living and visible church; and yet at the same time I pray that I may not speak so loosely, and so without God's direction, as to embrace any in the arms of Christian affection whom the Lord hath not received in the eternal covenant of his love.

Our text suggests to us three things: first, an inquiry—Have we the Spirit? secondly, a caution—if we have not the spirit we are sensual; thirdly, a suspicion—there are many persons that separate themselves. Our suspicion concerning them is, that notwithstanding their extra-superfine profession, they are sensual, not having the Spirit; for our text says, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

I. First, then, our text suggests AN INQUIRY—Have we the Spirit? This is an inquiry so important, that the philosopher may well suspend all his investigations to find an answer to this question on his own personal account. All the great debates of politics, all the most engrossing subjects of human discussion, may well stop to-day, and give us pause to ask ourselves the solemn question—"Have I the Spirit?" For this question

does not deal with any externals of religion, but it deals with religion in its most vital point. He that hath the Spirit, although he be wrong in fifty things, being right in this, is saved; he that hath not the Spirit, be he never so orthodox, be his creed as correct as Scripture-ay and in his morals outwardly as pure as the law, is still unsaved; he is destitute of the essential part of salvation—the Spirit of God dwelling in him.

To help us to answer this question, I shall try to set forth the effects of the Spirit in our hearts under sundry Scriptural metaphors. Have I the Spirit? I reply, And what is the operation of the, Spirit? How am I to discern it? Now the Spirit operates in divers ways, all of them mysterious, and supernatural, all of them bearing the real marks of his own power, and having certain signs following whereby they may be discovered and recognised.

1. The first work of the Spirit in the heart is a work during which the Spirit is compared to the wind. You remember that when our Saviour spoke to Nicodemus he represented the first work of the Spirit in the heart as being like the wind, "which bloweth where it listeth;" "even so;" saith he, "is every one that is born of the Spirit." Now you know that the wind is a most mysterious thing; and although there be certain definitions of it which pretend to be explanations of the phenomenon, yet they certainly leave the great question of how the wind blows, and what is the cause of its blowing in a certain direction, where it was before. Breath within us, wind without us, all motions of air, are to us mysterious. And the renewing work of the Spirit in the heart is exceedingly mysterious. It is possible that at this moment the Spirit of God may be breathing into some of the thousand hearts before me; yet it would be blasphemous if any one should ask, "Which way went the Spirit from God to such a heart? How entered it there?" And it would be foolish for a person who is under the operation of the Spirit to ask how it operates: thou knowest not where is the storehouse of the thunder; thou knowest not where the clouds are balanced; neither canst thou know how the Spirit goeth forth from the Most High and enters into the heart of man. It may be, that during a sermon two men are listening to the same truth; one of them hears as attentively as the other and remembers as much of it; the other is melted to tears or moved with solemn thoughts; but the one though



equally attentive, sees nothing in the sermon, except, maybe, certain important truths well set forth; as for the other, his heart is broken within him and his soul is melted. Ask me how it is that the same truth has an effect upon the one, and not upon his fellow: I reply, because the mysterious Spirit of the living God goes with the truth to one heart and not to the other. The one only feels the force of truth, and that may be strong enough to make him tremble, like Felix; but the other feels the Spirit going with the truth, and that renews the man, regenerates him, and causes him to pass into that gracious condition which is called the state of salvation. This change takes place instantaneously. It is as miraculous a change as any miracle of which we read in Scripture. It is supremely supernatural. It may be mimicked, but no imitation of it can be true and real. Men may pretend to be regenerated without the Spirit, but regenerated they cannot be. It is a change so marvellous that the highest attempts of man can never reach it. We may reason as long as we please, but we cannot reason ourselves into regeneration; we may meditate till our hairs are grey with study; but we cannot meditate ourselves into the new birth. That is worked in us by the sovereign will of God alone.

"The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,  
Blows on the sons of flesh,  
Inspires us with a heavenly mind,  
And forms the man afresh."

But ask the man how: he cannot tell you. Ask him when: he may recognize the time, but as to the manner thereof he knoweth no more of it than you do. It is to him a mystery.

You remember the story of the valley of vision. Ezekiel saw dry bones lying scattered here and there in the valley. The command came to Ezekiel, "Say to these dry bones, live." He said, "Live," and the bones came together, "bone to his bone, and flesh came upon them;" but as yet they did not live. "Prophecy, son of man; say to the wind, breathe upon these slain, that they may live." They looked just like life: there was flesh and blood there; there were the eyes and hands and feet; but when Ezekiel had spoken there was a mysterious something given which men

call life, and it was given in a mysterious way, like the blowing of the wind. It is even so to-day. Unconverted and ungodly persons may be very, moral and excellent; they are like the dry bones, when they are put together and clothed with flesh and blood. But to make them live spiritually it needs the divine afflatus from the breath of the Almighty, the divine pneuma, the divine Spirit, the divine wind should blow on them, and then they would live. Say, my hearer, hast thou ever had any supernatural influence on thine Heart? For if not I may seem to be harsh with thee, but I am faithful: if thou hast never had more than nature in thy heart, thou art "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Nay, sir, sneer not at that utterance; it is as true as this Bible, for tis from this Bible it was taken, and for proof thereof hear thou me. "except a man be born again (from above) of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What sayest thou to that? It is in vain for thee to talk of making thyself to be born again; thou canst not be born again except by the Spirit, and thou must perish, unless thou art. You see, then, the first effect of the Spirit, and by that you may answer the question.

2. In the next place, the Spirit in the word of God is often compared to fire. After the Spirit, like the wind, has made the dead sinner live, then comes the Spirit like fire. Now, fire has a searching and tormenting power. It is purifying, but it purifies by a terrible process. Now, after the Holy Spirit has given us the life of Christianity, there immediately begins a burning in our heart: the Lord searches and tries our reins, and lights a candle within our spirits which discovers the wickedness of our nature, and the loathsomeness of our iniquities. Say, my hearer, dost thou know anything about that fire in thine heart? For if not, thou hast not yet received the Spirit. To explain what I mean, let me just tell a piece of my own experience, by way of illustrating the fiery effects of the Spirit. I lived careless and thoughtless; I could indulge in sin as well as others, and did do so. Sometimes my conscience pricked me, but not enough to make me cease from vice. I could indulge in transgression, and I could love it: not so much as others loved it—mine early training would not let me do that—but still enough to prove that my heart was debased and corrupt. Once on a time something more than conscience pricked me: I knew not then what it was. I was like Samuel, when the Lord called him; I heard the voice, but I knew not whence it came. A stirring began in my heart, and I

began to feel that in the sight of God I was a lost, ruined, and condemned sinner. That conviction I could not shake off. Do what I might it followed me. If I sought to amuse my mind and take it off from serious thoughts it was of no use; I was obliged still to carry about with me a heavy burden on my back. I went to my bed, and there I dreamed about hell, and about "the wrath to come." I woke up, and this dreary nightmare, this incubus, still brooded on me. What could I do? I renounced first one vicious habit, then another: it mattered not; all this was like pulling one firebrand from a flame, that fed itself with blazing forests. Do what I might, my conscience found no rest. Up to the house of God I went to hear the gospel: there was no gospel for me; the fire burned but the more fiercely, and the very breath of the gospel seemed to fan the flame. Away I went to my chamber and my closet to pray: the heavens were like brass, and the windows of the sky were barred against me. No answer could I get; the fire burned more vehemently. Then I thought, "I would not live always; would God I had never been born!" But I dared not die, for there was hell when I was dead; and I dared not live, for life had become intolerable. Still the fire blazed right vehemently; till at last I came to this resolve: "If there be salvation in Christ, I will have it. I have nothing of my own to trust to; I do this hour, O God, renounce my sin, and renounce my own righteousness too." And the fire blazed again, and burned up all my good works, ay, and my sins with them. And then I saw that all this burning was to bring me to Christ. And oh! the joy and gladness of my heart, when Jesus came and sprinkled water on the flame, and said, "I have bought thee with my blood; put thy trust in me; I will do for thee what thou canst not do for thyself; I will take thy sins away; I will clothe thee with a spotless robe of righteousness; I will guide thee all thy journey through, and land thee at last in heaven." Say, my dear hearer, Dost know anything about the Spirit of burning? For if not, again I say, I am not harsh, I am but true; if thou hast never felt this, thou knowest not the Spirit.

3. To proceed a little further. When the Spirit has thus quickened the soul and convinced it of sin, then he comes under another metaphor. He comes under the metaphor of oil. The Holy Spirit is very frequently in Scripture compared to oil. "Thou anointest mine head with oil; my cup runneth over." Ah! brethren, though the beginning of the Spirit is by fire, it does not end there. We may be first of all convinced and brought to

Christ by misery; but when we get to Christ there is no misery in him, and our sorrow results from not getting close enough to him. The Holy Spirit comes, like the good Samaritan, and pours in the oil and the wine. And oh! what oil it is with which he anoints our head, and with which he heals our wounds! How soft the liniments which he binds round our bruises! How blessed the eye-salve with which he anoints our eyes! How heavenly the ointment with which he binds up our sores, and wounds, and bruises, and makes us whole, and sets our feet upon a rock, and establishes our goings! The Spirit, after he has convinced, begins to comfort; and ye that have felt the comforting power of the Holy Spirit, will bear me witness there is no comforter like him that is the Paraclete. Oh! bring hither the music, the voice of song, and the sound of harps; they are both as vinegar upon nitre to him that hath a heavy heart. Bring me here the enchantments of the magic world, and all the enjoyments of its pleasures; they do but torment the soul and prick it with many thorns. But oh! Spirit of the living God, when thou dost blow upon the heart, there is not a wave of that tempestuous sea which does not sleep for ever when thou biddest it be still; there is not one single breath of the proud hurricane and tempest which doth not cease to howl and which doth not lie still, when thou sayest to it, "Peace be unto thee; thy sins are forgiven thee." Say, do you know the Spirit under the figure of oil? Have you felt him at work in your spirits, comforting you, anointing your head, making you glad, and causing you to rejoice?

There are many people that never felt this. They hope they are religious; but their religion never makes them happy. There are scores of professors who have just enough religion to make them miserable. Let them be afraid that they have any religion at all; for religion makes people happy; when it has its full sway with man it makes him glad. It may begin in agony, but it does not end there. Say, hast thou ever had thine heart leaping for joy? Hath thy lip ever warbled songs of ecstatic praise? Doth thine eye ever flash the fire of joy? If these things be not so, I fear lest thou art still without God, and without Christ; for where the Spirit comes, his fruits are, joy in the Spirit, and peace, and love, and confidence, and assurance for ever.

4. Bear with me once more. I have to show you one more figure of the

Spirit, and by that also you will be able to ascertain whether you are under his operation. When the Spirit has acted as wind, as fire, and as oil, he then acts like water. We are told that we are "born again of water and of the Spirit." Now I do not think you foolish enough to need that I should say that no water, either of immersion or of sprinkling, can in the least degree operate in the salvation of a soul. There may be some few poor creatures, whose heads were put on their shoulders the wrong way, who still believe that a few drops of water from a priest's hands can regenerate souls. There may be such a few, but I hope the race will soon die out. We trust that the day will come when all those gentry will have no "other Gospel" to preach in our churches, but will have clean gone over to Rome, and when that terrible plague-spot upon the Protestant Church, called Puseyism, will have been cut out like a cancer, and torn out by its very roots. The sooner we get rid of that the better; and whenever we hear of any of them going over to Rome, let them go—I wish we could as easily get rid of the devil, they may go together—we do not want either of them in the Protestant Church, anyhow. But the Holy Spirit when he comes in the heart comes like water. That is to say, he comes to purify the soul. He that is to-day as foul a liver as he was before his pretended conversion is a hypocrite and a liar; he that this day loveth sin and liveth in it just as he was wont to do, let him know that the truth is not in him, but he hath received the strong delusion to believe a lie: God's people are a holy people; God's Spirit works by love, and purifies the soul. Once let it get into our hearts, and it will have no rest till it has turned every sin out. God's Holy Spirit and man's sin cannot live together peaceably; they may both be in the same heart, but they cannot both reign there, nor can they both be quiet there; for "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" they cannot rest, but there will be a perpetual warring in the soul, so that the Christian will have to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in due time the Spirit will drive out all sin, and will present us blameless before the throne of his Majesty with exceeding great joy.

Now, my hearer, answer thou this question for thyself, and not for another man. Hast thou received this Spirit? Answer me, anyhow; if it be with a scoff, answer me; if thou sneerest and sayest, "I know nothing of your enthusiastic rant," be it so, sir; say, nay, then. It may be thou carest

not to reply at all. I beseech thee do not put away my entreaty. Yes or no. Hast thou received the Spirit? "Sir no man can find fault with my character; I believe I shall enter heaven through my own virtues." It is not the question, sir. Hast thou received the Spirit? All that thou sayest thou mayest have done; but if thou hast left the other undone, and hast not received the Spirit, it will go ill with thee at last. Hast thou had a supernatural operation upon thine own heart? Hast thou been made a new man in Christ Jesus! For if not, depend on it, as God's Word is true, thou art out of Christ, and dying as thou art thou wilt be shut out of heaven, be thou who thou mayest and what thou mayest.

II. Thus, I have tried to help you to answer the first question—the inquiry, Have we received the Spirit? And this brings me to the CAUTION. He that has not received the Spirit is said to be sensual. Oh, what a gulf there is between the least Christian and the greatest moralist! What a wide distinction there is between the greatest professor destitute of grace, and the least of God's believers who has grace in his heart. As great a difference as there is between light and darkness between death and life, between heaven and hell, is there between a saint and a sinner; for mark, my text says, in no very polite phrase, that if we have not the Spirit we are sensual. "Sensual!" says one; "well, I am not converted man—I don't pretend to be; but I am not sensual." Well, friend, and it is very likely that you are not—not in the common acceptance of the term sensual; but understand that this word, in the Greek, really means what an English word like this would mean, if we had such a one—soulish. We have not such a word—we want such a one. There is a great distinction between mere animals and men, because man hath a soul, and the mere animal hath none. There is another distinction between mere men and a converted man. The converted man hath the Spirit—the unconverted man hath none; he is a soulish man—not a spiritual man; he has got no further than mere nature and has no inheritance in the spiritual kingdom of grace. Strange it is that soulish and sensual should after all mean the same! Friend, thou hast not the Spirit. Then thou art nothing better—be thou what thou art, or whatsoever thou mayest be—than the fall of Adam left thee. That is to say, thou art a fallen creature, having only capacities to live here in sin, and to live for ever in torment; but thou hast not the capacity to live in heaven at all, for thou hast no Spirit; and therefore thou

art unable to know or enjoy spiritual things. And mark you, a man may be in this state, and be a sensual man, and yet he may have all the virtues that could grace a Christian; but with all these, if he has not the Spirit, he has got not an inch further than where Adam's fall left him—that is, condemned and under the curse. Ay, and he may attend to religion with all his might—he may take the sacrament, and be baptized, and may be the most devout professor; but if he hath not the Spirit he hath not started a solitary inch from where he was, for he is still in "the bonds of iniquity," a lost soul. Nay, further, he may pick up religious phrases till he may talk very fast about religion; he may read biographies till he seems to be a deep taught child of God; he may be able to write an article upon the deep experience of a believer; but if this experience be not his own, if he hath not received it by the Spirit of the living God, he is still nothing more than a carnal man, and heaven is to him a place to which there is no entrance. Nay, further, he might go so far as to become a minister of the gospel, and a successful minister too, and God may bless the word that he preaches to the salvation of sinners, but unless he has received the Spirit, be he as eloquent as Apollos, and as earnest as Paul, he is nothing more than a mere soulish man, without capacity for spiritual things.

Nay, to crown all, he might even have the power of working miracles, as Judas had—he might even be received into the church as a believer, as was Simon Magus, and after all that, though he had cast out devils, though he had healed the sick, though he had worked miracles, he might have the gates of heaven shut in his teeth, if he had not received the Spirit. For this is the essential thing, without which all others are in vain—the reception of the Spirit of the living God. It is a searching truth, is it not, my friends? Do not run away from it. If I am preaching to you falsehood, reject it; but if this be a truth which I can substantiate by Scripture, I beseech you, rest not till you have answered this question: Hast thou the Spirit, living, dwelling, working in thy heart?

III. This brings me, in the third place, to THE SUSPICION. How singular that "separation" should be the opposite of having the Spirit. Hark! I hear a gentle man saying, "Oh! I like to hear you preach smartly and sharply; I am persuaded, sir, there are a great many people in the church that ought not to be there; and so I, because there is such a corrupt mixture in the

church, have determined not to join anywhere at all. I do not think that the Church of Christ now a days is at all clean and pure enough to allow of my joining with it. At least, sir, I did join a church once, but I made such a deal of noise in it they were very glad when I went away. And now I am just like David's men; I am one that is in debt and discontented, and I go round to hear all new preachers that arise. I have heard you now these three months; I mean to go and hear some one else in a very little time if you do not say something to flatter me. But I am quite sure I am one of God's special elect. I don't join any church because a church is not good enough for me; I don't become a member of any denomination, because they are all wrong, every one of them." Hark ye brother, I have something to tell you, that will not please you. "These be they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." I hope you enjoy the text: it certainly belongs to you, above every man in the world. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." When I read this over I thought to myself, there be some who say, "Well, you are a dissenter, how do you make this agreeable with the text, 'These be they who separate themselves;' " you are separated from the Church of England. Ah, my friends, that a man may be, and be all the better for it; but the separation here intended is separation from the one universal Church of Christ. The Church of England was not known in Jude's day: so the apostle did not allude to that. "These be they who separate themselves,"—that is from the Church of Christ; from the great universal body of the elect. Moreover, let us just say one thing. We did not separate ourselves—we were turned out. Dissenters did not separate themselves from the Church of England, from the Episcopal church; but when the Act of Uniformity was passed, they were turned out of their pulpits. Our forefathers were as sound Churchmen as any in the world, but they could not take in all the errors of the Prayer Book, and they were therefore hounded to their graves by the intolerance of the conforming professors. So they did not separate themselves. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves. There is not a Christian beneath the scope of God's heaven from whom I am separated. At the Lord's table I always invite all Churches to come and sit down and commune with us. If any man were to tell me that I am separate from the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist, I would tell him he did not know me, for I love them with a pure heart fervently, and I am not separate from them. I may hold



different views from them, and in that point truly I may be said to be separate; but I am not separate in heart, I will work with them—I will work with them heartily; nay, though my Church of England brother sends me in, as he has done, a summons to pay a churchrate that I cannot in conscience pay, I will love him still; and if he takes chairs and tables it matters not—I will love him for all that; and if there be a ragged-school or anything else for which I can work with him to promote the glory of God, therein will I unite with him with all my heart. I think this bears rather hard on our friends—the Strict Communion Baptists. I should not like to say anything hard against them, for they are about the best people in the world, but they really do separate themselves from the great body of Christ's people. The Spirit of the living God will not let them do this really, but they do it professedly. They separate themselves from the great Universal Church. They say they will not commune with it; and if any one comes to their table who has not been baptized, they turn him away. They "separate," certainly. I do not believe it is willful schism that makes them thus act; but at the same time I think the old man within has some hand in it.

Oh, how my heart loves the doctrine of the one church. The nearer I get to my Master in prayer and communion, the closer am I knit to all his disciples. The more I see of my own errors and failings, the more ready am I to deal gently with them that I believe to be erring. The pulse of Christ's body is communion; and woe to the church that seeks to cure the ills of Christ's body by stopping its pulse. I think it sin to refuse to commune with anyone who is a member of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire this morning to preach the unity of Christ's church. I have sought to use the fan to blow away the chaff. I have said no man belongs to Christ's church unless he has the Spirit; but, if he hath the Spirit, woe be to the man that separates himself from him. Oh! I should think myself grossly in fault if at the foot of these stairs I should meet a truly converted child of God, who called himself a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan. or a Churchman, or an Independent, and I should say, "No, sir, you do not agree with me on certain points; I believe you are a child of God, but I will have nothing to do with you." I should then think that this text would bear very hard on me. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." But would we do so, beloved? No, we would give

them both our hands, and say, God speed to you in your journey to heaven; so long as you have got the Spirit we are one family, and we will not be separate from one another. God grant the day may come when every wall of separation shall be beaten down! See how to this day we are separate. There! you will find a Baptist who could not say a good word to a Poedo-Baptist if you were to give him a world. You find to this day Episcopalians who hate that ugly word, "Dissent;" and it is enough for them that a Dissenter has done a thing; they will not do it then, be it never so good.

Ah! and furthermore, there are some to be found in the Church of England that will not only hate dissent, but hate one another into the bargain. Men are to be found that cannot let brother ministers of their own church preach in their parish. What an anachronism such men are! They would seem to have been sent into the world in our time purely by mistake. Their proper era would have been the time of the dark ages. If they had lived then, what fine Bonners they would have made! What splendid fellows they would have been to have helped to poke the fire in Smithfield! But they are quite out of date in these times, and I look upon such a curious clergyman in the same way that I do upon a Dodo—as an extraordinary animal whose race is almost, if not quite extinct. Well, you may look, and look and wonder. The animal will be extinct soon. It will not be long, I trust, before not only the Church of England shall love itself, but when all who love the Lord Jesus shall be ready to preach in each other's pulpits, preaching the same truth, holding the same faith, and mightily contending for it. Then shall the world "see how these Christians love one another; " and then shall it be known in heaven that Christ s kingdom has come, and that his will is about to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My hearer, dost thou belong to the church? For out of the church there is no salvation. But mark what the church is. It is not the Episcopalian, Baptist, or Presbyterian: the church is a company of men who have received the Spirit. If thou canst not say thou hast the Spirit, go thy way and tremble; go thy way and think of thy lost condition; and may Jesus by his Spirit so bless thee, that thou mayest be led to renounce thy works and ways with grief, and fly to him who died upon the cross, and find a

shelter there from the wrath of God.

I may have said some rough things this morning, but I am not given much to cutting and trimming, and I do not suppose I shall begin to learn that art now. If the thing is untrue, it is with you to reject it; if it be true, at your own peril reject what God stamps with divine authority. May the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon the one church of Israel's one Jehovah. Amen and Amen.

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## The Holy Spirit's Chief Office

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you - John 16:14-15

It is the chief office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. He does many things, but this is what he aims at in all of them, to glorify Christ. Brethren, what the Holy Ghost does must be right for us to imitate: therefore, let us endeavour to glorify Christ. To what higher ends can we "devote ourselves, than to something to which God the Holy Ghost devotes himself? Be this, then, your emotional prayer, "Blessed Spirit, help me ever to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Observe, that the Holy Ghost glorifies Christ by showing to us the things of Christ. It is a great marvel that there should be any glory given to Christ by showing him to such poor creatures as we are. What! To make us see Christ, does that glorify him? For our weak eyes to behold him, for our trembling hearts to know him, and to love him, does this glorify him? It is even so, for the Holy Ghost chooses this as his principal way of glorifying the Lord Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ, not to show them to angels, not to write them in letters of fire across the brow of night, but to show them unto us. Within the little temple of a sanctified heart, Christ is praised, not so much by what we do, or think, as by what we see. This puts great value upon meditation, upon the study of God's word, and upon silent thought under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus says, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Here is a gospel word at the very outset of our sermon. Poor sinner, conscious of your sin, it is possible for Christ to be glorified by him being shown unto you. If you look to him, if you see him to be a suitable Saviour, an all-sufficient Saviour, if your mind's eye takes him in, if he is effectually shown to you by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby glorified. Sinner

as you are, unworthy apparently to become the arena of Christ's glory, yet shall you be a temple in which the King's glory shall be revealed, and you poor heart, like a mirror, shall reflect his grace.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all thy quickening powers;"

and show Christ to the sinner, that Christ may be glorified in the sinner's salvation!

If that great work of grace is really done at the beginning of the sermon, I shall not mind even if I never finish it. God the Holy Ghost will have wrought more without me than I could possibly have wrought myself, and to the Triune Jehovah shall be all the praise. Oh, that the name of Christ may be glorified in every one of you! Has the Holy Spirit shown you Christ, the Sin-bearer, the one sacrifice for sin, exalted on high, to give repentance and remission? If so, then the Holy Spirit has glorified Christ, even in you.

Now proceeding to examine the text a little in detail, my first observation upon it is this, the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier: "He shall glorify me." Secondly, Christ's own things are his best glory: "He shall glorify me: for he shall shew it unto you;" and, thirdly, Christ's glory is his Father's glory: "all things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

I. To begin, then, the HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR LORD'S GLORIFIER. I want you to keep this truth in your mind, and never to forget it; that which does not glorify Christ is not of the Holy Spirit, and that which is of the Holy Spirit invariably glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, then, have an eye to this truth in all comforts. If a comfort which you think you need, and which appears to you to be very sweet, does not glorify Christ, look very suspiciously upon it. If, in conversing with an apparently religious man, he prates about truth which he says is comforting, but which does not honour Christ, do not you have anything to do with it. It is a poisonous sweet; it may charm you for a moment, but

it will ruin your soul for ever if you partake of it. But blessed are those comforts which smell of Christ, those consolations in which there is a fragrance of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the King's palace, the comfort drawn from his person, from his work, from his blood, from his resurrection, from his glory, the comfort directly fetched from that sacred spot where he trod the wine-press alone. This is wine of which you may drink, and forget your misery, and be unhappy no more; but always look with great suspicion upon any comfort offered to you, either as a sinner or a saint, which does not come distinctly from Christ. Say, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me. I will refuse to lay aside my despondency until he removes my sin. I will not go to Mr. Civility, or Mr. Legality, for the unloading of my burden; no hands shall ever lift the load of conscious sin from off my heart but those that were nailed to the cross, when Jesus himself bore my sins in his own body on the tree." Please carry this truth with you wherever you go, as a kind of spiritual litmus paper, by which you may test everything that is presented to you as a cordial or comfort. If it does not glorify Christ, let it not console or please you.

In the next place, have an eye to this truth in all ministries. There are many ministries in the world, and they are very diverse from one another; but this truth will enable you to judge which is right out of them all. That ministry which makes much of Christ, is of the Holy Spirit; and that ministry which decries him, ignores him, or puts him in the background in any degree, is not of the Spirit of God. Any doctrine which magnifies man, but not man's Redeemer, any doctrine which denies the depth of the Fall, and consequently derogates from the greatness of salvation, any doctrine which makes sinless, and therefore makes Christ's work less,—away with it, away with it. This shall be your infallible test as to whether it is of the Holy Ghost or not, for Jesus says, "He shall glorify me." IT WERE BETTER TO SPEAK FIVE WORDS TO the GLORY OF CHRIST, THAN TO BE the greatest orator who ever lived, and to neglect or dishonour the Lord Jesus Christ. We, my brethren, who are preachers of the Word, have but a short time to live; let us dedicate all that time to the glorious work of magnifying Christ. Longfellow says, in his Psalm of Life, that "Art is long," but longer still is the great art of lifting up the Crucified before the eyes of the sin-bitten sons of men. Let us keep to that one

employment. If we have but this one string upon which we can play, we may discourse such music on it as would ravish angels, and will save men; therefore, again I say, let us keep to that alone. Coronet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music are for Nebuchadnezzar's golden image; but as for our God, our one harp is Christ Jesus. We will touch every string of that wondrous instrument, even though it be with trembling fingers, and marvellous shall be the music we shall evoke from it.

All ministries, therefore, must be subjected to this test; if they do not glorify Christ, they are not of the Holy Ghost.

We should also have an eye to this truth in all religious movements, and judge them by this standard. If they are of the Holy Spirit, they glorify Christ. There are great movements in the world every now and then; we are inclined to look upon them hopefully, for any stir is better than stagnation; but, by-and-by we begin to fear, with a holy jealousy, what their effects will be. How shall we judge them? To what test shall we put them? Always to this test. Does this movement glorify Christ? Is Christ preached? Then therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Are men pointed to Christ? Then this is the ministry of salvation. Is he preached as first and last? Are men bidden to be justified by faith in him, and then to follow him, and copy his divine example? It is well. I do not believe that any man ever lifted up the cross of Christ in a hurtful way. If it be but the cross that is seen, it is the sight of the cross, not of the hands that lift it, that will bring salvation. Some modern movements are heralded with great noise, and some come quietly; but if they glorify Christ, it is well. But dear friends, if it is some new theory that is propounded, if it is some old error revived, if it is something very glittering and fascinating, and for a while it bears the multitudes away, think nothing of it; unless it glorifies Christ it is not for you and me. "Aliquid Christi," as one of the old fathers said, "Anything of Christ," and I love it; but nothing of Christ, or something against Christ, then it may be very fine and flowery, and it may be very fascinating and charming, highly poetical, and in consonance with the spirit of the age; but we say of it, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity where there is no Christ." Where he is uplifted, there is all that is wanted for the salvation of a guilty race. Judge every movement, then, not by

those who adhere to it, nor by those who admire and praise it, but by this word of our Lord, "He shall glorify me." The Spirit of God is not in it if it does not glorify Christ.

Once again, brethren, I pray you, eye this truth when you are under a sense of great weakness, physical, mental, or spiritual. You have finished preaching a sermon, you have completed a round with your tracts, or you have ended your Sunday-School work for another Sabbath. You say to yourself, "I fear that I have done very poorly." You groan as you go to your bed because you think that you have not glorified Christ. It is as well that you should groan if that is the case. I will not forbid it, but I will relieve the bitterness of your distress by reminding you that it is the Holy Ghost who is to glorify Christ: "He shall glorify me." If I preach, and the Holy Spirit is with me, Christ will be glorified; but if I were able to speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, but without the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ would not be glorified. Sometimes, our weakness may even help to make way for the greater display of the might of God. If so, we may glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon us. It is not merely we who speak, but the Spirit of the Lord, who speaketh by us. There is a sound of abundance of rain outside the Tabernacle; would God that there were also the sound of abundance of rain within our hearts! May the Holy Spirit come at this moment, and come at all times whenever his servants are trying to glorify Christ, and himself do what must always be his own work! How can you and I glorify anybody, much less glorify him who is infinitely glorious? But the Holy Ghost, being himself the glorious God, can glorify the glorious Christ. It is a work worthy of God; and it shows us, when we think of it, the absolute need of our crying to the Holy Spirit that he would take us in his hand, and use us as a workman uses his hammer. What can a hammer do without the hand that grasps it, and what can we do without the Spirit of God?

I will make only one more observation upon this first point. If the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, I beg you to have an eye to this truth amid all oppositions, controversies, and contentions. If we alone had the task of glorifying Christ, we might be beaten; but as the Holy Spirit is the Glorifier of Christ, his glory is in very safe hands. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The Holy Spirit is still to the



front; the eternal purpose of God to set his King upon the throne, and to make Jesus Christ reign for ever and ever, must be fulfilled, for the Holy Ghost has undertaken to see it accomplished. Amidst the surging tumults of the battle, the result of the conflict is never in doubt for a moment. It may seem as though the fate of Christ's cause hung in a balance, and that the scales were in equilibrium; but it is not so. The glory of Christ never wanes; it must increase from day to day, as it is made known in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit; and the day shall come when Christ's praise shall go up from all human tongues. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees. If you have failed to glorify Christ by your speech as you would, there is Another who has done it, and who will still do it, according to Christ's words, "He shall glorify me." My text seems to be a silver bell, ringing sweet comfort into the dispirited worker's ear. "He shall glorify me."

That is the first point, the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier. Keep that truth before your mind's eye under all circumstances.

II. Now, secondly, CHRIST'S OWN THINGS ARE HIS BEST GLORY. When the Holy Spirit wants to glorify Christ, what does he do? He does not go abroad for anything, he comes to Christ himself for that which will be for Christ's own glory: "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." There can be no glory added to Christ; it must be his own glory, which he has already, which is made more apparent to the hearts of God's chosen by the Holy Spirit.

First of all, Christ needs no new inventions to glorify him. "We have struck out a new line of things," says one. Have you? "We have found out something very wonderful." I dare say you have; but Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, wants none of your inventions, or discoveries, or additions to his truth. A plain Christ is ever the loveliest Christ. Dress him up, and you have deformed him and defamed him. Bring him out just as he is, the Christ of God, nothing else but Christ, unless you bring in his cross, for we preach Christ crucified; indeed, you cannot have the Christ without the cross; but preach Christ crucified, and

you have given him all the glory that he wants. The Holy Ghost does not reveal in these last times any fresh ordinances, or any novel doctrines, or any new evolutions; but he simply brings to mind the things which Christ himself spoke, he brings Christ's own things to us, and in that way glorifies him.

Think for a minute of Christ's person as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. What can more glorify him than for us to see his person, very God of very God, and yet as truly man? What a wondrous being, as human as ourselves, but as divine as God! Was there ever another like to him? Never.

Think of his incarnation, his birth at Bethlehem. There was greater glory among the oxen in the stall than ever was seen where those born in marble halls were swathed in purple and fine linen. Was there ever another babe like Christ? Never. I wonder not that the wise men fell down to worship him.

Look at his life, the standing wonder of all ages. Men, who have not worshipped him, have admired him. His life is incomparable, unique; there is nothing like it in all the history of mankind. Imagination has never been able to invent anything approximating to the perfect beauty of the life of Jesus Christ.

Think of his death. There have been many heroic and martyr deaths; but there is not one that can be set side by side with Christ's death. He did not pay the debt of natures as others do; and yet he paid our nature's debt. He did not die because he must; he died because he would. The only "must" that came upon him was a necessity of all-conquering love. The cross of Christ is the greatest wonder of fact or of fiction; fiction invents many marvellous things, but nothing than can be looked at for a moment in comparison with the cross of Christ.

Think of our Lord's resurrection. If this be one of the things that are taken, and shown to you by the Holy Spirit, it will fill you with holy delight. I am sure that I could go into that sepulchre, where John and Peter went, and spend a lifetime in revenging him who broke down that

barriers of the tomb, and made it a passage-way to heaven. Instead of being a dungeon and a cul-de-sac, into which all men seem to go, but could ever come out, Christ has, by his resurrection, made a tunnel right through the grave. Jesus, by dying, has killed death for all believers.

Then think of his ascension. But why need I take you over all these scenes with which you are blessedly familiar? What a wondrous fact that, when the cloud received him out of the disciple's sight, the angels came to convoy him to his heavenly home!

"They brought his chariot from above,  
To bear him to his throne;  
Clapp'd their triumphant wings, and cried,  
"The glorious work is done."

Think of him now, at his Father's right hand, adored of all the heavenly host; and then let your mind fly forward to the glory of his Second Advent, the final judgment with its terrible terrors, the millennium with its indescribable bliss, and the heaven of heavens, with its endless and unparalled splendour. If these things are shown to you by the Holy Spirit, the beatific vision will indeed glorify Christ, and you will sit down, and sing with the blessed Virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Thus, you see that the things which glorify Christ are all in Christ; the Holy Spirit fetches nothing from abroad, but he takes of the things of Christ; and shows them unto us. The glory of kings lies in their silver and their gold, their silk and their gems; but the glory of Christ lies in himself. If we want to glorify a man, we bring him presents; if we wish to glorify Christ; we must accept presents from him. Thus we take the cup of salvation, calling upon the name of the Lord, and in so doing we glorify Christ.

Notice, next that these things of Christ's are too bright for us to see till the Spirit shows them to us. We cannot see them because of their excessive glory, until the Holy Spirit, tenderly reveals them to us, until he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us.

What does this mean? Does it not mean, first, that he enlightens our understandings? It is wonderful how the Holy Spirit can take a fool, and make him know the wonders of Christ's dying love; and he does make him know it very quickly when he begins to teach him. Some of us have been very slow learners, yet the Holy Spirit has been able to teach something even to us. He opens the Scriptures, and he also opens our minds; and when there are these two openings together, what a wonderful opening it is! It becomes like a new revelation; the first is the revelation of the letter, which we have in the Book; the second is the revelation of the Spirit, which we get in our own spirit. O my dear friend, if the Holy Ghost has ever enlightened your understanding, you know what it is for him to show the things of Christ to you!

But next, he does this by a work upon the whole soul. I mean this. When the Holy Ghost convinces us of sin, we become fitted to see Christ, and so the blessed Spirit shows Christ to us. When we are conscious of our feebleness, then we see Christ's strength; and thus the Holy Ghost shows him to us. Often, the operations of the Spirit of God may seem not to be directly the showing of Christ to us, but as they prepare us for seeing him, they are a part of the work.

The Holy Ghost sometimes shows Christ to us by his power of vivifying the truth. I do not know whether I can quite tell you what I mean; but I have sometimes seen a truth differently from what I have ever seen it before. I knew it long ago, I owned it as part of the divine revelation; but now I realize it, grip it, grasp it, or what is better, it seems to get a grip of me, and hold me in its mighty hands. Have you not sometimes been overjoyed with a promise which never seemed anything to you before? Or a doctrine, which you believed, but never fully appreciated, has suddenly become to you a gem of the first water, a very Koh-I-Noor, or, "Mountain of Light." The Holy Spirit has a way of focussing light, and when it falls in this special way upon a certain point, then the truth is revealed to us. He shall take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you. Have you never felt ready to jump for joy, ready to start from your seat, ready to sit up in your bed at night, and sing praises to God through the overpowering influence of some grand old truth which has seemed to be

all at once quite new to you?

The Holy Spirit also shows to us the things of Christ in our experience. As we journey on in life, we pass up hill and down dale, through bright sunlight and through dark shadows, and in each of these conditions we learn a little more of Christ, a little more of his grace, a little more of his glory, a little more of his sin-bearing, a little more of his glorious righteousness. Blessed is the life which is just one long lesson upon the glory of Christ; and I think that is what every Christian life should be. "Every dark and bending line" in our experience should meet in the centre of Christ's glory, and should lead us nearer and nearer to the power of enjoying the bliss at his right hand for ever and ever. Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, and so glorifies Christ.

Beloved, the practical lesson for us to learn is this, let us try to abide under the influence of the Holy Spirit. To that end, let us think very reverently of him. Some never think of him at all. How many sermons there are without even an allusion to him! Shame on the preachers of such discourses! If any hearers come without praying for the Holy Spirit, shame on such hearers! We know and we confess that he is everything to our spiritual life; then why do we not remember him with greater love, and worship him with greater honour, and think of him continually with greater reverence? Beware of committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. If any of you feel any gentle touches of his power when you are hearing a sermon, beware lest you harden your heart against it. Whenever the sacred fire comes as but a spark, quench not the Holy Spirit, but pray that the spark may become a flame. And you, Christian people, do cry to him that you may not read your Bibles without his light. Do not pray without being helped by the Spirit; above all, may you never preach without the Holy Spirit! It seems a pity when a man asks to be guided of the Spirit in his preaching, and then pulls out a manuscript, and reads it. The Holy Spirit may bless what he reads; but he cannot very well guide him when he has tied himself down to what he has written. And it will be the same with the speaker if he only repeats what he has learnt, and leaves no room for the Spirit to give him a new thought, a fresh revelation of Christ; how can he hope for the divine blessing under such circumstances? Oh, it were

better for us to sit still until some of us were moved by the Spirit to get up and speak, than for us to prescribe the methods by which he should speak to us, and even to write down the very words we mean to utter! What room is there for the Spirit's operations then?

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,"

I cannot help breaking out into that prayer, "Blessed Spirit, abide with us, take of the things of Christ, and show them to us, that so Christ may be glorified."

III. I am only going to speak a minute or two on the last point. It is a very deep one, much too deep for me. I am unable to take you into the depths of my text, I will not pretend to do so; I believe that there are meanings here which probably we shall never understand till we get to heaven. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." But this is the point, CHRIST'S GLORY IS HIS FATHER'S GLORY: "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore I said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

First, Christ has all that the Father has. Do think that. No more man dares to say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." All the Godhead is in Christ; not only all the attributes of it, but the essence of it. The Nicene Creed well puts it, and it is not too strong in the expression: "Light of Light, very God of very God," for Christ has all that the Father has. When we come to Christ, we come to omnipotent omnipresent omniscience; we come to almighty immutability; we come, in fact, to the eternal Godhead. The Father has all things, and all power is given unto Christ in heaven and on earth, so that he has all that the Father has.

And further, the Father is glorified in Christ's glory. Never let us fall into the false notion that, if we magnify Christ, we are depreciating the Father. If any lips have ever spoken concerning the Christ of God so as to depreciate the God of Christ, let those lips be covered with shame. We never did preach Christ up as merciful, and the Father as only just, or Christ as moving the Father to be gracious. That is a slander which has been cast upon us, but there is not an atom of truth in it. We have known

and believed what Christ himself said, "I and My Father are one." The more glorious Christ is, the more glorious the Father is; and when men, professedly Christians, begin to cast off Christ, they cast off God the Father to a large extent. Irreverence to the Son of God soon becomes irreverence to God the Father himself. But dear friends, we delight to honour Christ, and we will continue to do so. Even when we stand in the heaven of heavens, before the burning throne of the infinite Jehovah, we will sing praises unto him and unto the Lamb, putting the two evermore in that divine conjunction in which they are always to be found.

Thus, you see, Christ has all that the Father has, and when he is glorified, the Father also is glorified.

Next, the Holy Spirit must lead us to see this, and I am sure that he will. If we give ourselves up to his teaching, we shall fall into no errors. It will be a great mystery, but we shall know enough, so that it will never trouble us. If you sit down and try to study the mystery of the Eternal, well, I believe that the longer you look, the more you will be like persons who look into the sea from a great height, until they grow dizzy, and are ready to fall and to be drowned. Believe what the Spirit teaches you, and adore your Divine Teacher; then shall his instruction become easy to you. I believe that, as we grow older, we come to worship God as Abraham did, as Jehovah, the great I AM. Jesus does not fade into the background; but the glorious Godhead seems to become more and more apparent to us. Our Lord's word to his disciples, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And as we come to full confidence in the glorious Lord, the God of nature, and of providence, and of redemption, and of heaven, the Holy Spirit gives us to know more of the glories of Christ.

I have talked with you as well as I could upon this sublime theme, and if I did not know that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, I should go home miserable, for I have not been able to glorify my Lord as I would; but I know that the Holy Spirit can take what I have said out of my very heart, and can put it into your hearts, and he can add to it whatever I have omitted. Go ye who love the Lord, and glorify him. Try to do it by your lips and by your lives. Go ye, and preach him, preach more of him, and preach him up higher and higher, and higher. The old lady, of whom I

have heard, made a mistake in what she said, yet there was a truth behind her blunder. She had been to a little Baptist chapel, where a high Calvinist preached, and on coming away she said that she liked "High Calvary" preachers best. So do I. Give me a "High Calvary" preacher, one who will make Calvary the highest of all the mountains. I suppose it was not a hill at all, but only a mound; still, let us lift it higher and higher, and say to all other hills, "Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in; year, the Lord will dwell in it forever." The crucified Christ is wiser than all the wisdom of the world. The cross of Christ has more novelty in it than all the fresh things of the earth. O believers and preachers of the gospel, glorify Christ! May the Holy Ghost help you to do so!

And you, poor sinners, who think that you cannot glorify Christ at all, come and trust him,—

"Come naked, come filthy, come just as you are,"

and believe that he will receive you; for that will glorify him. Believe, even now, O sinner at death's door, that Christ can make thee live; for thy faith will glorify him! Look up out of the awful depths of hell into which conscience has cast thee, and believe that he can pluck thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set thy feet upon a rock; for thy trust will glorify him! It is in the power of the sinner to give Christ the greatest glory, if the Holy Spirit enables him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thou mayest come, thou who art more leprous, more diseased, more corrupt, than any other; and if thou lookest to him, and he saves thee, oh, then thou wilt praise him! You will be of the mind of the one I have spoken of many times, who said to me, "Sir, you say that Christ can save me. Well, if he does, he shall never hear the last of it." No, and he never will hear the last of it. Blessed Jesus, -

"I will love thee in life, I will love thee in death,  
And praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath;  
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'Tis now.

"In mansion of glory and endless delight,



I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;  
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

We will do nothing else but praise Christ, and glorify him, if he will but save us from sin. God grant that it may be so with every one of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Holy Spirit's Intercession**

Likewise the Spirit also infirmities: for we know not what we should what pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according the to will of God. - Romans 8:26-27

The Apostle Paul was writing to a tried and afflicted people, and one of his objects was to remind them of the rivers of comfort which were flowing near at hand. He first of all stirred up their pure minds by way of remembrance as to their sonship,—for saith he "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." They were, therefore, encouraged to take part and lot with Christ, the elder brother, with whom they had become joint heirs; and they were exhorted to suffer with him, that they might afterwards be glorified with him. All that they endured came from a Father's hand, and this should comfort them. A thousand sources of joy are opened in that one blessing of adoption. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have been begotten into the family of grace.

When Paul had alluded to that consoling subject he turned to the next ground of comfort—namely, that we are to be sustained under present trial by hope. There is an amazing glory in reserve for us, and though as

yet we cannot enter upon it, but in harmony with the whole creation must continue to groan and travail, yet the hope itself should minister strength to us, and enable us patiently to bear "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment." This also is a truth full of sacred refreshment: hope sees a crown in reserve, mansions in readiness, and Jesus himself preparing a place for us, and by the rapturous sight she sustains the soul under the sorrows of the hour. Hope is the grand anchor by whose means we ride out the present storm.

The apostle then turns to a third source of comfort, namely, the abiding of the Holy Spirit in and with the Lord's people. He uses the word "likewise" to intimate that in the same manner as hope sustains the soul, so does the Holy Spirit strengthen us under trial. Hope operated spiritually upon our spiritual faculties, and so does the Holy Spirit, in some mysterious way, divinely operate upon the new-born faculties of the believer, so that he is sustained under his infirmities. In his light shall we see light: I pray, therefore, that we may be helped of the Spirit while we consider his mysterious operations, that we may not fall into error or miss precious truth through blindness of heart.

The text speaks of "our infirmities," or as many translators put it in the singular—of "our infirmity." By this is intended our affliction, and the weakness which trouble discovers in us. The Holy Spirit helps us to bear the infirmity of our body and of our mind; he helps us to bear our cross, whether it be physical pain, or mental depression, or spiritual conflict, or slander, or poverty, or persecution. He helps our infirmity; and with a helper so divinely strong we need not fear for the result. God's grace will be sufficient for us; his strength will be made perfect in weakness.

I think, dear friends, you will all admit that if a man can pray, his trouble is at once lightened. When we feel that we have power with God and can obtain anything we ask for at his hands, then our difficulties cease to oppress us. We take our burden to our heavenly Father and tell it out in the accents of childlike confidence, and we come away quite content to bear whatever his holy will may lay upon us. Prayer is a great outlet for grief; it draws up the sluices, and abates the swelling flood, which else might be too strong for us. We bathe our wound in the lotion of prayer,

and the pain is lulled, the fever is removed. We may be brought into such perturbation of mind, and perplexity of heart, that we do not know how to pray. We see the mercy-seat, and we perceive that God will hear us: we have no doubt about that, for we know that we are his own favoured children, and yet we hardly know what to desire. We fall into such heaviness of spirit, and entanglement of thought, that the one remedy of prayer, which we have always found to be unfailing, appears to be taken from us. Here, then, in the nick of time, as a very present help in time of trouble, comes in the Holy Spirit. He draws near to teach us how to pray, and in this way he helps our infirmity, relieves our suffering, and enables us to bear the heavy burden without fainting under the load.

At this time our subjects for consideration shall be, firstly, the help which the Holy Spirit gives; secondly, the prayers which he inspires; and thirdly, the success which such prayers are certain to obtain.

I. First, then, let us consider **THE HELP WHICH THE HOLY GHOST GIVES.**

The help which the Holy Ghost renders to us meets the weakness which we deplore. As I have already said, if in time of trouble a man can pray, his burden loses its weight. If the believer can take anything and everything to God, then he learns to glory in infirmity, and to rejoice in tribulation; but sometimes we are in such confusion of mind that we know not what we should pray for as we ought. In a measure, through our ignorance, we never know what we should pray for until we are taught of the Spirit of God, but there are times when this beclouding of the soul is dense indeed, and we do not even know what would help us out of our trouble if we could obtain it. We see the disease, but the name of the medicine is not known to us. We look over the many things which we might ask for of the Lord, and we feel that each of them would be helpful, but that none of them would precisely meet our case. For spiritual blessings which we know to be according to the divine will we could ask with confidence, but perhaps these would not meet our peculiar circumstances. There are other things for which we are allowed to ask, but we scarcely know whether, if we had them, they would really serve our turn, and we also feel a diffidence as to praying for them. In praying

for temporal things we plead with measured voices, ever referring our petition for revision to the will of the Lord. Moses prayed that he might enter Canaan, but God denied him; and the man that was healed asked our Lord that he might be with him, but he received for answer, "Go home to thy friends." We pray evermore on such matters with this reserve, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." At times this very spirit of resignation appears to increase our spiritual difficulty, for we do not wish to ask for anything that would be contrary to the mind of God and yet we must ask for something. We are reduced to such straits that we must pray, but what shall be the particular subject of prayer we cannot for a while make out. Even when ignorance and perplexity are removed, we know not what we should pray for "as we ought." When we know the matter of prayer, we yet fail to pray in a right manner. We ask, but we are afraid that we shall not have, because we do not exercise the thought, or the faith, which we judge to be essential to prayer. We cannot at times command even the earnestness which is the life of supplication: a torpor steals over us, our heart is chilled, our hand is numbed, and we cannot wrestle with the angel. We know what to pray for as to objects, but we do not know what to pray for "as we ought" it is the manner of the prayer which perplexes us, even when the matter is decided upon. How can I pray? My mind wanders: I chatter like a crane; I roar like a beast in pain; I moan in the brokenness of my heart, but oh, my God, I know not what it is my inmost spirit needs; or if I know it, I know not how to frame my petition aright before thee. I know not how to open my lips in thy majestic presence: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. My spiritual distress robs me of the power to pour out my heart before my God. Now, beloved, it is in such a plight as this that the Holy Ghost aids us with his divine help. and hence he is "a very present help in time of trouble."

Coming to our aid in our bewilderment he instructs us. This is one of his frequent operations upon the mind of the believer: "he shall teach you all things." He instructs us as to our need, and as to the promises of God which refer to that need. He shows us where our deficiencies are, what our sins are, and what our necessities are; he sheds a light upon our condition, and makes us feel deeply our helplessness, sinfulness, and dire poverty; and then he casts the same light upon the promises of the Word, and lays home to the heart that very text which was intended to meet the

occasion—the precise promise which was framed with foresight of our present distress. In that light he makes the promise shine in all its truthfulness, certainty, sweetness, and suitability, so that we, poor trembling sons of men, dare take that word into our mouth which first came out of God's mouth, and then come with it as an argument, and plead it before the throne of the heavenly grace. Our prevalence in prayer lies in the plea, "Lord, do as thou hast said." How greatly we ought to value the Holy Spirit, because when we are in the dark he gives us light, and when our perplexed spirit is so befogged and beclouded that it cannot see its own need, and cannot find out the appropriate promise in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God comes in and teaches us all things, and brings all things to our remembrance, whatsoever our Lord has told us. He guides us in prayer, and thus he helps our infirmity.

But the blessed Spirit does more than this, he will often direct the mind to the special subject of prayer. He dwells within us as a counsellor, and points out to us what it is we should seek at the hands of God. We do not know why it is so, but we sometimes find our minds carried as by a strong under current into a particular line of prayer for some one definite object. It is not merely that our judgment leads us in that direction, though usually the Spirit of God acts upon us by enlightening our judgment, but we often feel an unaccountable and irresistible desire rising again and again within our heart, and this so presses upon us, that we not only utter the desire before God at our ordinary times for prayer, but we feel it crying in our hearts all the day long, almost to the supplanting of all other considerations. At such times we should thank God for direction and give our desire a clear road: the Holy Spirit is granting us inward direction as to how we should reckon upon good success in our pleadings. Such guidance will the Spirit give to each of you if you will ask him to illuminate you. He will guide you both negatively and positively. Negatively, he will forbid you to pray for such and such a thing, even as Paul essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not: and, on other hand, he will cause you to hear a cry within your soul which shall guide your petitions, even as he made Paul hear the cry from Macedonia, saying, "Come over and help us." The Spirit teaches wisely, as no other teacher can do. Those who obey his promptings shall not walk in darkness. He leads the spiritual eye to take good and steady aim at the

very centre of the target, and thus we hit the mark in our pleadings.

Nor is this all, for the spirit of God is not sent merely to guide and help our devotion, but he himself "maketh intercession for us" according to the will of God. By this expression it cannot be meant that the Holy Spirit ever groans or personally prays; but that he excites intense desire and created unutterable groanings in us, and these are ascribed to him. Even as Solomon built the temple because he superintended and ordained all, and yet I know not that he ever fashioned a timber or prepared a stone, so doth the Holy Spirit pray and plead within us by leading us to pray and plead. This he does by arousing our desires. The Holy Spirit has a wonderful power over renewed hearts, as much power as the skillful minstrel hath over the strings among which he lays his accustomed hand. The influences of the Holy Ghost at times pass through the soul like winds through an Eolian harp, creating and inspiring sweet notes of gratitude and tones of desire, to which we should have been strangers if it had not been for his divine visitation. He can arouse us from our lethargy, he can warm us out of our lukewarmness, he can enable us when we are on our knees to rise above the ordinary routine of prayer into that victorious importunity against which nothing can stand. He can lay certain desires so pressingly upon our hearts that we can never rest till they are fulfilled. He can make the zeal for God's house to eat us up, and the passion for God's glory to be like a fire within our bones; and this is one part of that process by which in inspiring our prayers he helps our infirmity. True Advocate is he, and Comforter most effectual. Blessed be his name.

The Holy Spirit also divinely operates in the strengthening of the faith of believers. That faith is at first of his creating, and afterwards it is of his sustaining and increasing: and oh, brothers and sisters, have you not often felt your faith rise in proportion to your trials? Have you not, like Noah's ark, mounted towards heaven as the flood deepened around you? You have felt as sure about the promise as you felt about the trial. The affliction was, as it were, in your very bones, but the promise was also in your very heart. You could not doubt the affliction, for you smarted under it, but you might almost as soon have doubted the divine help, for your confidence was firm and unmoved. The greatest faith is only what God

has a right to expect from us, yet do we never exhibit it except as the Holy Ghost strengthens our confidence, and opens up before us the covenant with all its seals and securities. He it is that leads our soul to cry, "though my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." Blessed be the Divine Spirit then, that since faith is essential to prevailing prayer, he helps us in supplication by increasing our faith. Without faith prayer cannot speed, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, and such an one may not expect anything of the Lord; happy are we when the Holy Spirit removes our wavering, and enables us like Abraham to believe without staggering, knowing full well that he who has promised is able also to perform.

By three figures I will endeavour to describe the work of the Spirit of God in this matter, though they all fall short, and indeed all that I can say must fall infinitely short of the glory of his work. The actual mode of his working upon the mind we may not attempt to explain; it remains a mystery, and it would be an unholy intrusion to attempt to remove the veil. There is no difficulty in our believing that as one human mind operates upon another mind, so does the Holy Spirit influence our spirits. We are forced to use words if we would influence our fellow-men, but the Spirit of God can operate upon the human mind more directly, and communicate with it in silence. Into that matter, however, we will not dive lest we intrude where our knowledge would be drowned by our presumption.

My illustrations do not touch the mystery, but set forth the grace. The Holy Spirit acts to his people somewhat as a prompter to a reciter. A man has to deliver a piece which he has learned; but his memory is treacherous, and therefore somewhere out of sight there is a prompter, so that when the speaker is at a loss and might use a wrong word, a whisper is heard, which suggests the right one. When the speaker has almost lost the thread of his discourse he turns his ear, and the prompter gives him the catch-word and aids his memory. If I may be allowed the simile, I would say that this represents in part the work of the Spirit of God in us, —suggesting to us the right desire, and bringing all things to our remembrance whatsoever Christ has told us. In prayer we should often

come to a dead stand, but he incites, suggests, and inspires, and so we go onward. In prayer we might grow weary, but the Comforter encourages and refreshes us with cheering thoughts. When, indeed, we are in our bewilderment almost driven to give up prayer, the whisper of his love drops a live coal from off the altar into our soul, and our hearts glow with greater ardour than before. Regard the Holy Spirit as your prompter, and let your ear be opened to his voice.

But he is much more than this. Let me attempt a second simile: he is as an advocate to one in peril at law. Suppose that a poor man had a great law-suit, touching his whole estate, and he was forced personally to go into court and plead his own cause, and speak up for his rights. If he were an uneducated man he would be in a poor plight. An adversary in the court might plead against him, and overthrow him, for he could not answer him. This poor man knows very little about law, and is quite unable to meet his cunning opponent. Suppose one who was perfect in the law should take up his cause warmly, and come and live with him, and use all his knowledge so as to prepare his case for him, draw up his petitions for him, and fill his mouth with arguments,—would not that be a grand relief? This counsellor would suggest the line of pleading, arrange the arguments, and put them into right courtly language. When the poor man was baffled by a question asked in court, he would run home and ask his adviser, and he would tell him exactly how to meet the objector. Suppose, too, that when he had to plead with the judge himself, this advocate at home should teach him how to behave and what to urge, and encourage him to hope that he would prevail,—would not this be a great boon? Who would be the pleader in such a case? The poor client would plead, but still, when he won the suit, he would trace it all to the advocate who lived at home, and gave him counsel: indeed, it would be the advocate pleading for him, even while he pleaded himself. This is an instructive emblem of a great fact. Within this narrow house of my body, this tenement of clay, if I be a true believer, there dwells the Holy Ghost, and when I desire to pray I may ask him what I should pray for as I ought, and he will help me. He will write the prayers which I ought to offer upon the tablets of my heart, and I shall see them there, and so I shall be taught how to plead. It will be the Spirit's own self pleading in me, and by me, and through me, before the throne of grace. What a happy



man in his law-suit would such a poor man be, and how happy are you and I that we have the Holy Ghost to be our Counsellor!

Yet one more illustration: it is that of a father aiding his boy. Suppose it to be a time of war centuries back. Old English warfare was then conducted by bowmen to a great extent. Here is a youth who is to be initiated in the art of archery, and therefore he carries a bow. It is a strong bow, and therefore very hard to draw; indeed, it requires more strength than the urchin can summon to bend it. See how his father teaches him. "Put your right hand here, my boy, and place your left hand so. Now pull"; and as the youth pulls, his father's hands are on his hands, and the bow is drawn. The lad draws the bow: ay, but it is quite as much his father, too. We cannot draw the bow of prayer alone. Sometimes a bow of steel is not broken by our hands, for we cannot even bend it; and then the Holy Ghost puts his mighty hand over ours, and covers our weakness so that we draw; and lo, what splendid drawing of the bow it is them! The bow bends so easily we wonder how it is; away flies the arrow, and it pierces the very centre of the target, for he who giveth have won the day, but it was his secret might that made us strong, and to him be the glory of it.

Thus have I tried to set forth the cheering fact that the Spirit helps the people of God.

II. Our second subject is THE PRAYER WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRES, or that part of prayer which is especially and peculiarly the work of the Spirit of God. The text says, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is not the Spirit that groans, but we that groan; but as I have shown you, the Spirit excited the emotion which causes us to groan.

It is clear then the prayers which are indited in us by the spirit of God are those which arise from our inmost soul. A man's heart is moved when he groans. A groan is a matter about which there is no hypocrisy. A groan cometh not from the lips, but from the heart. A groan then is a part of prayer which we owe to the Holy Ghost, and the same is true of all the prayer which wells up from the deep fountains of our inner life. The

prophet cried, "My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart: my heart maketh a noise in me." This deep ground-swell of desire, this tidal motion of the life-floods is caused by the Holy Spirit. His work is never superficial, but always deep and inward.

Such prayers will rise within us when the mind is far too troubled to let us speak. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, and then it is that we groan, or utter some other inarticulate sound. Hezekiah said, "like a crane or a swallow did I chatter." The psalmist said, "I am so troubled that I cannot I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart"; but he added, "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." The sighing of the prisoner surely cometh up into the ears of the Lord. There is real prayer in these "groanings that cannot be uttered." It is the power of the Holy Ghost in us which creates all real prayer, even that which takes the form of a groan because the mind is incapable, by reason of its bewilderment and grief, of clothing its emotion in words. I pray you never think lightly of the supplications of your anguish. Rather judge that such prayers are like Jabez, of whom it is written, that "he was more honourable than his brethren, because his mother bare him with sorrow." That which is thrown up from the depth of the soul, when it is stirred with a terrible tempest, is more precious than pearl or coral, for it is the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

These prayers are sometimes "groanings that cannot be uttered," because they concern such great things that they cannot be spoken. I want, my Lord! I want, I want; I cannot tell thee what I want: but I seem to want all things. If it were some little thing, my narrow capacity could comprehend and describe it, but I need all covenant blessings. Thou knowest what I have need of before I ask thee, and though I cannot go into each item of my need, I know it to be very great, and such as I myself can never estimate. I groan, for I can do no more. Prayers which are the offspring of great desires, sublime aspirations, and elevated designs are surely the work of the Holy Spirit, and their power within a man is frequently so great that he cannot find expression for them. Words fail, and even the sighs which try to embody them cannot be uttered.

But it may be, beloved, that we groan because we are conscious of the

littleness of our desire, and the narrowness of our faith. The trial, too, may seem too mean to pray about. I have known what it is to feel as if I could not pray about a certain matter, and yet I have been obliged to groan about it. A thorn in the flesh may be as painful a thing as a sword in the bones, and yet we may go and beseech the Lord thrice about it, and getting no answer we may feel that we know not what to pray for as we ought; and yet it makes us groan. Yes, and with that natural groan there may go up an unutterable groaning of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, what a different view of prayer God has from that which men think to be the correct one. You may have seen very beautiful prayers in print, and you may have heard very charming compositions from the pulpit, but I trust you have not fallen in love with them. Judge these things rightly. I pray you never think well of fine prayers, for before the thrice holy God it ill becomes a sinful suppliant to play the orator. We heard of a certain clergyman who was said to have given forth "the finest prayer ever offered to a Boston audience." Just so! The Boston audience received the prayer, and there it ended. We want the mind of the spirit in prayer, and not the mind of the flesh. The tail feathers of pride should be pulled out of our prayers, for they need only the wing feathers of faith; the peacock feathers of poetical expression are out of place before the throne of God. Hear me, what remarkably beautiful language he used in prayer!" "What an intellectual treat his prayer was! Yes, yes; but God looks at the heart. To him fine language is as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, but a groan has music in it. We do not like groans: our ears are much too delicate to tolerate such dreary sounds; but not so the great Father of spirits. A Methodist brother cries, "Amen," and you say, "I cannot bear such Methodistic noise"; no, but if it comes from the man's heart God can bear it. When you get upstairs into your chamber this evening to pray, and find you cannot pray, but have to moan out, "Lord, I am too full of anguish and too perplexed to pray, hear thou the voice of my roaring," though you reach to nothing else you will be really praying. When like David we can say, "I opened my mouth and panted," we are by no means in an ill state of mind. All fine language in prayer, and especially all intoning or performing of prayers, must be abhorrent to God; it is little short of profanity to offer solemn supplication to God after the manner called "intoning." The sighing of a true heart is infinitely more acceptable, for it is the work of the Spirit of God.

We may say of the prayers which the Holy Spirit works in us that they are prayers of knowledge. Notice, our difficulty is that we know not what we should pray for; but the Holy Spirit does know, and therefore he helps us by enabling us to pray intelligently, knowing what we are asking for, so far as this knowledge is needful to valid prayer. The text speaks "of the mind of the Spirit." What a mind that must be!—the mind of that Spirit who arranged all the order which now pervades this earth! There once was chaos and confusion, but the Holy Spirit brooded over all, and His mind is the originator of that beautiful arrangement which we so admire in the visible creation. What a mind his must be! The Holy Spirit's mind is seen in our intercessions when under his sacred influence we order our case before the Lord, and plead with holy wisdom for things convenient and necessary. What wise and admirable desires must those be which the Spirit of Wisdom himself works in us!

Moreover, the Holy Spirit's intercession creates prayers offered in a proper manner. I showed you that the difficulty is that we know not what we should pray for "as we ought," and the Spirit meets that difficulty by making intercession for us in a right manner. The Holy Spirit works in us humility, earnestness, intensity, importunity, faith, and resignation, and all else that is acceptable to God in our supplications. We know not how to mingle these sacred spices in the incense of prayer. We, if left to ourselves at our very best, get too much of one ingredient or another, and spoil the sacred compound, but the Holy Spirit's intercessions have in them such a blessed blending of all that is good that they come up as a sweet perfume before the Lord. Spirit-taught prayers are offered as they ought to be. They are his own intercession in some respects, for we read that the Holy Spirit not only helps us to intercede but "maketh intercession." It is twice over declared in our text that he maketh intercession for us; and the meaning of this I tried to show when I described a father as putting his hands upon his child's hands. This is something more than helping us to pray, something more than encouraging us or directing us,—but I venture no further, except to say that he puts such force of his own mind into our poor weak thoughts and desires and hopes, that he himself maketh intercession for us, working in us to will and to pray according to his good pleasure.

I want you to notice, however, that these intercessions of the Spirit are only in the saints. "He maketh intercession for us," and "He maketh intercession for the saints." Does he do nothing for sinners, then? Yes, he quickens sinners into spiritual life, and he strives with them to overcome their sinfulness and turn them into the right way; but in the saints he works with us and enables us to pray after his mind and according to the will of God. His intercession is not in or for the unregenerate. O, unbelievers you must first be made saints or you cannot feel the Spirit's intercession within you. What need we have to go to Christ for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, which is peculiar to the children of God, and can only be ours by faith in Christ Jesus! "To as man as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God"; and to the sons of God alone cometh the Spirit of adoption, and all his helping grace. Unless we are the sons of God the Holy Spirit's indwelling shall not be ours: we are shut out from the intercession of the Holy Ghost, ay, and from the intercession of Jesus too, for he hath said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me."

Thus I have tried to show you the kind of prayer which the Spirit inspires.

### III. Our third and last point is THE SURE SUCCESS OF ALL SUCH PRAYERS.

All the prayers which the Spirit of God inspires in us must succeed, because, first, there is a meaning in them which God reads and approves. When the Spirit of God writes a prayer upon a man's heart, the man himself may be in such a state of mind that he does not altogether know what it is. His interpretation of it is a groan, and that is all. Perhaps he does not even get so far as that in expressing the mind of the Spirit, but he feels greenings which he cannot utter, he cannot find a door of utterance for his inward grief. Yet our heavenly Father, who looks immediately upon the heart, reads what the Spirit of God has indited there, and does not need even our groans to explain the meaning. He reads the heart itself: "he knoweth," says the text, "what is the mind of the Spirit." The Spirit is one with the Father, and the Father knows what the Spirit means. The desires which the Spirit prompts may be too spiritual

for such babes in grace as we are actually to describe or to express, and yet the Spirit writes the desire on the renewed mind, and the Father sees it. Now that which God reads in the heart and approves of—for the word to "know" in this case includes approval as well as the mere act of omniscience—what God sees and approves of in the heart must succeed. Did not Jesus say, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things before you ask them"? Did he not tell us this as an encouragement to believe that we shall receive all needful blessings? So it is with those prayers which are all broken up, wet with tears, and discordant with those sighs and inarticulate expressions and heavings of the bosom, and sobbings of the heart and anguish and bitterness of spirit, our gracious Lord reads them as a man reads a book, and they are written in a character which he fully understands. To give a simple figure: if I were to come into your house I might find there a little child that cannot yet speak plainly. It cries for something, and it makes very odd and objectionable noises, combined with signs and movements, which are almost meaningless to stranger, but his mother understands him, and attends to his little pleadings. A mother can translate baby-talk: she comprehends incomprehensible noises. Even so doth our Father in heaven know all about our poor baby talk, for our prayer is not much better. He knows and comprehends the cryings, and meanings, and sighings, and chatterings of his bewildered children. Yea, a tender mother knows her child's needs before the child knows what it wants. Perhaps the little one stutters, stammers, and cannot get its words out, but the mother sees what he would say, and takes the meaning. Even so we know concerning our great Father: -

"He knows the thoughts we mean to speak,  
Ere from our opening lips the break."

Do you therefore rejoice in this, that because the prayers of the Spirit are known and understood of God, therefore they will be sure to speed.

The next argument for making us sure that they will speed is this—that they are "the mind of the Spirit." God the ever blessed is one, and there can be no division between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These divine persons always work together, and there is a common desire

for the glory of each blessed Person of the Divine Unity, and therefore it cannot be conceived without profanity, that anything could be the mind of the Holy Spirit and not be the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son. The mind of God is one and harmonious; if, therefore, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and he move you to any desire, then his mind is in your prayer, and it is not possible that the eternal Father should reject your petitions. That prayer which came from heaven will certainly go back to heaven. If the Holy Ghost prompts it, the Father must and will accept it, for it is not possible that he should put a slight upon the ever blessed and adorable Spirit.

But one more word, and that circles the argument, namely, that the work of the Spirit in the heart is not only the mind of the Spirit which God knows, but it is also according to the will or mind of God, for he never maketh intercession in us other than is consistent with the divine will. Now, the divine will or mind may be viewed two ways. First, there is the will declared in the proclamations of holiness by the Ten Commandments. The Spirit of God never prompts us to ask for anything that is unholy or inconsistent with the precepts of the Lord. Then secondly, there is the secret mind of God, the will of his eternal predestination and decree, of which we know nothing; but we do know this, that the Spirit of God never prompts us to ask anything which is contrary to the eternal purpose of God. Reflect for a moment: the Holy Spirit knows all the purposes of God, and when they are about to be fulfilled, he moves the children of God to pray about them, and so their prayers keep touch and tally with the divine decrees. Oh would you not pray confidently if you knew that your prayer corresponded with the sealed book of destiny? We may safely entreat the Lord to do what he has ordained to do. A carnal man draws the inference that if God has ordained an event we need not pray about it, but faith obediently draws the inference that the God who secretly ordained to give the blessing has openly commanded that we should pray for it, and therefore faith obediently prays. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and when God is about to bless his people his coming favour casts the shadow of prayer over the church. When he is about to favour an individual he casts the shadow of hopeful expectation over his soul. Our prayers, let men laugh at them as they will, and say there is no power in them, are the

indicators of the movement of the wheels of Providence. Believing supplications are forecasts of the future, He who prayeth in faith is like the seer of old, he sees that which is to be: his holy expectancy, like a telescope, brings distant objects near to him. He is bold to declare that he has the petition which he has asked of God, and he therefore begins to rejoice and to praise God, even before the blessing has actually arrived. So it is: prayer prompted by the Holy Spirit is the footfall of the divine decree.

I conclude by saying, see, my dear hearers, the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit, for if the saints know not what they should pray for as they ought; if consecrated men and women, with Christ suffering in them, still feel their need of the instruction of the Holy Spirit, how much more do you who are not saints, and have never given yourselves up to God, require divine teaching! Oh, that you would know and feel your dependence upon the Holy Ghost that he may prompt the once crucified but now ascended Redeemer that this gift of the Spirit, this promise of the Father, is shed abroad upon men. May he who comes from Jesus lead you to Jesus.

And, then O ye people of God, let this last thought abide with you,—what condescension is this that Divine Person should dwell in you for ever, and that he should be with you to help your prayers. Listen to me for a moment. If I read in the Scriptures that in the most heroic acts of faith God the Holy Ghost helpeth his people, I can understand it; if I read that in the sweetest music of their songs when they worship best, and chant their loftiest strains before the Most High God, the Spirit helpeth them, I can understand it; and even if I hear that in their wrestling prayers and prevalent intercessions God the Holy Spirit helpeth them, I can understand it: but I bow with reverent amazement, my heart sinking into the dust with adoration, when I reflect that God the Holy Ghost helps us when we cannot speak, but only groan. Yea, and when we cannot even utter our groanings, he doth not only help us but he claims as his own particular creation the "groanings that cannot be uttered." This is condescension indeed! In deigning to help us in the grief that cannot even vent itself in groaning, he proves himself to be a true Comforter. O God, my God, thou hast not forsaken me: thou art not far from me, nor from



the voice of my roaring. Thou didst for awhile leave the Firstborn when he was made a curse for us, so that he cried in agony, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" but thou wilt not leave one of the "many brethren" for whom he died: the Spirit shall be with them, and when they cannot so much as groan he will make intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. God bless you, my beloved brethren, and may you feel the Spirit of the Lord thus working in you and with you. Amen and amen.

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## **Holy Violence**

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, - Matthew 11:12

WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST preached in the wilderness of Judea, the throng of people who pressed around him became extremely violent to get near enough to hear his voice. Often when our Saviour preached did the like scene occur. We find that the multitudes were immense beyond all precedent. He seemed to drain every city, every town, and every village, as he went along preaching the word of the gospel. These people, moreover, not like our common church-and-chapel-goers, - content to hear, if they could, and yet more content to keep without hearing, if it were possible, - were extremely earnest to get near enough to hear anyhow. So intense was their desire to hear the Saviour that they pressed upon him, insomuch that they trod one upon another. The crowd became so violent to approach his person, that some of the weaker ones were cast down and trodden upon. Now, our Saviour, when he witnessed all this struggling round about to get near him, said, "This is just a picture of what is done spiritually by those who will be saved. As you press and throng about me," said Christ, "and thrust one another, with arm and elbow, to get within reach of my voice, even so must it be if ye would be saved, 'For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'" He pictured to himself a crowd of souls desiring to get to the

living Saviour. He saw them press, and crowd, and throng, and thrust, and tread on one another, in their anxious desire to get at him. He warned his hearers, that unless they had this earnestness in their souls, they would never reach him savingly; but if they had it, they should certainly be saved. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

"But," says one, "do you wish us to understand, that if a man is to be saved he must use violence and vehement earnestness in order to obtain salvation?" I do, most assuredly; that is the doctrine of the text. "But," says one, "I thought it was all the work of God." So it is, from first to last. But when God has begun the work in the soul, the constant effect of God's work in us is to set us working; and where God's Spirit is really striving with us, we shall begin to strive too. This is just a test whereby we may distinguish the men who have received the Spirit of God, from those who have not received it. Those who have received the Spirit in verity and truth are violent men. They have a violent anxiety to be saved, and they violently strive that they may enter in at the strait gate. Well they know that seeking to enter in is not enough, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able, and therefore do they strive with might and main.

I shall this morning, first, direct your attention to these violent men. Look at them. Secondly, we shall show their conduct. What makes them so violent? Are they justified in this impetuous vehemence? We shall next rejoice in the fact, that they are sure to be successful in their violence. And then, I shall endeavour to arouse in your hearts, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, that holy violence, without which the gates of heaven will be shut in your teeth, and you will never be able to enter the pearly portals of Paradise.

1. First then, **LET US LOOK AT THESE VIOLENT MEN.** Understand that what they are, they have been made by divine grace. They are not so naturally of themselves. But there has been a secret work of grace in them, and then they have become violent men. Look at these violent men, who are violently in earnest to be saved. You will observe them when they come up to the house of God; there is no yawning with them, no listlessness or inattention, no imagination that if they do but sit in the

place the hour-and-a-half which is regularly allotted to divine worship, they will have done enough. No; they hear with both their ears, and they look with both their eyes, and all through the service they have an intense desire that they may find Christ. Meet them as they go up to the house of prayer, and ask them why they are going there. They know right well what they are going after. "I am going there to find mercy, and to find peace and rest to my soul; for I am in anguish about sin, and I want to find the Saviour; I am in hopes that being in the way the Lord will meet with me, so I am about to lay myself down by the side of the pool of Bethesda, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will stir the pool and enable me to step in." You do not find these people like the most of modern hearers, critical, or else careless. No; they are all awake to see whether there is not something to be had which may be a balm to their wearied spirits, and a cordial to their troubled breasts. Mark these violent people after they have gone home. They go to their chambers and they begin to pray; not that prayer between sleeping and waking that some of you are used to attend to, not that drowsy supplication which never gets beyond the ceiling of your bedroom; but they fall on their knees and with a holy anxiety they begin to cry, "Lord, save or I perish; O Lord save me; I am ready to perish, Lord; I beseech thee, stretch out thine hand and rescue my poor soul from that destruction which now haunts my spirit." And see them after they have prayed, how they turn over the Word of God. They do not read its chapters as if the mere looking at the letters was enough, but they read just as Watts says in his hymn,  
"Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,  
Whose hope, still hovering round thy word  
Would light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure support against despair."

And down they are on their knees again. "O Lord speak to my soul through thy word! Lord help me to lay hold on the promise, enable me to grasp it! Oh, let not my soul perish for lack of thy help and thy grace." And then see these violent men whom God has really made in earnest about being saved. You will not find them leaving their devotions in their closets, or in their house of prayer. Wherever they go there is a solemn earnestness upon them, which the world cannot understand. They are seeking after Jesus, and rest they neither will nor can until they find him.

Their nights are disturbed with dreams, and their days are made sad with their pantings after the blessing - without which they cannot live, and without which they dare not die.

My hearer, have you ever been one of these violent men, or are you so now? Blessed be God if this holy violence is in your spirit: you shall take heaven by force yet; you shall take it by storm, and carry the gates of heaven by the battery of your prayers. Only persevere with importunity; still plead, still wrestle, still continue to strive, and you must at length prevail. But ah! my hearer, if thou hast never had a strong unconquerable anxiety about thy soul, thou art as yet a stranger to the things of God. Thou dost not understand that violence victorious without which the gates of heaven never can be stormed. Some of us can look back to the time when we were seeking Christ. I could myself awake of a morning easily then. The first ray of light that came into my chamber would awaken me to take up Baxter's Call to the Unconverted that lay under my pillow. I believed I had not repented enough, and I began to read that. Oh! how I hoped that would break my heart. And then I would get Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, and Allen's Alarm, and read them. But, still, I think I might have read them to this day, and not been a whit the better, if I had not something better than alarm, in remembering that Christ came into the world to save every sinner who was willing to cast himself upon his blood and righteousness, and take him at his word, and trust God. Have ye not seen many - and are there not many among us - men who have said, "I must have mercy, I must have it: it is not a thing which I may have, or may not have; but I am a lost soul if I have it not?" And when they have gone to pray they have seemed like Samsons; they have got hold of the two posts of heaven's gate of mercy, and they have pulled as if they would pull them up by their eternal roots sooner than not get the blessing. They have hammered at the gates of heaven until it seemed as if they would split the golden bolts rather than be turned away. No man ever gets peace until he gets into such a passion of earnestness to be saved, that he cannot find peace until Christ speaks pardon to his soul, and brings him into life and liberty. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

But this violence does not end when a man finds Christ; it then begins to exercise itself in another way. The man who is pardoned, and who knows it, then becomes violently in love with Christ. He does not love him just a little, but he loves him with all his soul and all his might. He feels as if he could wish to die for Christ, and his heart pants to be able to live alone with his Redeemer, and serve him without interruption. Mark such a man who is a true Christian, mark his prayers, and you will see there is violence in all his supplications when he pleads for the souls of men. Mark his outward actions, and they are violently sincere, violently earnest. Mark him when he preaches: there is no dull droning out of a monotonous discourse, he speaks like a man who means what he says, and who must speak it, or else woe would be unto him if he preached not the gospel. As I look around on many of the churches, yea, on many members of my own church, I am apt to fear that they are not God's children at all, because they have nothing of this holy violence. Have ye ever read Coleridge's Ancient Mariner? I dare say you have thought it one of the strongest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up, - all of them dead, yet rising up to manage the ship; dead men pulling the ropes, dead men steering, dead men spreading the sails. I thought what a strange idea that was. But do you know I have lived to see that true: I have seen it done. I have gone into churches and I have seen a dead man in the pulpit, and a dead man as a deacon, and a dead man holding the plate at the door, and dead men sitting to hear. You say "Strange!" but I have. I have gone into societies, and I have seen it all going on so regularly. These dead men, you know, never overstep the bounds of prudence, - not they: they have not life enough to do that. They always pull the rope orderly, "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." And the dead man in the pulpit, is he not most regular and precise? He systematically draws his handkerchief from his pocket, and uses it just at the regular period, in the middle of the sermon. He would not think of violating a single rubric that has been laid down by his old-fashioned church. Well, I have seen these churches - I know where to point them out - and have seen dead men doing everything. "No," says one, "you can't mean it?" Yes, I do, the men were spiritually dead. I have seen the minister preaching, without a particle of life, a sermon, which is only fresh in the sense in which a fish is fresh

when it has been packed in ice. I have seen the people sit, and they have listened as if they had been a group of statues - the chiseled marble would have been as much affected by the sermon as they I have seen the deacons go about their business just as orderly, and with as much precision as if they had been mere automatons, and not men with hearts and souls at all. Do you think God will ever bless a church that is like that? Are we ever to take the kingdom of heaven with a troop of dead men? Never! We want living ministers, living hearers, living deacons, living elders, and until we have such men who have got the very fire of life burnings in their souls, who have got tongues of life, and eyes of life, and souls of life, we shall never see the kingdom of heaven taken by storm. "For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. "I have been a Sunday-school teacher for years," says one, "and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted." No, and the reason most likely is, you have never been violent about it; you have never been compelled by the Divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be, and no stone should be left unturned until they were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion, that you have said, "I cannot live unless God bless me; I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved." Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer, and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards heaven, you would never have been disappointed, "for the violent take it by force." And you too, my brother in the gospel, you have marvelled and wondered why you have not seen souls regenerated. Did you ever expect it? Why, you preach like one who does not believe what he is saying. Those who believe in Christ, may say of you with kind partiality, "Our minister is a dear good man;" but the careless young men that attend your ministry, say, "Does that man expect to make me believe that which he only utters as a dry story, and to convince me when I see him go through the service with all the dulness and monotony of dead routine?" Oh, my brethren, what we want today in the churches is violence, not violence against each other, but violence against death, and hell, against the hardness of other men's hearts, and

against the sleepiness of our own. In Martin Luther's time, truly the kingdom of heaven suffered violence. The whole religious world was wide awake. Now, I fear for the most part it is sound asleep. Go where you may, our churches have come to be old-established businesses. They do not care to extend themselves. We must have new blood, nay, we must have new fire from heaven to fall upon the sacrifice, or else, like Baal's priests, we may cut and hack our bodies, and distract our minds in vain; there will be "no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth." The sacrifice shall lay unburnt upon the altar, and the world will say our God is not the living God, or surely we are not his people, "And thou shalt grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee." Violent men, then, are those that take the kingdom of heaven by force.

**II. NOW, BRING THESE VIOLENT MEN FORWARD, AND LET US ASK THEM WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT.** When a man is very earnest, he ought to be ready to give a reason for his earnestness. "How now, sirs, what is all this strife about? why all this earnestness? You seem to be boiling over with enthusiasm. What is up? Is there anything that is worth making such a stir about?" Hear them, and they will soon convince you that all their enthusiasm and striving to enter the kingdom of heaven by force, is not a whit more strong than reasonable.

The first reason why poor sinners take the kingdom of heaven by force is, because they feel they have no natural right to it; and, therefore, they must need take it by force if they would get it at all. When a man belongs to the House of Lords, and knows that he has got a seat there by prescriptive right and title, he does not trouble himself at the time of the elections. But there is another man, who says, "Well, I should like a seat in the House of Commons, but I have no absolute right to it. If I get it, it will be by a desperate struggle." Do you not see how busy he is on the day! how the carriages fly about everywhere; and how earnest are his supporters that he may stand at the head of the poll and win the day! He says, "I have no absolute right to it; if I had, then I would just take it easy and walk into my seat at the proper time." But now he labors, and strives, and wrestles, because without so doing he does not expect to succeed.

Now, look at those who are saved; they have no right to the inheritance they are seeking. What are they? Sinners, the chief of sinners; in their own esteem the vilest of the vile. Now, if they would get heaven they must take it by force, for they have no right to it by birth or lineal entail. And what are they else? They are the poor ones of this earth. There stands the rabbi at the gate, and he says, "You can't come in here; this is no place for the poor to enter." "But," says he. "I will;" and pushing the rabbi aside, he takes it by force. Then, again, they were Gentiles too; and Jews stood at the gate, and said, "Stand back, you Gentile dogs, you cannot come in." Now, if such would be saved, they must take the kingdom of heaven by storm, for they have no rights to assert. Ah, my fellow men, if ye sit down and fold your arms, and say, "I am so good I have a right to heaven," - how deceived you will be. But if God has convinced you of your lost, ruined, and undone condition, and if he has put his quickening Spirit within you, you will use a bold and desperate violence to force your way into the kingdom of heaven. The Spirit of God will not lead you to be obsequious in the presence of foes, or faint-hearted in the overwhelming crisis; he will drive you to desperate labour that you may be saved.

Ask one such man, again, why is he so violent in prayer; he replies, "Ah, I know the value of the mercy I receive. Why, I am asking for pardon, for heaven, for eternal life, and am I to get these with a few yawns and sleepy prayers? I am asking that I may wear the white robe, and sing the never-ending song of praise; and do you think that a few poor supplications are to be enough? No, my God; if thou wouldst make me tarry a hundred years, and sigh, and groan, and cry through that long century; - yes, if I might but have heaven at last, all my prayers would have been well-spent; nay, had they been a thousand times as many, they were well rewarded if thou wouldst hear me at last. But," says he again, "if you want to know why I am so earnest, let me tell you it is because I cannot bear to be lost for ever." Hear the earnest sinner when he speaks. You say to him "Why so earnest?" The tear is in his eye, the flush is on his cheek, there is emotion in every feature, while he says, "Would to God I could be far more earnest; do you know I am a lost soul, perhaps before another hour is over I may be shut up in the hopeless fires of hell! Oh, God, have mercy on me, for if thou dost not, how terrible is my fate. I shall be lost - lost for ever!"



Once let a man know that hell is beneath his feet, and if that does not make him earnest, what would? No wonder that his prayers are importunate, that his endeavours are intensely earnest, when he knows that he must escape, or else the devouring fire will lay hold on him. Suppose now, you had been a Jew in the olden time, and one day while taking a walk in the fields you had seen a man running with all his might. "Stop!" you say, "stop! my dear friend, you will exhaust yourself." He goes on, and on, with all his might. You run after him. "Pause awhile," you say, "and rest; the grass is soft, sit down here, and take your ease. See, here I have some food and a bottle; stop and refresh yourself." But without saluting you, he says, "No, I must away, away, away." "Why? wherefore?" you say. He is gone so far ahead, you run after him with all your might; and scarcely able to turn his head, he exclaims, "The city of refuge! the city of refuge! the manslayer is behind me." Now, it is all accounted for; you do not wonder that he runs with all his might now. When the manslayer is after him, you can well understand that he would never pause for rest until he has found the city of refuge. So let a man know that the devil is behind him, that the avenging law of God is pursuing him, and who can make him stop? Who shall endeavor to make him stay his race until he enters Christ, the city of refuge, and finds himself secure? This will make a man earnest indeed - to dread "the wrath to come," and to be labouring to escape therefrom.

Another reason why every man who would be safe must be in earnest, and be violent, is this, there are so many adversaries to oppose us, that if we are not violent we shall never be able to overcome them. Do you remember that beautiful parable in John Bunyan's Pilgrim? "I saw also, that the Interpreter took him by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then said Christian, 'May we go in thither?' Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table-side, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein;

he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in amaze. At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, 'Set down my name, sir;' the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put a helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, (Matt. xi. 12. Acts xiv. 22.) he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace; at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying,  
'Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory thou shalt win.'

So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they." And surely the dreamer saw the truth in his dream. It is even so. If we would win eternal glory we must fight.

"Sure we must fight, if we would reign;  
Increase our courage, Lord!"

Ye have enemies within you, enemies without, enemies beneath, enemies on every side - the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if the Spirit of God has quickened you, he has made a soldier of you, and you can never sheathe your sword till you gain the victory. The man who would be saved must be violent, because of the opposition he has to encounter.

But do you still condemn this man, and say that he is an enthusiast and a fanatic? Then God himself comes forth to vindicate his despised servant. Know that this is the sign, the mark of distinction between the true child of God and the bastard-professor. The men who are not God's children are a careless, stumbling, coldhearted race. But the men that are God's in sincerity and truth, are burning as well as shining lights. They are as brilliant constellations in the firmament of heaven, burning stars of God. Of all things in the world, God hates most the man that is neither hot nor

cold. Better have no religion than have a little: better to be altogether without it, enemies to it, than to have just enough to make you respectable, but not enough to make you earnest. What does God say concerning the religion of this day? "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Lukewarmness of all things God abhors, and yet of all things it is the predominant mark of the present day. The time of the Methodists, of Whitfield and Wesley, was a time indeed of fire and of divine violence and vigour. But we have gradually cooled down, now, into a delightful consistency, and though here and there there is a little breaking out of the old desperado spirit of the Christian religion, yet for the most part the world has so mesmerised the church, that she is as nearly asleep as she can be; and much of her teaching, and much of the doings of her religious societies, is sheer somnambulism. It is not the wide-awake earnestness of them that walk with their eyes open. They walk in their sleep; very nimbly they walk, too and very nicely they "trim their way," but very little is there of the life of God in aught they do, and very little of divine success attending their agencies, because they are not violent with regard to the matters of the kingdom of God.

III. Having thus endeavoured to screen the violent men from harsh criticism, I shall now invite you for a moment to reflect, that **THE VIOLENT MAN IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL**. Do you think you are going to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Have you got a notion in your heads that the road to paradise is all a lawn, the grass smoothly mown, still waters and green pastures ever and anon to cheer you? You have just got to clear your heads of that deceitful fancy. The way to heaven is up hill and down hill; up hill with difficulty, down hill with trials. It is through fire and through water, through flood and through flame, by the lions and by the leopards. Through the very mouths of dragons is the path to paradise. But the man who finds it so, and who desperately resolves in the strength of God to tread that path - nay, who does not resolve as if he could do nothing else but resolve, but who feels driven, as if with a hurricane behind him, to go into the right road, this man is never unsuccessful, never. Where God has given a violent anxiety for salvation he never disappoints it. No soul that has ever cried for it with a violent cry has been disappointed. From the beginning of creation until now there

has never been raised to the throne of God a violent and earnest prayer which missed its answer. Go, soul, in the strong confidence that if thou goest earnestly thou goest successfully. God may sooner deny himself than deny the request of an earnest man. Our God may sooner cease to be "the Lord God, gracious and merciful," than cease to bless the men who seek the gates of heaven, with the violence of faith and prayer. Oh, reflect, that all the saints above have been led by divine grace to wrestle hard as we do now with sins, and doubts, and fears. They had no smooth path to glory. They had to dispute every inch of the way at the sword's point. So must you: and as surely as you are enabled to do so, so surely will you conquer. Only the violent are saved, and all the violent are saved. When God makes a man violent after salvation, that man cannot perish. The gates of heaven may sooner be unhinged than that man be robbed of the prize for which he has fought.

IV. And, now I have to close, for I find my voice fails me this morning, when most I need it. I have to close abruptly by endeavouring earnestly TO EXCITE EACH OF YOU TO A VIOLENCE AFTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. In this great crowd there are surely some of the class I am about to describe. There is one man here who says, "I don't know that I have done much amiss in my life: I am about as regular a man as there is living. Don't I attend a place of worship regularly? I believe that I shall most certainly be saved. But I don't take much trouble about it, it never disquiets me particularly. I don't like" - says this man " - that intrusive kind of religion that always seems to be thrusting itself in everybody's way. I think it is quite right that people should go to their place of worship, but why take any further trouble? I just believe that I shall fare as other people fare: I am a steady unpretending sort of man, and I have no reason to doubt that I shall be saved." Ah, friend, you have never seen the gate of heaven? It is obvious that you have never seen it, or else you would know better; for at the gate of heaven multitudes are struggling, the gates of heaven are thronged, and he that would enter there must press, and elbow, and push, or he may go away certain that he can never enter. No! your easy religion will just bring you in too late. It may carry you nine miles out of ten; but what is the good of that to a man who must perish unless he is carried the whole way? It will go a good way with you when you follow the counsels of a gospel ministry with outward

propriety; but at the bar of God it will utterly fail you, when you lack the inward witness of strong crying and supplications. No! an easy religion is the way to hell, for it is not the way to heaven. Let your soul alone, and you need not expect much good fruit to come of it, any more than a farmer who leaves his fields alone, need expect to reap a harvest. Your religion is vain and futile if that is all. "Ah" cries another "but I am in quite a different case. I am a sinner so vile, sir, that I know I never can be saved, therefore, what is the use? I never think about it now, except with blank despair. Have I not long rebelled against God; will he ever pardon me? No, no; don't exhort me to try. I may as well take my full swing of pleasure while I am here, for I feel I never shall enjoy the pleasures of heaven hereafter." Stop friend, "The violent take it by force." If the Lord has taught thee thy utter sinfulness, go and try - say,  
"I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die."

Go home, go to your closet, fall on your knees, put your trust alone in Christ and, my friend, if the Lord does not have mercy upon you, then he is not the God we have preached to you, and he has not substantiated his faithful promise: you cannot, you shall not seek in vain. But mark, you must not think that your once seeking is enough; continue in it. If God has given you his Spirit you will continue - you will never leave off praying until you get the answer. Oh! my friend, if God hath given thee this day a longing after his love; if he has caused thee to say, "I will never give it up, I will perish at the foot of the cross if I perish at all;" thou canst no more perish than the angels in Paradise. Be of good cheer; use violence again and again, and thou shalt take it by force.

And then, let each one of us as we retire, and if we have tasted that the Lord is precious, determine to love him more earnestly than before. I never leave my pulpit washout feeling ashamed of myself. I do not remember a time when I have been able to go home without being suffused with humiliation and cast down with self-reproach, because I had not been more earnest. I very seldom flog myself for using an ugly

word, or anything of that sort; it is for not having been earnest enough about the salvation of men. When I sit down, I begin to think of this vast stream of people being swept along towards the gulf of eternity - bound for heaven or hell; and I wonder how it is that I do not weep all the time I am here - why it is that I do not find red-hot burning words with which to address you. I find fault with others sometimes, but far more with myself in this matter. Oh! how is it that a man can be God's ambassador, and yet have so callous, so insensitive a heart, as many of us have in this work? Oh! how is it that we tell the tale of death and life, of heaven and hell, of Christ crucified and his gospel despised, so quietly as we do? Condemn not the minister for excitement or fanaticism; condemn him because he is not half in earnest, as he ought to be. Oh my God! impress me, I beseech thee, more with the value of souls, and then impress my hearers, also, with the value of their own souls. Are you not going to-day, many of you, post-haste to perdition? Is it not the fact, that your conscience tells you that many of you are enemies to God? You are without Christ, you have never been washed in his blood; never been forgiven. Oh! my hearers, if ye continue as ye are, a few more rising suns, and then your sun must set for ever. Only a few more Sundays have you to waste, a few more sermons have you to hear, and the pit of hell must open wide its jaws, and then where are you? But a few more days, and the heavens shall be rent, and Christ shall come to judge the earth, and sinner where are you? Oh! I beseech you now by the living God, and by his Son Jesus Christ, think of your state; repent of your sins; turn you to God. Oh Spirit of God, turn, I pray thee, turn the hearts of sinners now. Remember, if you now repent, if you now confess your sins, Christ is preached to you. He came into the world to save sinners. Oh! believe on him; throw yourselves before his cross; trust in his blood; rely on his righteousness, -

"But if your ears refuse  
The language of his grace,  
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,  
That unbelieving race;  
The Lord, in vengeance dress'd,  
Will lift his hand and swear,  
'You that despise my promised rest,  
Shall have no portion there.'"

Oh! if I had the tongue of Whitfield, or the mouth of an archangel, if I could speak like the cherubim, I would pour out my heart before you, and pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. I must face you soon before God's great bar, and shall your blood be laid to my door? Shall you perish, and must I perish with you for unfaithfulness? May God forbid it! Now may he  
"Let you see your lost estate,  
And save you ere it be too late,  
Wake you to righteousness."

Lord have mercy upon you all for Jesus' sake!

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## **A Home Mission Sermon**

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. - Ecclesiastes 9:10

IF GOD had willed it we might each one of us have entered heaven at the moment of our conversion. It was not absolutely necessary for our preparation for immortality that we should tarry here. It is possible for a man to be taken to heaven, and to be found meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, though he hath but believed in Christ a solitary moment. The thief upon the cross had no long time for the process of sanctification; for thus spake the Saviour. "Verily I say unto thee this day shalt thou be with. me in paradise." It is true that in our case sanctification is a long and continued process, and we shall not be perfected - the being of sin shall not be cast out - till we lay aside our bodies and enter within the veil. But nevertheless, it is quite certain that if God had so willed it, he might have sanctified us in a moment. He might have changed us from imperfection to perfection, he might have cut out the very roots of sin, and have destroyed the very being of corruption, and have taken us to heaven instantaneously, if so he had willed it. Notwithstanding that, we are here. and why are we here? Would God keep his children out

of paradise a single moment longer than was necessary? Yet it is not absolutely necessary for them. Then, why are they here? Does God delight to tantalise his people by keeping them in a wilderness when they might be in Canaan? Will he shut them up in prison when he might give them instant liberty, unless there be some overwhelming reason for his delay in giving them the fullness of their life and bliss? Why are they here? Why is the army of the living God still on the battle field? One charge might give them the victory. Why are God's ships still at sea? One breath of his wind might waft them to the haven. Why are his children still wandering hither and thither through a maze, when hen a solitary word from his lips would bring them into the center of their hopes in heaven? The answer is; they are here that they may glorify God, and that they may bring others to know his love. We are not here in vain, dear brethren. We are here on earth like sowers scattering good seed; like ploughmen ploughing up the fallow ground. We are here as heralds, telling to sinners around "What a dear Saviour we have found,"

and heralding the coming of our Master. We are here as the salt to preserve a world, which else would become putrid and destroyed. We are here as the very pillars of this world's happiness: for when God shall take away his saints, the universal moral fabric "shall tumble to its fall; and great shall be the crash, when the righteous shall be removed, and the foundations shall be shaken. Taking it therefore as granted that the people of God are here to do something to bless their fellow-men, our text comes in very pertinently as the rule of our life. May God help us to practice it by giving us much of his powerful Spirit. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This is what thou art here for. Thou art here for a certain purpose. That purpose will soon be ended, and whether it be accomplished or unaccomplished, there shall never be a second opportunity for attempting it, "for there is no work, nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, wither hither thou goest." So far as this world is concerned, the grave is the end of our doing. So far as this time and state are concerned, the grave shall be the burial of our wisdom, our knowledge, and our devices.

Now, I shall this morning, first, endeavor to explain the preacher's exhortation; and then endeavor to enforce it by evangelical arguments.



I. First, I shall explain THE PREACHER'S EXHORTATION. I shall do so by dividing it into three parts. What shall I do? - "Whatsoever thy hand findeth." How shall I do it? - "Do it with thy might." - And then, why shall I do it? - "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.

1. First, then, are there not some here who are saying, I hope I love Christ; I desire to serve him, for I have been saved by his work upon the cross; what then can I do? "The answer is - "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do." Here we will observe, first, that this refers us to the works that are near at hand. You are not called upon to-day, the most of you, to do works which your eye sees far away in Hindostan or China. The most of you are called especially to do the work which is near at hand. People are always desiring to be doing something miles off, If they could but be somewhere else what wonders they would accomplish! Many a young man thinks if he could stand up under a banyan tree, and discourse to the black faces in India, how eloquent he might be. My dear fellow, why don't you try the streets of London first, and see whether you are eloquent there. Many a lady imagines that if she could move in a high circle she would no doubt become another Lady Huntingdon, and do wonders. But why cannot you do wonders in the circle in which God has placed you? He does not call you to do that which is leagues away, and which is beyond your power; it is that which your hand findeth to do I am persuaded that our home duties, - the duties which come near to us in our own streets, in our own lanes and alleys, - are the duties in which we ought most of us mainly to glorify Christ. Why will you be stretching out your hands to that which you cannot reach? Do that which is near, - which is at your hand. People sometimes come to their minister and say, "What shall I do for Christ?" In nine cases out of ten it is evidence of a lazy, idle spirit, when men ask what they shall do. For if they were really in earnest, - wanting to do something they would find themselves placed in the midst of such a press of work, that the question would not be, "What can I do?" but "Which out of all these shall I do first? for here is enough to fill an angel's hands, and occupy more than all a mortal's time." Very often I find men ambitious to serve God in an orbit in which they will never move. Many say, I wish I could become a preacher." Yes, but you are not called to be a preacher it may be. Serve God in that which your hand findeth present.

Serve him in your immediate situation, where you now are. Can you not distribute tracts? "Oh yes," you say, "but I was thinking of doing something else." Yes, but God put you there to do that. Could you not teach an infant class in the Sunday School?" I was thinking of being the superintendent of the Sunday School." Were you, indeed? but flour hand has not found out how to get there. Do what thy hand has found: it has found an infant class to teach. Could you not endeavor to instruct your family, and teach your servants in the way of God - God helping? "Oh yes," says one, "but I was thinking about organizing a Dorcas Society, or a Ladies' Visiting or Tract Distributing Society." Yes, but your hand has not found that out yet. Just do that first which is nearest to you. Begin at home. When Jerusalem was built, every man built before his own house. Do you the same? There is a wise provision by our rulers, that every man should cleanse the street in front of his own house. Why will you, who fire here in Southwark walk all the way to Islington to cleanse the street in front of somebody else's door? Stop and attend to your own work. and if everybody will do that which comes immediately under his own eyes, and is found out by his own hand then how much may be accomplished. Depend upon it, there is more wisdom in that than some of us dream. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." Do not be prowling about for work, but do it where it is when thy hand findeth it.

Again, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," refers to works that are possible. There are many things which our heart findeth to do that we never shall do. It is well it is in our heart, God accepts the will for the deed. But if we would be eminently useful, we must not be content with forming schemes in our heart, and talking of them with our lips. We must get plan" that are tangible, schemes that we can really manage, ideas that we can really carry out; and so we shall fulfill the exhortation of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." I will give you an illustration not many months ago in a certain magazine, which I will not mention, there was a supplement given upon China; in which supplement the churches represented by that magazine were exhorted to raise enough money to send a hundred missionaries to China. There was a very earnest appeal made to the churches - a glorious blast of trumpets as if something very great was coming. The mountain was in labor, and labor it did. Now, I have been told that the secretary of the Chinese mission called upon the

editor of the aforesaid magazine, and said, "I see you have a proposal to send a hundred missionaries to China. Will you strike the two off and find money enough to send one. It is said that they who aim at the moon will shoot higher than those who shoot at a bush. It may be correct, they may shoot higher, but I do not think they are so likely to hit their mark. Shooting high is not the thing: it is hitting what you shoot at now, if they had said, "We will do our utmost to send one missionary to China," they might have effected it; but they were talking about a hundred and they have not succeeded, nor are they likely to do".

The exhortation of our preacher would come home to such people. They have got it in their hearts to do it; they say when they grow big enough they mean to accomplish great things. "Who art thou. O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Now, instead of meddling with that great mountain, suppose you try your faith upon a fig tree first; and, then, if you moved that first, you might have confidence to move a mountain. John Bunyan was a very wise man when he thought once he would try to work miracles, Instead of ordering the sun and moon to go back several degrees, as he rode along he thought he would tell the puddles in the road to become dry. It was a miracle that would not interfere with anybody, and therefore a very proper one to begin with. But in the beginning the thought came into his mind, "Pray first;" and when he prayed he could not find any promise that he could dry up the puddles, and so he determined to leave them alone. I hope those men who come with some splendid vision in their heads would only try to do what they can and no more. When they become giants let them do a giant's work, but as long as they are dwarfs, let them do a dwarf's work Remember, the exhortation of the great man is, to do, not great things, but to do the things that thy hand findeth to do - present things, possible things. Do not be scheming and speculating about what you would do if your old aunt were to leave you twenty thousand pounds, or what you would do if you were to become prime minister, and so forth. Do what you can, in your workshop or shed, or with a needle in your hand; and if ever you have a scepter - which is not likely - and you use your needle well, you would be the most likely person to use your scepter well also.

There is another word of exhortation which seems to strike me as being

very necessary when addressing God's people, it is this: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do." Suppose, now, the duty which lies against our door to be a very disagreeable one. A sad thing that any duty should be disagreeable to the man who has been saved by Christ, but so it is. There are some duties, which while we are nothing but poor flesh and blood will always be less agreeable than certain others; yet, mark you, though the duties seem to you to be degrading and disagreeable, contrary to your taste, yet the exhortation hath it, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Whether it be the visitation of the poorest of the poor or the teaching of the most ignorant, whether the hewing of wood or the drawing of water, the very lowest work in the Lord's house, if thy hand findeth it to do it. You will remark in many Christians, and possibly if you are wise you will remark in yourself, how we all have a preference to do those duties which we regard as being honorable, as coming strictly within the range of our own office, those which probably will be rewarded with the praise of men. But if there is any duty that shall never be heard of till the day of judgment, if there is any work that never shall be seen until the blaze of the last day shall manifest it to a blind world, then we generally slur such a duty and seek another. Oh, if we did but understand the true majesty of humility, and how great a thing it is for a Christian to do little things, to bow himself and to stoop, we should rather envy the meanest of the flock than the greatest, and each of us try to wash the saint's feet and perform the most menial service for the Master. Often, I think, when you and I are standing back for some humbling duty if Christ Jesus should come by that way and do it, how we should blush. Let me give you Christ's own picture. There was a poor wounded Samaritan who was left half dead. There was a priest coming to Jerusalem. He was busy with his sermon, looking over his notes, and thinking of what he should have to say to the people when he addressed them. Well, there was a poor fellow the other side of the road, wounded. It was no business of his - he was a preacher. If he went to interfere with that poor man's wounds, he was quite sure it would be such a ghastly sight that he would not be able to preach half so well, so he passed by. Well, then there came a Levite, a good respectable deacon in the sanctuary. "Well," he says, "I must make haste and catch the minister, or else I shall not be in time to read the hymns." It was no business of his to go and see after the poor man who was wounded. At last the Master himself came that way, and he, the head

of the church, the prince of preachers. the great deacon, the great servant of servants, he did not disdain to bind up the broken heart, and to heal the poor man's wounds. There is a story told in the old American war, that once upon a time George Washington, the commander-in-chief, was going around among his soldiers. They were hard at work, lifting a heavy piece of timber at some fortification There stood the corporal of the regiment calling out to his men, "Heave there, heave ahoy!" and giving them all kinds of directions. As large as possible the good corporal was. So Washington, alighting from his horse, said to him, "What is the good of your calling out to those men, why don't you help them yourself and do part of the work." The corporal drew himself up and said, "Perhaps you are not aware to whom you are speaking, sir; I am a corporal." "I beg your pardon," said Washington; "you are a corporal are you; I am sorry I should have insulted you." So he took off his own coat and waistcoat and set to work to help the men build the fortification When he had done he said, "Mr. Corporal, I am sorry I insulted you, but when you have any more fortifications to get up, and your men won't help you, send for George Washington, the commander-in-chief, and I will come and help them." The corporal slunk away perfectly ashamed of himself. And so Christ Jesus might say to us, "Oh, you don't like teaching the poor; it is beneath your dignity; then let your commander-in-chief do it; he can teach the poor, he can wash the feet of the saints, he can visit the sick and afflicted - he came from heaven to do this, and he will set you the example." Surely we should each be ashamed of ourselves, and declare from this time forward whatever it is, be it great or little, if it comes to our hand, and if God will but give us help and give us grace, we will do it with all our might. I have thus explained what we are to do.

2. And, now, How are we to do it? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." First, "do it." That is do it promptly; not fritter away your lives in setting down what you intend to do to-morrow as being a recompense for the idleness of to-day. No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow. If we have honored Christ and are blessed, it is by the things which we do to-day. For after all, the ticking of the clock saith-today! to-day! to-day! We have no other time in which to live. The past is gone; the future hath not come; we have, we never shall have, anything but the present. This is our all. let us do what our hand findeth to do.

Young Christian, are you just converted? Do not wait until your experience has ripened into maturity before you attempt to serve God. And now to bring forth fruit. This very day, if it be the first day of your conversion, bring forth fruits meet for repentance - even now. And thou who art now in middle age, say not, "I will begin to serve Christ when my hair shall be frosty with age." No. Now do it. - do it - "do it with thy might." Oh that God would keep us to this - that we would always do our day's work in our day, and serve him now. I have heard of a certain divine who was a preacher at Newgate. He preached a sermon divided into two parts: the first was to the saint, the second was to the sinner. When he had finished the first part, to the saint, in the morning, he said he would preach to the sinner the next Sunday morning, and then finish his sermon. There was a poor man who was hanged on the Monday, and who therefore never heard that part of the discourse which was best adapted to his case. How often may we be found in the like light. We may be saying, "I will do him good by-and-bye." But he may be dead then, and our opportunity will be gone, or, what is just as likely, we may be dead also; and then all our opportunities will be passed, and it will be totally out of our power to do anything. Do it! do it! do it! This is what the church of Christ wants to have proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet in all her ranks, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." Put it not off one hour. Do it! Procrastinate not a day. "Procrastination is the thief of time." Let him not steal thy time. Do it, at once. Serve thy God now; for now is all the time thou canst reckon on.

Then, the next words, "Do it with thy might." Whatever you do for Christ, throw your whole soul into it Christ wants none to serve him with their fingers: he must have their hands their arms, their hearts, We must not give Christ a little slurred labor, which is done as a matter of course now and then; but when we do serve him, we must do it with all our bears, and soul, and strength, and might. Among the old Roman pagans, they were accustomed to slay the beasts and cut them open, in order to discover future events. If ever they cut open a bullock and could not find the heart, it was always considered by the people to be an ill omen. And depend upon it, if ye cut your works open and cannot find your hearts in them, it is an ill omen for your works - they are good for nothing, and their object shall never be accomplished. The worst part of the Christian church at

this time is, that it seems as if many of our ministers and their churches had lost their hearts. Step into your churches and chapels, everything is orderly and precise. but where is the life, where is the power? I confess that I would rather address a congregation of ignorant men who are alive and enthusiastic, than a congregation of the most learned and orderly who are dead and blank, upon whose ears all the preaching in the world falls as but a dull monotony. About three weeks ago I was addressing a Methodist congregation. They leaped on their feet, now and then, and cried, "Hallelujah! Glory be to God!" My whole soul was stirred within me, and I felt that I could preach and preach again, and never grow weary while these people drink in the word with real life. I am persuaded that real good was done, and that they did not forget what was said. But, then, our people take things so orderly; they come and take their seats so quietly; until it often seems that one might preach to a set of statues or wooden blocks, with just as much hope of effect as to preach to them. We want life, we want heart. heart in the ministry, heart in the deacons, heart in all the offices of the church, and until we have this we cannot expect the Master's blessing. You are going to teach in the Sunday school this afternoon, are you? How are you going to teach? "I am going to do as I have often done." Stand back I If you are going to serve Christ, stand back till you have got your heart with you, and take with you all your strength, and all your might, and say as David did, "Bless the Lord, and serve the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me." Serve the Master and spend yourself in your strength. I would rather have no sermon than a dull sermon, no teaching than sleepy teaching, no prayers than lifeless prayers. A cold religion is tasteless. Let us have a hot religion that will burn its way into the heart. this is the religion that will make its way in the world, and make itself respected, even though some pretend to despise it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

But where is the might of a Christian? Let us not forget that. The might of a Christian is not in himself, for he is perfect weakness. His might lieth in the Lord of Hosts. It will be well for us if all we attempt to do is done in God's strength, or else it will not be done with might: it will be feebly and badly done. Whenever we attempt to serve a loaf in the winning of souls, let us first begin with prayer. Let us seek his help. Let us go on with prayer mixed with faith; and when we have concluded the work, let us

commend it again to God with renewed faith and fresh prayer. What we do thus will be well done, and will not fail in its effect. But what we do merely with creature-strength, with the mere influence of carnal zeal, will come to nothing at all. "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," do it with that real might which God hath promised them that ask it, with that real wisdom which he giveth liberally, which he bestows on all who seek it meekly and reverently at his feet. God help us, then to carry out this exhortation, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it v with thy might."

3. And, now, the third part of the exhortation was, Why? We are to do it with all our might death is near. and when death comes there will be an end to all our serving God on earth, an end to our preaching, an end to our praying, an end to our doing aught for God's glory among the perishing souls of men. If we all lived in the light of our funerals how well should we live. Some of the old Romish monks always read their Bibles with a candle stuck in a skull. The light from a death's head may be an awful one, but it is a very profitable one. There is no way of living like that. There is an old monkish legend told of a great painter, who had begun a painting, but did not finish it; and as the legend went, he prayed that he might come back on earth that he might finish that painting. There is a picture now extant, representing him after he had come back to finish his picture. There is a solemnity about that man's look, as he paints away with all his might, for he had but little time allowed him, and a ghastliness, as if he knew that he must soon go back again, and wanted his labor to be finished. If you were quite sure of the time of your death, if you knew you had but a week or two to live, with what haste would you go round and bid farewell to all your friends; with what haste would you begin to set all matters right on earth, supposing matters are all right for eternity. But, Christian men like other men, forget that they are mortal, and even we who profess to see into the future, and declaring that we are looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, even we seem to think that we shall live here for ever. It is well that God puts a thorn into our nest, or else, often his own birds of Paradise would build their nests here and never mount higher. Let us pause a moment, and think that in a short time we must die. The hour is not to be staved off. When yon winged arrow shall have ended its hasty journey, and found its target in this heart, then all is over. I may preach to you to-day



and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come; but when this tongue is sealed in silence, I can no more warn you. If I have been unfaithful, and have not discharged my Master's message and faithfully told it, I cannot come back and tell it over again. Mother, you can pray for your children, now; but when death shall have sealed your eyes in darkness, there can be no more prayers lifted up for ever. You can teach them now in God's Word, and labor that they may be brought to know their mother's God, but it shall be all over then. You may now, O Sunday school teacher, instruct those children. and God blessing you, you may be their spiritual father and bring them to Christ; but it shall one day be whispered in your class, "teacher is dead;" and there is the end of your labor. Your children may come to your grave, and sit down there and weep, but from the clay-cold sod no voice of warning can come up. There, your warning and your love is lost, alike unknowing and unknown. And you, the servant of Christ, with great stores of wealth, you have this day money with which God's cause might be greatly helped; you have talent, too, which might fit you well to stand in the midst of the church and serve it. You are going the way of all flesh. Grey hairs are scattered here and there. You know that your end is approaching. When once death shall have come your ham! cannot devise liberal things; your brain cannot form new devices for the spread of your Master's kingdom, neither can your heart, then, bend and weep over sinners perishing, or your tongue address them with earnest exhortation. Think, dear friends, that all we can do for our fellows we must do, now. For the cerement shall soon enwrap us, the hands must soon hang down, and the eyes be shut, and the tongue be still. While we live let us live. There are no two live. accorded us on earth. If we build not now, the fabric can never be built. If now we spin not, the garment will never be woven. Work while ye live, and live while ye work; and God grant to each of us that we may discharge in this life all the desires of our hearts, in magnifying God and bringing sinners to the cross.

II. How, having thus explained and opened the exhortation, I shall pray that God's Holy Spirit may be solemnly with me while very briefly and very vehemently, I endeavor to **STIR UP ALL PROFESSORS OF RELIGION HERE PRESENT TO DO WHATSOEVER THEIR HANDS FINDETH TO DO, TO DO IT NOW, AND WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT.** If Christ Jesus should leave the upper world and come into the midst of this

hall this morning, what answer could you give if after showing you his wounded hands and feet, and his rent side, he should put this question, "I have done all this for thee what hast thou done for me?" Let me put that question for him, and in his behalf. You have known his love some of you, forty years, some of you thirty, twenty, ten, three, one. He has done all this for you, has bled away his precious life, has died in agonies most exquisite upon the cross. What have you done for him? Turn over your diary now. Can you remember the contributions you have given out of your wealth, and what do they amount to? Add them up. Think of what you have done for him, how much of your time you have spent in his service. Add that up, turn over another leaf, and then observe how much time you have spent in praying for the progress of his kingdom. What have you done there? Add that up. I will do so for myself, and I can say without a boast I have labored to serve God, and have been in labors more abundant; but when I come to add all up and set what I have done side by side with what I owe to Christ, it is less than nothing and vanity, I pour contempt upon it all, it is but dust of vanity. and though from this day forward I should preach every hour in the day, though I could spend myself and be spent; though night should know no rest and day should never cease from toil, and year should succeed to year till this hair was hoary and this frame exhausted, when I come to render up my account he might say, "Well done." but I should not feel it was so, but should rather say, "I am still an unprofitable servant; I have not done that which it was even my bare duty to do much less have I done all to show the love I owe." Now will you think what you have done dear brother and sister, and surely your account must fall short equally with mine.

But as for some of you, you have done positively nothing. You have joined the church and have been baptized, and that is about all, you have sometimes doled out a little from your abundance to the cause of Christ, but oh, how little when you think he gave his all for you! Others there are of you who out of your little have given much, out of your weakness have been strong, in your poverty you have never been poor towards Christ's cause; ye shall not lack your reward at last but even ye will come with the rest of us and say, "Lord help us to love the poor and by thy amazing love to us constrain us to devote ourselves wholly, unreservedly to thee."

Another argument let me give you, why you should serve Christ with all your might now. You believe, my dear hearers, that if men die unconverted their doom is fearful beyond all expression. You and I are compelled to believe from the testimony of the Spirit, that the punishment of those who die impenitent is beyond all that words can describe. They sink into a pit that is bottomless, into a fire that never can be quenched where they are fed on by a worm that dieth not. You know, and sometimes your hair has almost stood on end with the thought that the wrath to come is more than the soul can conceive. And is it possible, can it be possible with this belief in your mind that many of your fellow-creatures are going post-haste to this awful, this fearful hell, that you are idle and doing nothing? May God forgive you if such is your unfeeling state of heart - that you can contemplate a fellow-creature perishing in the fires of hell, and yet permit your hand to hang down in listless idleness. O children of the living God, I beseech you by the fires of hell, by the agony that knows of no abatement by the thirst that is not to be mitigated by a drop of water, by the eternity which knows no end; I beseech you by the wrath to come, be ye up and doing, earnestly striving together to be the means in God's hand of awakening poor souls and bringing them to the mercy of Christ. Be ye earnest. If ye do not believe this Bible, I care not what you are - earnest or dull. But if ye do believe it, act as ye believe; if ye think men are perishing, if the Lord's right hand is dashing in pieces his enemy, then I beseech you be strengthened by the same right hand, to endeavor to bring those enemies to Christ that they may be reconciled by the blood of the cross.

And, now last of all, let, me just appeal to you in this way. Possibly, in my explanation, I have led you to form in your heart some great scheme of what you would do. Let me knock that all to pieces, because that is not my text. It is not a great scheme, but it is, "whatsoever your hand findeth to do," that I want you to do. My dear friends, many of you are parents of children. It is quite certain, whatever else may be your duty, that your duty as parents is first. As their parents you owe them a duty; you have responsibilities towards them, and it is your duty to bring them up in the fear and nurture of God. May I earnestly beg and beseech of you, not to neglect this; for remember, you will soon be gone, and will not this be a thorn in your dying pillow, if, when your children stand around your bed

to bid farewell to their dying father, or their dying mother, they shall have to say to you, "You are going from us, but we shall not miss you. We shall miss you as far as temporal things is concerned but when you are dead we shall be as well off in spiritual things as we were before, for you neglected us." They will not say so but do you suppose they will not think so, if such be the truth? Children are always quick. and if they say it not they would feel it. Will it not be far better, if God stroll so bless you, that when you lay sick and dying, there shall be a daughter wiping the hot sweat from your brow, and saying, "Fear not, mother, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, "God is with you, and you need fear no evil?" Will it not be a satisfaction to you, father, when you die if glancing at the foot of the bed, you can say to your son, "Farewell, my son; I bless God that I leave you in this world to carry on the work which I have begun, for you are walking in your father's steps." I know of no greater joy than for some aged patriarch, and I know of one, - God bless him, he is preaching the word I doubt not this morning, - to be able to look to sons and daughters converted to Christ and then to look to another generation and see grandchildren converted to Christ It must be a noble thing to die and leave behind three generations, and many of these already able to call the Redeemer blessed. O neglect not your present work I beseech you, or otherwise you shall lose the present blessing; and by neglecting this present duty which concerns your own household, you shall incur a household curse and make your death-bed uneasy, so that you shall toss there with those eyes looking on you, and silently charging you with having neglected their souls.

Sunday school teachers, I give you the same exhortation. I pray God that when you die it may not be said in your schools, "Well, we do not miss so-and-so at all; she was not a teacher we could desire, she filled up a gap, and that is all we can say." I hope it may be said of you, my brothers and sisters, in the holy work of Sunday - school teaching, "They are gone to their grave, and there is a vacancy made which will not soon be filled." But still your children shall gather round your coffin, and say, "God be blessed that we ever had such a teacher!" And though they are not converted, yet shall their little eyes weep when they think, "Teacher will never weep over us again. teacher will never pray for us any more, teacher will never tell us of Christ again;" and that very thought may be more

powerful in their minds than all you ever said to them, and may, perhaps, effect the work which was not accomplished when your soul left the body.

And now I charge myself most solemnly in his conclusion, to be more earnest than ever in preaching the Word to you, - to preach it in season and out of season to preach it with all my might, for I shall soon be gone. Life lasts not long, and when we have all departed may not others have to think of us, that we went before our work was fully accomplished? Once when George Whitfield was very sick and ill he was laid down by his friends by the fireside and he lay there as if he was dying. Presently he opened his eyes and a poor old negro woman, who had watched over him when others had given him up, spoke to him and said, "Massa George Whitfield are you still alive?" He looked and said, "Yes, I am; but I was in hopes I should have been in heaven." Then the old woman made this pretty speech. "Ah! Massa George," she said, "you went to the very gates of heaven, and Christ said, 'Go back, Massa George; there are many poor negroes down on the earth that I mean to have saved. Go back and tell them I love them, and mind you do not come back any more till you bring them all with you.'" So Whitfield recovered strength, and even found, as the old woman said, a desire not to go home till he could take these poor negroes with him. So may it be with us; may we live till we shall bring many souls home with us to glory, and then may it be said -

"Servant of Christ well done,  
Rest from thy loved employ;  
The battle's fought. the victory's won,  
Enter thy rest with joy."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.

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## **A Home Question**

But are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? - 2 Chronicles 28:10

This was a home stroke. When the children of Israel had bloodthirsty thoughts towards their brethren of Judah, the prophet very earnestly dissuaded them. "Why deal ye so sternly with your brethren who are in your power, simply because they have sinned. Smite them not too furiously, for are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" How remarkably pertinent is such a question to different nations, to different sects, to different classes among men. We are too apt to look upon the sins of other nations and forget our own. Placed as we imagine ourselves to be in a pre-eminence in the midst of the peoples of the earth - we are continually criticising the acts of other tribes and nations. We look across the flood and we see that grand Republic, with the black stain of slavery upon its fair hand, and we cry out against it with all our might. We look across the channel, and we see a nation that we are continually charging with being volatile and frivolous. We cast our eyes to other peoples of the earth, and we see crimes in them, all which we very readily condemn with iron tongue. It will always be well for the pride of Great Britain if she will question herself thus. Is there not with thee, oh mistress of the seas - is there not with thee a sin against the Lord our God? Are we immaculate? Is our nation spotless? We have no slaves at home or abroad, but have we none who are oppressed and down-trodden? Are there none concerning whom it may be said, that the hire of the laborer which is kept back crieth out against them? Have we not drunkenness in our midst? Are we not in feet among the very chief of sinners, because as a nation we have received more Scripture light, and more Divine favor than any other people among the race of men? God hath dealt so well with us, that our crimes assume a monstrous shape and vivid color when they are viewed in the light of his countenance. Oh Britain, weep for thy sons and daughters, and bemoan their iniquity before the Lord, lest like Capernaum they sink to hell amid the full flood of privileges disregarded. Instead of lifting up your hand to point at the faults of others, point at your own. Let us be content to sweep our own

streets, to cleanse our own cities and make our own streams pure. Let our reformation begin at home, for we cannot hope that our remonstrances against the sin of other nations can be powerful, unless we have cleansed ourselves.

How applicable, too, is this question to the different sects, especially among Christians. How apt we all are to be plucking the mote from the eye of others. How very earnestly does the Dissenter exclaim against the sins of the Church of England, and certainly they are neither few nor small. How anxiously does the man in the Church of England, who happens to have an uncharitable bias, observe the strifes and divisions that exist among the Dissenting bodice; and as for all the different denominations, how continually will they be pointing to unscriptural traits in the order of other churches and how constantly do they forget their own infirmities. I hold that every Christian man is bound to give his honest testimony to every truth he believes. We must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, because we may be charged with sectarianism. Every great man had been called a Sectarian in his time, and every true man who stands up for the whole that God teaches, will necessarily incur that censure. But let every Christian remember that our business is to deal first with ourselves. Let each denomination acknowledge its own faults, and confess its own iniquities. I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung, as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism, and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all other sects; but I am equally clear as to our innumerable faults. Indeed, the sins and faults of our denomination may well go up against us to heaven, and withhold the dew of God's grace that we prosper not. I believe it to be the same with every other class of Christians, and I would that whenever we are prone to rebuke our fellows too severely, we would pause and ask ourselves this question: "Are there not with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God?"

The like question may be continually reiterated in the ears of the different classes into which our commonwealth is divided. You see continually plastered on the walls - "Sermons to the Working Classes." The working classes might return the compliment by papering the walls with "Sermons

to the Wealthy Classes," for if there be any that need preaching to, it is the rich. If there be any men, or any class of men, among whom the gospel has its stronghold, it is just that order and class of persons who may be fairly ranked among the working classes. I do not believe in the intense need of the working classes for evangelization any more than any other class among men. All class-preaching is, I take it, fundamentally wrong. We preach the gospel to every creature, and the Christian minister knows nothing of rich or poor, of young man or old man. The gospel is to be preached every day to everybody. No doubt the intent is good, but I think the shape which it takes is calculated to raise up party prejudices, and to arouse class feelings. We stand up, and we say to all the classes, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if the poor man has his tavern and his house of drunkenness - what are the drinking-parties of the rich? What! is there no covered and concealed drunkenness hidden under the shadows of night? What if the poor have a place where they meet for licentiousness? Is there no such licentiousness among the aristocracy? Do they not cast off those whom they have debauched, and help to feed the stream of harlotry with the refuse of their lusts? Ah, my brethren, it is not for the Christian minister to set one rank of men against another. We are alike guilty from the highest to the lowest. We have sins to confess and acknowledge, and the prophet of God must go through streets of this modern Nineveh, and he must demand that king as well as commoner should repent. We have the same gospel for all. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"

But if the question be pertinent to nations, to sects, to classes, depend upon it, It is equally so to individuals. It is the nature of truth, like the crystal, that subdivide it as you may, every minute atom of it shall assume the same shape. Break up the truth from nations to sects, or from nations to classes, and it still holds true; subdivide it, dash it into atoms of individuality, and the same question is pertinent to each. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"

I propose this morning, God helping me, to preach a very plain, faithful,



and honest sermon; praying that it may come home to some of your hearts. You will find no smoothness about my speech but the very reverse. My sword may have a very mean hilt, but I do trust it shall have a very keen edge, and that it shall cut sharp, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. I shall first of all, put a home question, secondly, I shall make a common sense enquiry, and ere I have done, I shall give you a little good advice.

I. First, then, I put A HOME QUESTION. Let me single out the persons and put the questions to them.

Doubtless I have here this morning, the moralist, the man who hates the very name of drunkenness. As for profanity, if he saw the seat of the scorner, he would pass by it at the remotest distance possible. He is a man whose hands are clean of all dishonesty. As far as he knows himself, he can say that he is upright in his business, that he is kind to his neighbors, that in everything he endeavors to keep the moral law. My friend has no religion perhaps, but still he has the outward form of morality. Bring anywhere between the wind and his nobility, the harlot, and oh, how disgusted he is! Let him but see one evening the drunkard rolling in the streets, and no language can be too severe. As for the thief, he condemns him, and condemns him rightly too. But one part of his condemnation arises from the fact that he feels himself without any guilt or accusation in this matter. He is innocent and therefore he feels that he may throw the first stone. My dear friend, I am glad to see you here this morning. I wish that all men were as moral as you are. I wish that all hated sin as much as you do; but still I have a question to ask of you, which perhaps you may not like, for you good moral people are very fond of your own righteousness. Let me ask you the question, "Is there not with you, even with you, some sin against the Lord your God?" Can you not remember any overt deed of wrong? Do you dare to tell me that you have never, never once broken a command of God? Well let it stand so, but have you never said an idle word, and have you never read that for every idle word that man shall speak the Lord shall bring him into judgment? Has your tongue always been as clean of every evil thing as God's law requires it should be? What! have you the matchless effrontery to say that? Do you think so well of yourself that you will declare that

nothing has ever come out of your mouth but that which is good? Come then a little deeper, how about your thoughts? Remember, the thought of evil is sin. Have you never thought an evil thought, never desired an evil thing? Oh, man, I will not compliment you thus; take down the ten commandments, read through the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and read it through prayerfully, and I think you will be compelled to say as you read each commandment through, "Lord have mercy upon me, for though I thought my life was good, I now discover that with me even with me, there is sin against God." I do not condemn you for finding fault with the drunkard or the harlot, but I condemn you for this, that unless you are without fault yourself, you ought not to take up the first stone. You, too, live in a glass house, why throw stones at others? I wish you would turn your attention to yourself. Physician heal thyself, builder build thine own wall, husbandman plough thine own field and trim thine own vines. What signifieth it to thee if other men are worse than thyself, will that save thee? Cook to thyself, I pray thee, or else thy morality shall be but the white winding sheet of thy dead soul. For men may be as truly damned in morality as in immorality. Morality is good enough for what it is, but for the salvation of souls it is not sufficient. There must be a living faith in a dying Savior, there must be the Spirit of God indwelling in the soul or else you can never mount to heaven. Oh remember, one sin will sink your soul lower than the lowest hell. Repent therefore, O moralist, and no longer rebuke others, but rebuke thyself.

I now turn to another individual, a very common personage, the accuser of the brethren. I fear I have not a few here of that sort. I know I have some, but I fear they may be more than I think. Do you not know the man who whenever he can say a nasty thing of a Christian will do it, who, whatever a Christian man may do will make mischief of it, who is inclined at all times to be turning that which is good into evil - a man described by Spenser in his picture of Envy in the "Faerie Queene." Envy, who always did chew between his dripping lips a toad, but "inwardly he chewed his own maw," eating his own heart, spitting on every one's good thing, imagining that every creature was as foul and as loathsome as himself? I have seen the dirty, mangy wretch, himself abominable as hell, and daring to insinuate that all others were as deceitful, and vile, and filthy as himself. This is when the evil has come to its full grown state. Such

persons then become the most loathsome creatures in all society, and the most despicable. Who is there that respects the wretch who has no respect for others; whose only life is to pull other men's characters to pieces, and whose death would be sure to follow the universal reign of truth and goodness. I have seen, however, this disease before it has broken out and assumed its basest shape. I have seen men, and women too - let me lay a stress on that second word, for there is a stress sometimes needed there, though I would not be too severe - men and women who seem to have a propensity rather to observe that which is evil in another than that which is good. Now, I will put this home question. My friend, it is all very well for you to have those eyes so sharp, and to wear those magnifying glasses for other people, but "are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What about your own life? I will tell you something about it. Whatever you think of other people is true of yourself - that is an invariable rule. We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel, and if you think you find other people's corn very gritty, the dirt was originally in your own. Depend upon it, that your judgment of others will be God's judgment of you, for with what measure ye mete the same shall be measured to you again. Now, what good have you ever got in your life by finding fault with other people? I will tell you all the good you have got. You have often been found fault with by others, you have been hated, you have been distrusted, you have lost many loves you might have received, you have sundered yourself from kind associations, and if you continue in your present course, you will be like the dreary iceberg that floats in the sea, always to be dreaded and avoided, chilling the atmosphere for miles around, and threatening destruction to the unwary mariner who happens to come into its neighborhood. Nay, more, if your calumnies have been directed against a servant of God, you have brought upon your head the most awful doom that can ever fall on man "He that toucheth my people toucheth the apple of mine eye," saith God. You have thrust your finger into the eye of God, and what shall be the doom which you shall receive? Tremble, sinner, there is nothing that brings a man's wrath into his face like finding fault with his children. He will stand many an insult, but once touch his children and his spirit boils with indignation. And so touch the children of God, find fault with them, and verily, verily, I say unto you, it were better for you that a millstone were about your neck, and that you

were cast into the depths of the sea, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" I am afraid none will take this second passage home, and the person who applies it to himself will be very angry. My dear friend, excuse me for saying that is a matter which I shall not at all regret, for if you will but be angry with yourself, you may be as angry as you please with me.

And now for the third class. I have here the man who says, "Well, I have not been touched in either of those things. I hope I am something more than moral. I am religious also. You never see me absent from my place of worship. I am as punctual as a chronometer whenever the doors are open. I add to my morality that which is better still. I attend to ceremonies; there is not one which I have not observed. I have endeavored as far as I can to carry out every precept of the Christian ritual. I feel indignant with men who break the Sabbath; I feel angry with those who have no reverent regard for God's house." My dear friend, I do not condemn you for those feelings, but permit me to put to you a question. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" The preacher stands here this morning to make a personal confession. It not unfrequently happens that in condemning others he condemns himself; and while that is a painful thing to him as a man, it is always a hopeful sign to him as a minister, because surely that which compels contrition and repentance in your pastor, may possibly be profitable to you, to bring you also to repentance. There are, however, some outwardly religious people, who, when this question is put to them, imagine that certainly they have no sins whatever. Ah, my dear hearers, "if ye say that ye have no sin, ye deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you." But if you answer this question sorrowfully, saying, "Alas, alas, I am not what I would be; I pray God to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body," then I think there is a sign of life within. But if on the contrary, you reply, "No, I have no sin, I am perfect, I am complete through my ceremonial righteousness;" ah, my dear hearer, you know not what spirit you are of. Though you have attended to the outward form, what is that unless you have received the spiritual grace? though you have been constant at the place of worship, let me ask you, what is that unless you have brought your heart with you? Have you always heard as you would desire to hear if the sermon should be your last? Have you always prayed as you would desire to pray if you

knew that rising from your knees you would have to lie down in your grave? Oh no, my brethren, we are too cold, too lukewarm, too chilled in our affections; we must mourn before God that with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God.

But again, I have to speak to a character of a very common kind. There is a man here who says, "Well, sir, I make no profession of religion - do not think of doing such a thing. I hate hypocrisy of all things in the world. It is true, sir, I commit a great many faults, and am often very loose, but then you know everybody knows me; they can see my character at once. I never cheat anybody. I would not be a cant, to go up to a place of worship and then go on as some people do afterwards; I would not be taking; the sacrament one day and then be grinding the poor on the morrow. No, sir, I am as honest as possible, and I have no doubt that when I stand before Almighty God I shall have as good a time of it as some of these professing Christians." Well, my friend, I like honesty; there is something an Englishman always likes in an honest speech; but do you know I am inclined to think that there is a little hypocrisy about you. I think you are not quite as honest as you seem to be; for if I were to put some home and very pointed questions to you, I should not be surprised if you were to get very angry. Have you not heard of the monk who said what a miserable sinner he was, and some one said, "Ay, that you are, there is no mistake about it." Then the monk grew wrath, and demanded in a passion, "What do you know against me? I will not be insulted by you." And probably if I were to take you at your word, and say to you, "Yes, that is just the fact, you are so bad a fellow as you can be," you would say, "I will not be insulted even by a minister; go along with you, sir, what do you know about me?" Your honesty is merely worn as a mask. Your conscience is uneasy, and this is a pat on the back for it, a sort of lullaby to send it to sleep. But suppose you are honest, let me ask you what there is to boast of in your honesty. A man bounces into the prisoner's box before the Court, and says, "My Lord Mayor, here I am as honest a man as can be. I am no hypocrite: I do not plead 'Not guilty,' for I am in the habit of stealing, and committing larceny, felony, highway robbery, and burglary." Now, is he not an honest man? Yes, with this little exception, that by his own confession he is a rogue. So is it with you, sir; you say you are honest, and yet on your own confession that very honesty which you plead is but a

confession of your own abominable wickedness. And you imagine that when you stand before God, if you tell him, "Lord, I never professed to love thee, I never pretended to serve thee," God will accept your impudence as honesty - that he will look upon your presumption as sincerity! Why, sir, you cannot mean what you say; you must have deceived yourself most terribly if you do. Your honesty in avowing yourself to be a slave of Satan! Your effrontery in declaring that you are steeped up to the very throat in sin, is this to be an apology for your sin? Oh! man, be wiser. But I put now this question to you. You say that you are no hypocrite, and that you hate hypocrisy. Then I ask you, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if you are no hypocrite - yet you are profane, and you curse God to his face; what if you are not a deceiver, yet are you not a drunkard, and a companion of adulterers? Ah! sir, there are sins in your heart, and loathsome ones too; your hardened acknowledgment that you are a sinner is of no value; that drunken braggadocio honesty of which you talk is of no value whatever. Get rid, I beseech you, of any hope or confidence that you may place in it.

And now if I have omitted one class, if there be one into whose heart the question has not penetrated, let me go round personally. I cannot do so literally; but let this finger range you all, and let this eye look into every face. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" Answer it not for others, but for thyself, my hearer; give a reply from the depth of thine own consciousness, and sitting in this hall, remember thine own sin, and make the silent confession of sin before God. And O may he fulfill that promise - "He that confesseth his sin and forsaketh it shall find mercy."

II. Now I come to the second point, A COMMON SENSE QUESTION. They say that common sense is worth all the other senses put together; and methinks if men could but use common sense aright, it might be a fine thing for them in matters of religion. You know what Young says - "All men think all men mortal but themselves." We believe that all men will die, but somehow or other, we fancy we shall live. Now the question I shall put reminds me of that sentence. It is this, "Who are you that you think you shall escape the punishment of sin?" When the first question

was put, you were compelled to confess that you had some guilt; who are you that God should let you off, and not punish you? who are you that you should stand clear of the sins that you have committed? All men think all men guilty but themselves. They think all men deserve to be punished; but every man has such a good excuse of his own iniquity, that he thinks surely at the last day, he may hope to creep away without the curse. Now I put this common sense question: What is there about you that your sins should not be punished as well as the sins of any other man? Who has given you an exemption? What is there about you that you should walk about this earth and fancy your sins are nothing at all, and that other persons sins are so tremendous? What fine gentleman are you that you fancy your pedigree to be so distinguished, that because the blood of counts, and dukes, and earls, and princes, and kings may happen to stain your veins, therefore you shall stand clear? Of course the sins of the lower classes are dreadful - oh, so dreadful - but what is there about yours my lord, that yours are so trivial? Surely if the poor man is to be punished, the equal law which stands for all, and which heaven will carry out, will not exempt you. Let me remind you, that so far from exempting, it may perhaps give you a double penalty, because your sin has led others into sin, and the prominence of your position, has been the means of spreading the pestilence of crime amongst others. I say to you, sir, however great you may be, what can there be in that roll of honor that you receive among men, that can in the least degree move the Lord your God? How he sniffs at this princely blood; he knows that you were all made of earth as Adam was, and that you all sprung from that gardener, that dishonest gardener, who of old lost his situation, because he would steal his Master's fruit. A pretty pedigree if you trace it up to its root! Oh, sir, there is nothing in it whatever. I beseech you, remember your sins must be punished as well as those of the vagrant, pauper, criminal.

But make way for yonder gentleman; he imagines he is not to be punished because of his respectability. He has been such an honest tradesmen; has he not been at the corner of the street since eighteen hundred and two? Whoever heard that he failed and run through the court? Is he not respected by everybody? Well, sir, and what do you think your respectability has to do with it? You have sinned sir, and you will be punished as surely as anybody else. Every iniquity shall have its just

recompense of reward. It will be in vain for you to plead your paltry respectability when you come up before the throne of God. You may wear all the stars and all the garters that man was ever befooled with; you may come before God and think that you can wear all the coronets, or all the glittering marks of respectability that ever man dreamt of; but these are nothing. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and if thy works be found evil, those works must be punished, unless thou happily hast found a substitute through whom thy sin can be put away.

What excuses men make on earth. I wish they would always make their excuses believing themselves standing before the judgment-seat. My very honest friend, over there, who said he got drunk, and he did not mind saying that he was not a cant and a hypocrite. Ah! my friend, you will not be likely to say that when the world is in a blaze, when the pillars of earth are reeling, and the stars are falling like untimely figs, then you will find that excuse shrivelled up like a scroll. Will you not be afraid to come before God, you mere moralist, and tell him you have kept his law? You, even now, know you have not, and you shall know it better then, when your conscience has been quickened. And you, formalist, you may condemn others because you attend to every outward ceremony, but the day of judgment will make you feel that ceremonies are less than nothing; and you will be compelled then to cry, "Rocks hide me; mountains on me fall, to hide me from the face of that Lamb whom I despised while I trusted in the outward form and the empty ceremony." Oh, my hearer, whoever you may be, if you have not been born again, if your faith is not fixed on Christ alone, you have no excuse whatever for your sin. You not only are guilty, be you who you may, but you are so guilty that you shall surely be punished for your trespasses. God will not give any exemption to you. Ah, Mr. Accuser, you turn king's evidence on earth, and so hope to escape the bar of man, but there are no king's evidences at the bar of God. You may accuse the church then; you shall but the more swiftly be condemned. You may rail against your fellow men at the last great day; your words of railing shall but be a witness against you. Oh, my dear hearer, if you are not in Christ, I would that I could so preach that you would begin to tremble. If Christ is not in you, your state is such that nothing but the Lord's mercy keeps you out of hell a single moment. The wrath of God has gone out against you; you are condemned already



because you have not believed in Christ. I want if I can, to draw this bow, not at a venture, but in such a way that the arrow will go home directly to the heart. "Repent and be converted, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Ye have sins, repent of them, I beseech you; bewail yourselves before God. May his Spirit give you a mind for repentance, and make you humble on account of him; and then remember there is mercy for the contrite; there is pardon for the penitent. But to the man who hugs his sin, or seeks to cloak it, there is no pardon, no mercy, but the wrath of God abideth on him, and the sword of divine justice shall soon be plunged into his heart.

III. I come now, in conclusion, to give A LITTLE ADVICE; it shall be threefold.

My first advice is, leave other people alone with regard to finding fault. My dear sir, if you have been busying yourself with the faults of others, be so good as to cease from that occupation. I know a loathsome fly that can only live on the foulest food, I will not compare you to it, but if you ever want a resemblance, there is yourself to the life. You remind me, when I hear you talk against others, of those poor creatures dressed in rags with a bag on their backs, who go through the streets picking up every stale bone and every piece of offal they can find; with this exception, that their calling is honorable and they may possibly live by it, but yours is dishonorable, it is of no service to you or to any one else. There never perhaps was an age when men's characters were less safe than now. The best man that breathes beneath the sun may live to find some putrid wretch standing up to accuse him of crimes of which he never dreamed. I beseech you all, if you hear ought against any man, do not believe it till you see it. Liars now-a-days are rife as wasps in summer. Hold off those black hands, thou devilish traducer! O slanderer, have done with thy filthy work; rake no more in the kennel, lest thou be sent to rake in the blazing kennel of hell, there to find out the faults of others which like serpents shall be set to bite thine own bosom and suck thy soul's blood throughout eternity. Take heed, slanderer, for there are hot coals of juniper and fiery irons awaiting the false tongue that lifteth up itself against God and his people.

After that first piece of advice let me give another. Treat yourselves, my

dear friends, as you have been accustomed to treat others. We get another man's character and tie it up to the halberds, and out with our great whip and begin to lay it on with all our force, and after the flogging, we wash the poor creature with a kind of briny pretense at excusing his sins. After that again we throw him back upon the bed of spikes of our own supposition that he is a great deal worse than we have made him out to be. Ah, just serve thyself so. Tie thyself up to the halberds man, and lay on the whip; do not spare him. When you have got yourself tied up, hit hard, sir, it is a great rascal you are whipping. Never mind his flesh creeping, he deserves it all. Never mind, though the white bones start from the raw red bleeding back - lay it on. Now then, a heavy blow! kill him if you can, the sooner he is dead the better; for when he is once killed as to an idea of righteousness in himself, then he will begin to lead a new life and be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Do not be afraid of whipping him, but when the cat-o'-nine-tails is heavy with clots of gore, rub the brine into his back, make it tingle. Tell him that his sins deserve the wrath of hell. Make him feel that it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of our God, for he is a consuming fire. Then throw him down on the bed of spikes, and make him sleep there if he can. Roll him on the spikes, and tell him that bad as he is, he is worse by nature than by practice. Make him feel that the leprosy lies deep within. Give him no rest. Treat him as cruelly as he could treat another. 'Twould be only his deserts. But who is this that I am telling you to treat so? Yourself, my hearer, yourself. Be as severe as you can, but let the culprit be yourself. Put on the wig, and sit upon the judgment-seat. Read the king's commission. There is such a commission for you to be a judge. It says - Judge thyself - though it says judge not others. Put on, I say, your robes; sit up there lord chief justice of the Isle of man, and then bring up the culprit. Make him stand at the bar. Accuse him; plead against him; condemn him. Say: "Take him away, jailer." Find out the hardest punishment you can discover in the statute book, and believe that he deserves it all. Be as severe as ever you can on yourself, even to the putting on the black cap, and reading the sentence of death. When you have done this, you will be in a hopeful way for life, for he that condemns himself God absolves. He that stands self-convicted, may look to Christ hanging on the cross, and see himself hanging there, and see his sins for ever put away by the sacrifice of Jesus on the tree.

The third piece of counsel, with which I am about to close, is this: My dear hearer, with you there are sins, and God must in justice punish you as well as others. I do beseech you look to the eternal interests of your own souls. I have hard work to plead this last point. May God the Holy Spirit take it in hand, and it will be done to purpose; but if he do not do it, all I can say will fall with lifeless dulness upon your ear. As well preach to the dead in the grave as to the unawakened sinner, but yet I am commanded to preach to the dead, and therefore I do preach to the dead this morning. My dear hearer, look to thine own soul's salvation. These are happy times. We are living just now in a period when the grace of God is manifesting itself in a singular manner. There is more prayer in London now than there has been in the last ten years; and I believe more outpouring of the Holy Spirit than some of us have ever known. Oh! I beseech you, look well for this auspicious gale. Now the wind is blowing, up with thy sail; when the tide is coming in full, launch thy boat, and oh may God the Spirit bear thee on towards life and happiness! But, I beseech thee, make thy first object in life thy own salvation. What is thy shop compared with thy soul? Nay, what is thy body, thine eyes, thy senses, thy reason, compared with thine immortal soul? Let this word ring in thine ears, Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! And, oh! I beseech thee, look well to thyself, lest eternity should become to thee a sea without a shore, where fiery billows shall for ever toss thy wretched soul. Eternity! Eternity! And must I climb thy topless steeps and never find a summit? Must I plough thy pathless waters and never find a haven? 'Tis even so. Then grant me, God, that I may climb in eternity the mount of bliss, and not the hill of woe; and may I sail across the sea of happiness and joy, and not across the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone! Look to yourself, sir. This is a day of good tidings for many, may it be a day of good tidings for you! I beseech you, give up thinking about men at large, about the world, and nations; what have you to do with politics? Let your politics be the politics of your own soul. Attend those other things by-and-bye, but now give yourself the favor of your own thoughts. Begin at home. I do fear there are more lost through this than almost through any other cause, next to procrastination - thinking about others and forgetting about self. I wish I could put you to-day, in some respects, like those who are in the chapel of the penitentiary, where every man sees the minister during service, but no man sees another. My dear hearer, do

recollect that what I have said I mean for you, not for other people. Take it home; and to-day, I beseech you, go to your chamber. and may God compel you by his grace to make a confession of your own sins. Seek a Savior for yourself; and oh may you find him for yourself and then begin to seek him for others. If this were a day of famine, would you be content to hear me say, "There is bread in abundance stored away in the Tower - there is a great quantity of food there?" No, you would say, "Let me go and get some of this bread for myself." You would go home, and the cries of your wife and children would compel you to arouse. You would say, "I hear there is bread, I must get it, for I cannot bear to see my wife and children starving." Oh! sinner, hear the cry of thy poor starving soul, hear, I beseech thee, the cry of thy poor body. Thy body does not wish to be cast into fire, and thy soul shrinketh from the thought of everlasting torment. Hear, then, thine own flesh and blood when it cries to thee. Let thine own nature speak; the voice of nature that dreads pain and torment, and wrath to come, and when it speaks, listen to it, and come; come I pray you, to penitence and to faith.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
To Christ, and heal your wounds.  
This is the glorious gospel-day,  
Wherein free grace abounds."

May God the Holy Spirit draw you, or drive you, whichever he pleases, so that you may be brought to life, and peace, and happiness, and salvation, through the precious blood.

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## **Honest Dealing With God**

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. - 1 John 1:8-10

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all:" and consequently he cannot have fellowship with darkness. God is light, that is purity: and as the thrice Holy One he can hold no communion with iniquity. God is light, that is knowledge, for all things are known unto the Lord, and with ignorance he has no affinity. God is light, that is truth, for he can neither err, nor break his word, and therefore he cannot smile on anything that is false. We are constantly erring, first on this side and then on that, for there is darkness in us; God is light essentially, and it is not possible for his nature to be affected by either impurity or error. Out of this attribute of his nature arises the fact that the Lord always deals with things as they are. Man invents fictions, but God creates facts. We conceive of things as they appear, but God sees them as they exist. "Man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." The dress of things impresses us, but all things are naked and open before him. The Lord never misrepresents, nor has fellowship with misrepresentation. We are for ever hurrying about with our paint and varnish and tinsel, laboring to make the meaner thing appear equal to the more precious, and spending our skill in making the sham seem as brilliant as the reality, but all this is contrary to the way of the Lord. Everything is true in God, and everything is seen in its reality by his all-discerning eye. Because he is light, he deals with things in the light, treating them as they are. If God is to deal graciously with us, we must each one stand in the light, and present ourselves before him as we are. If there be upon our lip a false word, or in our heart a false thought, or in our mind a knowingly false judgment, so far we are out of the sphere in which God can have fellowship with us. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

Yet, dear friends, the natural tendency of our heart is to try and appear to be what we are not, and we all have more or less to struggle against this tendency, for it assails the most truthful. That love of approbation which, rightly checked and kept in order, has its uses, very readily pushes men on to pretend to be better than they are. Fear of censure is an equally powerful means of producing hypocrisy. We must by all means strive against the very beginnings of this frightful evil, for if it should ever get the mastery over us it will make us altogether untruthful, and consequently we shall be far removed from all power to walk with God.

The Lord cannot stand with us on the platform of seeming and appearance, but only on the ground of what we really are, and therefore in proportion as we are untrue we cut ourselves off from God.

Our tendency to be false is illustrated in the chapter before us, for we find three grades of it there. There is first the man who lies: "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We say and do that which is untrue if while abiding under the influence of sin and falsehood we claim to have fellowship with God. If this tendency is let alone and unchecked, you will find the man growing worse and doing according to the eighth verse, wherein it is written, "We deceive ourselves." Here the utterer of the falsehood has come to believe his own lie. he has blinded his understanding and befouled his conscience till he has become his own dupe. Falsehood has saturated his nature, so that he puts darkness for light and light for darkness. This is at once his sin and his punishment; he closed his eyes so long that at length he has become stone blind. He will soon reach the complete development of his sin, which is described in the tenth verse, when the man, who first lied, and then secondly, deceived himself, becomes so audacious in his falseness as to blaspheme the Most Holy by making him a liar. It is impossible to say where sin will end; the beginning of it is as a little water in which a bird may wash, and scatter half the pool in drops, but in its progress sin, like the brook, swells into a torrent deep and broad. We must, therefore, judge ourselves very severely, lest our natural tendency to falseness should lead us to false assertion as to ourselves, and then should urge us on till we delude ourselves into the foolish belief that we are what we proudly represent ourselves to be, and then should dare in the desperation of our pride to think God himself untrue.

Our only safe course—and may the Spirit of God grant us grace to follow it—is to come to God as we actually are, and ask him to deal with us, in Christ Jesus, according to our actual condition. If we are to walk with God at all it must be in the light, and if we once walk in the light with him our condition will tally with the description of verse seven; we shall see sin in ourselves and daily feel the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us therefrom. Only on the footing of sin daily confessed and pardoned can there be any fellowship between us and the eternal God this side heaven, for that

footing is the only one consistent with the facts of the case. Let us daily ask the Lord to keep us in a truthful spirit, admitting the truth, both concerning ourselves and our Lord, feeling its power, and desiring to be taught still more of it. Let us pray him to deal with us not according to our suppositions but according to the fact, and let us entreat him never to allow us to rejoice in fancied blessings, such as might satisfy our proud, half-stupified conscience, but to give to us the real blessings of genuine forgiveness, and effectual cleansing from all unrighteousness.

I intend at this time, as God may help us, first, to consider the three courses which lie open before us in the text; then, in the second place, to consider how to follow in the right course; and thirdly, it shall be my endeavor to lead you to consider why you should do so.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE THREE COURSES laid open before us in the text.

I will suppose that we are all earnestly anxious to be in fellowship with God. We cannot bear to be his enemies any longer; distance from him has become distasteful to us; we long, like the prodigal son, to arise and go to our Father, that we may hereafter dwell in our Father's house. Our deceitful heart suggests to us, first, that we should deny our present sinfulness, and so claim fellowship with God, on the ground that we are holy, and so may draw near to the Holy God. It is suggested to our hearts that we should say that "we have no sin," and are neither guilty by act nor defiled in nature. This is a bold assertion, and he who makes it has no truth in him, but at different times and by very different persons it has been made and stoutly maintained. There are many ways in which this proud saying has been justified. Some have arrived at it by denying altogether the doctrine of original sin, "as the Pelagians do vainly talk." They will not allow that there is a fault and natural corruption in the nature of every man, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil. Now we, I trust, will ever be clear from this doctrinal error, for we know, as David did, that we were shapen in iniquity, and are

"Sprung from the man whose desperate fall  
Corrupts the blood, and taints us all."

I do not suppose that many of you are likely to say you have no sin on the ground of a disbelief of natural depravity, for many of you know this truth, not merely as a matter of creed, but as a terrible fact, which has come home to you, and caused you keenest sorrow. If, however, any of you should venture to plead that you have no sin, on the ground that your nature is not evil, I do beseech you rid your heart of that lie, for a lie it is through and through. I mind not how honest your parentage, nor how noble your ancestry, there is in you a bias towards evil; your animal passions, nay more, your mental faculties are unhinged and out of order, and unless some power beyond your own shall keep your desires in check, you will soon prove by overt acts of transgression the depravity of your nature.

It is not uncommon for others to arrive at the same conclusion by another road. They have attained to the audacity to say that they have no sin by divers feelings and beliefs which they, as a rule, ascribe to the Holy Spirit. Now, if any man says that all tendency to sin is gone from him, that his heart is at all times perfect, and his desires always pure, so that he has no sin in him whatsoever, he may have traveled a very different road from the character we just now warned, but he has reached the same conclusion, and we have but one word for both boasters, it is the word of our text—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Some, however, have reached this position by another route. They plead that though it may be they have sin, yet they are not bad at heart; they look upon sin as a technical term, and though they admit in words that they have sin, yet they practically deny it by saying, "I have a good heart at bottom; I always was well-intentioned from the very first. True, what I have done does not appear to be right according to the very severe judgment of the law of God; but I cannot help that; I only followed my nature, and cannot be blamed, for I never meant to do anything wrong, either to God or man. I have always been kind to the poor, and have done the right thing all round. I know I have—of course we all have—erred here and there, but you cannot expect a fellow to be perfect. I can't say I see anything to find fault with." Thus you in effect say you have no sin. Though you compliment God by saying with the church service, "We are



miserable sinners," you do not mean it at all; you mean that if you have sinned it has been your misfortune, and you are to be pitied rather than blamed. In so saving or feeling you prove that the truth is not in you, you are either deplorably ignorant as to what holiness is, or else you are wilfully uttering a falsehood; in either case the truth is not in you.

A fourth sort of persons say the same thing, for albeit they confess that they have sinned, they think themselves now to be in a proper and fit condition to receive pardon. "We have prayed," say they; "we have repented, we have read the Scriptures, we have attended public worship, and are as right as we can be: we have tenderness and contrition, and every right and proper feeling; our wonder is that we do not receive salvation." It would be a very great wonder to me if you did, for it does not matter how you got there, you have virtually come to the same place as others of whom I have spoken, for you believe that there is nothing about you which can operate against your salvation; you are ripe for mercy, and fit for pardon, and what is this but declaring that you are not in a sinful state? All things are ready with you, and you half insinuate that God is not ready: this is casting the blame of your unbelief upon God and disowning it yourself. According to your ideas you are a poor innocent whom God delays to bless; you are willing and earnest enough, and yet he passes you by;—do you really believe this? Then let me tell you that if any man dreams that he has a fitness or preparation for divine grace he knows not what he speaks upon, for in the very nature of things the only fitness for grace is the need of it. The idea of fitness is only another form of the vain notion of merit, and it cannot find an inch of foothold in the gospel. True penitents can see nothing in themselves to commend them to mercy, and therefore they cast themselves upon undeserved favor, feeling both unworthy and unfit, but hoping to receive forgiveness freely.

Whatever shape our denial of our sinful nature and state may take, please remember that that denial is a mere say, and nothing more,— "If we say we have no sin." You know how little value we attach to evidence of the nature of "I say," and "they say." There may be no truth whatever in such evidence, and in the present case there is nothing whatever to warrant the proud saying—"We have no sin." There will come a day when the righteous will have no sin, as a matter of fact; but now, whether saint or

sinner, if you say "I have no sin," you say it, and that is all. The words sound very prettily, but there is no fact to correspond with them.

Moreover, the idea of having no sin is a delusion; you are altogether deceived if you say so; the truth is not in you, and you have not seen things in the true light; you must have shut your eyes to the high requirements of the law, you must be a stranger to your own heart, you must be blind to your own conduct every day, and you must have forgotten to search your thoughts and to weigh your motives, or you would have detected the presence of sin. He who cannot find water in the sea is not more foolish than the man who cannot perceive sin in his members. As the salt flavours every drop of the Atlantic, so does sin affect every atom of our nature. It is so sadly there, so abundantly there, that if you cannot detect it you are deceived.

This self-deceit has taken you a good deal of persuading and ingenious trickery. To deceive another requires a measure of cunning, but to deceive yourself needs far more. Our deceitful heart reveals an almost Satanic shrewdness in self-deception, it readily enough makes the worse appear the better reason, and it states a lie so that it wears the fashion of truth. If you say you have no sin you have achieved a fearful success, you have put out your own eyes, and perverted your own reason! You have fed upon falsehood till it has entered into your very being, and rendered you incapable of truth. I know you claim to be very sincere in your belief of your own rightness, and it would be very hard to persuade you out of your fond notions; tent this is all the worse, for so much the more completely have you deceived yourself. Now that you call darkness light, and boast that your blindness is true sight, we mourn over you as all but hopeless; and we fear lest the Lord should leave you to perish, because you cling so fast to a lie.

In how many ways men manage to deceive themselves! They can do it by irreligion and by religion too; by outrageous sin and by boastful sanctity. They can mislead themselves by precious hymns,—which rightly understood speak truth, but wrongly turned speak desperate falsehoods, by dwelling upon the work of the Spirit of God,—which rightly taken is greatly for our consolation, but taken after the Pharisaic manner may itself be misconstrued and made to furnish wind for the bubble of vain

glory. O friends, it is not without effort that men pervert the best things into excuses for pride, yea, turn even their meat into poison. It is not an easy thing to get up the imposture of sinlessness, nor is it an easy matter to keep the cheat from collapsing. The baseless fabric must be deftly put together, and it will need much propping up and buttressing; it is almost as hard to seem to be as to be, perhaps I might say it is harder. Pity that men should be at such pains to make fools of themselves.

Let it be remembered, however, that while the man who has deceived himself says, "I have no sin," he has not deceived the Lord. God sees sin in us if we do not. The ostrich is reported to bury her head in the sand, and then to suppose herself safe, but she is the more speedily taken; and we may shut our eyes and say, "have no sin," but in so doing instead of securing eternal salvation we shall as practically give ourselves up to the destroyer as the bird of the desert is fabled to do. Let a man say, "I have no sin," and he has condemned himself out of his own mouth, for the text says of such a man the truth is not in him, and he who hath not truth in him is not saved. The absence of confession of present sin means the absence of the light of truth, and sincerity. All sorts of people God saves, however black their sins, but the man of a false spirit, the Pharisaic washer of the outside of the cup, while the inside is foul, is the last person who is likely to be saved. A main point in conversion consists in a man's being honest, for it is the honest and good ground which receives the seed. If you preach the gospel among the roughest and most profane of men, there is more hope of success among them than among hypocritical professors. Open enmity and opposition are better than that pretended friendship which begins and ends with the shallow compliments of empty formalism. Outward religiousness, unattended by heart piety, does a man serious injury, by rendering him superficial and unreal in all that he does in reference to God, and as God desires truth in the inward parts he will not parley with dishonest men. Pretend and profess and boast what ye will, but this know, that the living God abhors everything which is not according to the strictest truth.

Now, all this may serve for our guidance when seeking the Lord. Awakened sinners often say, "If I could feel my heart was right towards God, then I could believe that he would look upon me in mercy." How

wrong is this! If you did feel that all was right, it would be an untruthful feeling, for by nature all is wrong. "Oh, sir," say you, "if I could but feel that now at last I am as I ought to be before God, as tender and as penitent as he would have me to be, then I could have hope." No, but my dear friend, such a feeling would not be according to truth, for no man is as tender and as penitent as he ought to be; and if you felt you were, you would be feeling a falsehood, and so the truth would not be in you. I do not want you to feel that you are what you ought to be: I pray that you may own that you are not what you ought to be; I would have you feel unrest, and absence of anything like satisfaction, for such feelings will be according to the truth. I beseech you never claim to experience feelings which you do not feel, nor make hypocritical confessions of sin which you have never committed, nor pretend to a repentance which is not in you, for the Lord hates all shams, and will only deal with you according to truth. If you are conscious of impenitence, go to the Lord and tell him you have a hard heart, which will not feel either the terrors of his law or the meltings of his love: in fine, go to him just as you are, and confess what you are, and ask him to deal with you in Christ Jesus as he sees you to be. That is the only way, and the plan of pretending that we are now free from sin will not work and bring us blessing; for "we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

The second course which is open to us is the one which I trust the divine Spirit may lead us to follow, to lay bare our case before God exactly as it stands. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." Please to observe that John does not say, "If we confess our sin." He had been speaking of that in the eighth verse, but here he uses the plural, to include both sin in its essence and in its actual development in our life. We are to confess both the inward sin and the outward fruit of it. We must say, "Lord, I own with shame that as my nature is corrupt such has my life been; I am a sinner both by nature and by practice." Make the confession of the two things, of the cause and the effect, of the original depravity—the foul source, and then of the actual sin which is the polluted stream. And if you say, "How am I to confess it?" I would say this—To confess sin does not mean merely on some one occasion to repeat a catalogue of sins before God in private, nor at certain set seasons to rehearse a list of our faults, but it means a life-

long acknowledgment of our sin. We must take our places as then who have sinned, and never attempt to occupy the position of innocent beings. We are to look towards God as a man ought to look who has transgressed. Do you understand me? The Pharisee took up the posture and spirit of a man who had no sin in him and said, "God, I thank thee." He was not confessing sin, but claiming righteousness, and he was not accepted because he was out of the light, that is to say, he was not speaking and feeling according to truth. But the republican, though he said little, and made no confession of sin in detail, yet by his posture, by his smiting on his breast, by his not daring to look up, by the sigh which he heaved, was virtually confessing sin. When a man prayerfully begs that he may feel the power of the blood of Jesus, he is confessing sin, for is not the blood of Jesus needful because of our sin? The daily exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is a confession of sin, for nobody would need to believe in a Savior unless he had sin. Baptism is a confession of sin,—who needs to be buried with Christ if he be alive by a righteousness of his own? To come to the communion table, and remember there the atoning sacrifice, is a confession of sin; for we should need no remembrance of our blessed Substitute if we were not sinners. Confession of sin is best carried out when we deal with God as those who have offended him, not as those who feel that they are innocent. We are to act before the Lord as those who know that sin is in them. And how ought such to behave? They will walk with God very humbly, and watchfully, jealous lest inbred corruption should get the mastery of them. Such persons will daily cry to the strong for strength, and what is prayer for strength but a confession of weakness caused by sin? What is watchfulness but a confession that our nature still needs holding in check. So ought we to watch as those who feel that the battle is not fought, and therefore we cannot lay down our Armour and our sword. We should so live as those who know that the race is not run, and therefore they press forward. We ought to be prayerfully dependent upon God, as those who know that if they were left by divine grace they would go back unto perdition.

When a sinner feels he has no natural fitness for receiving the grace of God; when a broken spirit cries, "Oh, what a wretch I am! Not only my past sin but my present feelings disqualify me for the love of God; seem to be made of hell-hardened steel," he is confessing that sin is in him.

Methinks I hear him sighing,

"The rooks can rend; the earth can quake;  
The seas can roar; the mountains shake:  
Of feeling all things show some sign,  
But this unfeeling heart of mine!

"To hear the sorrow thou hast felt,  
Dear Lord, an adamant would melt:  
But I can read each moving line  
And nothing move this heart of mine!

"Thy judgments, too, unmoved I hear,  
Amazing thought! which devils fear:  
Goodness and wrath in vain combine  
To stir this stupid heart of mine."

Now, this piteous outcry because all is wrong within is virtually a confession of sin, and a truthful one too, for all is wrong. If you feel you are desperately bad, remember you are worse than you think you are. Your case is in itself desperate, hopeless, damnable! If you feel that you are lost, you do not feel too strongly, you are in the true light where God will meet with you. The Lord will not consent to parley with you on the ground that you are not much of a sinner, and that after all your sin is not a great evil. No, he will meet you where the truth is and nowhere else; when you confess that you are unworthy of his pity, you are owning the truth, and when you feel guilty, you feel what is really fact; on this footing of truth, sad truth though it be, the Lord will meet with you through the atoning blood. It is in your vileness that sovereign grace o'er sin abounding will come to you and cleanse you, and therefore the sooner you come to the honest truth the better for you, for the sootier will you obtain joy and peace through believing in Christ. The text means just this—Treat God truthfully, and he will treat you truthfully. Make no pretensions before God, but lay bare your soul, let him see it as it is, and then he will be faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Mark the beauty of that expression; God will deal with you in faithfulness. His nature is mercy, and you naturally expect that if you confess your sin to a merciful God, he will deal

mercifully with you and be faithful to his nature; and he will be so. But he has also given a promise that if the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and turn unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him; depend upon it he will be faithful to his promise. The blood of Jesus Christ has made a full atonement, and God will be faithful to that atonement. He will deal with you on the grounds of the covenant of grace, of which the sacrifice of Jesus is the seal, and therein also he will be true to you.

What a blessing it is that the Lord will be faithful and just to you in the cleansing of you from all the sinfulness of your nature. I pray you deal honestly with God and say to him, "Cleanseth thou me from secret faults; thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou wilt make me to know wisdom, purge me, therefore, O Lord, and I shall be clean." Suppose you go to a surgeon because you have some deadly polypus or cancer growing upon you: you want to have it removed, and you know there are a great many physicians who will profess to cure such things, but in reality only give temporary ease. From all these you keep clear. You are well aware that if only a little root of the growth should be left it will grow again. So you say outright to the surgeon, "Sir, there is my disease; I will tell you all the symptoms of it: I only ask to have a thorough cure, cost me what it may in money or pain. I make no reserve, do just whatever you think best in the case, but make clean work of it. If you have the knife in your hand, do not spare it out of pity for my pain, but be just with me, cut out the disease, roots and all, so that it may be a complete cure." Even in the same manner, go to the Lord, and say, "Lord, there is my sin, I confess it all; do not suffer me to have any peace unless it is true peace, do not let me have any comfort unless I get it from Christ; and if there must be more conviction of sin and more alarm of conscience, if there must be deeper gashes and sterner cuts into my soul, Lord, do not spare me; be pleased to purge me from the secret depravity of my nature, and make me pure. Thy holiness is what I crave after, and I cannot be satisfied till thou make me holy, even as thou art holy." This is the way to plead with God, and the only way. Confess the sin, and then he will be faithful and just to give you the double cure, namely, first, the forgiveness, and next, the cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Now, there are still some who say, "Well, yes, I think I could go to God in that way, sir, but oh, my past sins prevent me. I could tell him I am sinful, I could ask him to renew my nature, I could lay myself bare before him, but oh, my past sins; all might yet be well if I had not so sinned? Ah, my brethren, that brings out a third course which lies before you, which I hope you will not follow, namely, to deny actual sin. The very thing which I bless God you cannot do, would seal your doom, for it would lead you to make God a liar, and so his word could not abide in you. If you felt able to say, "I have not sinned," in proportion as you said and felt that you would put yourself out of the light in which God alone can walk with you. Some get to that point by saying that what they did was not Really sin to any extent; or, at any rate, if it would have been sin in other people, it was no sin in them; considering their strong passions, they wonder they were not worse, and considering the circumstances of their case, they do not see how they could have done otherwise: in a word, they have not sinned at all. There is another class who say, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" This self-justification clearly makes God a liar. For what means the cross of Calvary, what mean those streams of blood, what mean those agonies to the death? God has acted out a gigantic lie if we have no sin, for he has provided a propitiation for a thing which does not exist. O hideous profanity! O vile blasphemy! thus to insinuate that the great sacrifice of love divine was an acted falsehood. Brethren, we have sinned, sinned far beyond anything we know, and the only wise and true way is to confess it before God.

I find the first part of my subject has occupied much more time than I thought, and therefore I will be exceedingly brief upon the second head.

II. LET US NOW CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FOLLOW THIS COURSE, which is the only right and acceptable one, namely, to confess our sin. I suppose I am speaking to those who are in earnest about their salvation. O my friends, lay bare your consciences before the law of God. Go and open the twentieth chapter of Exodus and read the ten commands; think of their spirituality,—remember how he that looketh on a woman to lust after her committeth adultery with her in his heart; and let the law with all its blaze of light flash flame into your soul. Do not shirk the facts or shrink from knowing their full force, but feel the power of the



condemning law. Then recollect your individual sins; recall them one by one: those greater sins, those huge blots upon your character, do not try to forget them. If you have forgotten them, raise them from the grave and think them over, and feel them as your own sins. Do not lay them at the door of anyone else. Do not look at circumstances in order to find an alleviation for your guilt, but set them in the light of God's countenance. Remember, the sins of your holy things, your Sabbath sins, your sanctuary sins, your sins against the Bible, your sins against prayer, your sins against the love of the Father, the blood of Christ, and the strivings of the Spirit. Oh, how many are these! Think of your sins of omission, your failures in duty, your shortcomings in spirit. Repent of what you have done, and what you have not done. How both these forms of iniquity may stagger and humble you! Think of your sins of heart. How cold has that heart been towards your Savior! Your sins of thought, how wrongly your mind has often judged; your sins of imagination, what filthy creatures your imagination has portrayed in lively colors on the wall. Think of all the sins of your desires and delights, and hopes and fears. What faculty is there that has not been defined? "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." We are bound to confess the aggravations of our sin, how we sinned against light and against knowledge, against conscience, and against divine love, against the monitions of the Holy Spirit, against tender warnings which came from his gentle voice. Oh, when some of us err, every ounce of our sin has as much evil in it as a ton of other men's sins. Let us take care that we confess all. And then let us try to see the heinousness of all sin as an offense against a kind, good, loving God, a sin against a perfect law, intended for our good. Let us remember our wanton sins, our mischievous sins, sins which hurt ourselves, foolish sins, despicable sins, into which our spirits have descended, even though we have known the nobility of holiness, and had some fellowship with God. I beseech you, dear hearer, try to fix your eye on Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice, and live as a believer in him, and this will make you live as a constant confessor of sin; for when the wounds of Jesus speak peace they also preach penitence, and when the atonement gives us rest it also makes us meek and lowly in heart under a sense of abiding faultiness. As you see what Jesus suffered you will see how you sinned, and as you observe the glory of his merit you will see the horror of your own demerit. Thus may you daily, as long as ever you live, confess sin and find

cleansing from all unrighteousness.

III. LET US CONSIDER WHY WE SHOULD CONFESS SIN. I shall say first, do so because it is right. Religious lie-telling is a dreadful thing, and there is plenty of it; but if I could be saved by masking my condition before God, I would not like to be saved in that way. The man whose heart is in the light loves to do the right. It would be a great dishonor to God to suppose it possible that he will save us in any manner which would not accord with truth. It is right that we should come before God as we are, and plead for mercy through Jesus Christ, and therefore let us do it.

Moreover, upon some of us it is imperative, because we cannot do anything else. There may possibly be a person here who could say, "I have no sin"; but I could not. Why, if I were to claim innocence either of nature or practice the words would choke me. Say I have no sin! I should expect to turn black in the face and fall down dead, it would be so gross a falsehood. To say I have no sin, why there is no one part of my whole nature but what would protest against such an assertion! I am shut up to come to God as a sinner, I cannot help it; and I would tell God that every one in this place felt shut up to it too, for it is the intent and design of the law to shut the sinner up in order that he may be compelled to accept salvation on free grace terms through Jesus Christ. You can never catch a fish in a net while there is one mesh through which he can escape, but when all around the meshes are so small that the fish cannot get out, then we have taken him. When you are such a sinner that you cannot plead that you have no sin, nor yet that you have not sinned, but are quite shut up to be saved by grace, then you are in Christ's net, and he will lift you out, and the Fisher of Men shall have cause to rejoice.

Besides, beloved friends, suppose we have tried to appear before God what we are not, God has not been deceived, for he is not mocked. We may get up a very respectable character to please ourselves, and give it a few touches every now and then, just to set it off and improve it, and we may find a number of people to join with us to form a mutual admiration society, and our friends may cheerfully hear us talk about what wonderful beings we are, provided we will sit and hear them glorify themselves in return: but neither with one witness nor a thousand witnesses will our

boasts be one jot more true, or likely to be believed in heaven. God is not misled, he looks at all boasters of their own purity, and says, "When you say you have no sin you make me a liar, and my word is not in you, for if the truth were in you, you would know that sin is in you; and if my word were in you, you would also confess that you have sinned, and humble yourselves before me."

I exhort thee, sinner, to give up all thine attempts to feel right and to be right before coming to God in Christ Jesus. Have you not made a great failure of it already? You thought you were getting right for Christ, but just then you fell in the worst possible way. You have been trying to repair your old clothes and make yourself respectable before coming to Christ; but every time you have touched the garment the rent has grown worse. Give up all attempting to prepare for grace, and come to Jesus Christ just as you are. When you have been trying to make yourself feel that you are right and proper for Christ, you have been sinning against God, for you have been flying in the teeth of his witness, which is, that Jesus Christ came, not to save the righteous, but sinners. In proportion as you try to make yourself out to be righteous you have denied the testimony of God. May the Spirit of God help you to come to your heavenly Father on the ground of truth, confessing that you have sinned—that is the truth for you; and on the ground that Christ died for sinners—that is the truth on God's side which enables him to smile on sinners.

Now, what is your state this morning? Cold as an iceberg as to divine things? Come and tell the Lord you are an iceberg, and Isle him to thaw you. What is your state—hard as a rock, or like a nether millstone? Is there no feeling? Come and tell the Lord that you do not feel. Oh, is there no trace of any good feeling in you? Come to my Lord without a trace of feeling, and tell him just what you are; and oh, if you can dare over the head of all your sin and sinfulness to say, "Nevertheless, I rest myself on the blood that cleanses from all sin and I beseech thee, O Lord, seeing I confess my sin, to cleanse me from all unrighteousness," you will find him faithful and just to do it. Come as the citizens of Calais did to King Edward III when the city was captured; come with ropes about your neck, owning that if sentence be executed upon you, you deserve it; come at once in all your filthiness and dishabille; come with no jewels in your

ears, with no ornaments upon your necks, and with no recommendation whatever; come as sinners by nature, and as sinners by practice. Plead nothing that looks like goodness, but come in your sin. Do not try to put one touch of paint on those cheeks of yours, nor imitate the flush of health upon that consumptive countenance. Come honestly as you are, and say "Lord, look at me as I am, a worse sinner than even I think myself to be, and then show the infinity of thy free grace, and the power of Jesus' dying love in saving me, even me." Ah, my brethren, you will not be long without peace if you draw nigh to God in that fashion. Fling away any preparations, fitnesses, commendations, and hopefulneses, and take my Lord Jesus, as empty-handed sinners take him. Meet him just as he is, and just as you are. God will deal with you truthfully. He will never cast away a sinner that comes to him according to truth. For my own part, I mean to come to him always as a sinner. I know I am saved, but I never hope to get one inch beyond that verse,— "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin," for only so can I walk in the light as he is in the light.

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## Honey In The Mouth

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. - John 16:14-15.

Beloved friends, here you have the Trinity, and there is no salvation apart from the Trinity. It must be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "All things that the Father hath are mine", saith Christ, and the Father hath all things. They were always his; they are still his; they always will be his; and they cannot become ours till they change ownership, till Christ can say, "All things that the Father hath are mine"; for it is by virtue of the representative character of Christ standing as the surety of the covenant that the "all things" of the Father are passed over to the Son, that they might be passed over to us. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and of his fullness have all we received." But yet we are so dull that, though the conduit-pipe is laid on to the great fountain, we cannot get at it. We are lame; we cannot reach thereto; and in comes the third Person of the divine unity, even the Holy Spirit, and he receives of the things of Christ, and then delivers them over to us. So we do actually receive, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, what is in the Father.

Ralph Erskine, in his preface to a sermon upon the fifteenth verse, has a notable piece. He speaks of grace as honey—honey for the cheering of the saints, for the sweetening of their mouths and hearts; but he says that in the Father "the honey is in the flower, which is at such a distance from us that we could never extract it." In the Son "the honey is in the comb, prepared for us in our Immanuel, God-Man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, 'All things that the Father hath are mine; and mine for your use and behoof': it is in the comb. But then, next, we have honey in the mouth; the Spirit taking all things, and making application thereof, by showing them unto us, and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these 'all things'; yea, not only eat the honey, but the honeycomb with the honey; not only his benefits, but himself." It is a very beautiful division of the subject. Honey in the flower in God, as in

mystery; really there. There never will be any more honey than there is in the flower. There it is. But how shall you and I get at it? We have not wisdom to extract the sweetness. We are not as the bees that are able to find it out. It is bee-honey, but not man-honey. Yet you see in Christ it becomes the honey in the honeycomb, and hence he is sweet to our taste as honey dropping from the comb. Sometimes we are so faint that we cannot reach out a hand to grasp that honeycomb; and, alas! there was a time when our palates were so depraved that we preferred bitter things, and thought them sweet. But now the Holy Ghost has come, we have got the honey in the mouth, and the taste that enjoys it; yea, we have now so long enjoyed it, that the honey of grace has entered into our constitution, and we have become sweet unto God; his sweetness having been conveyed by this strange method unto us.

Beloved friends, I scarcely need say to you, do keep the existence of the Trinity prominent in your ministry. Remember, you cannot pray without the Trinity. If the full work of salvation requires a Trinity, so does that very breath by which we live. You cannot draw near to the Father except through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. There is a trinity in nature undoubtedly. There certainly constantly turns up the need of a Trinity in the realm of grace; and when we get to heaven we shall understand, perhaps, more fully what is meant by the Trinity in unity. But if that is a thing never to be understood, we shall at least apprehend it more lovingly; and we shall rejoice more completely as the three tones of our music shall rise up in perfect harmony unto Him who is one and indivisible, and yet is three, for ever blessed, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God.

Now for the point which I am to open up to you this morning; though I cannot do it, but he must do it. We must sit here, and have the text acted out upon ourselves. "He shall glorify me. He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." May it be so just now!

First, what the Holy Spirit does: "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Secondly, what the Holy Spirit aims at and really effects: "He shall glorify me." And then, thirdly, how in doing both these things he is the Comforter. It is the Comforter that does this; and we shall find our richest, surest comfort in this work of the Holy Spirit, who shall take of

the things of Christ, and show them unto us.

I. First, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES. It is clear, beloved friends, that the Holy Spirit deals with the things of Christ. As our brother, Archibald Brown, said, when expounding the chapter just now, he does not aim at any originality. He deals with the things of Christ. All things that Christ had heard from his Father he made known to us. He kept to them. And now the Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and of nothing else. Do not let us strain at anything new. The Holy Ghost could deal with anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath—the story of the ages past, the story of the ages to come, the inward secrets of the earth, the evolution of all things, if there be an evolution. He could do it all. Like the Master, he could handle any topic he chose; but he confines himself to the things of Christ, and therein finds unutterable liberty and boundless freedom.

Do you think, dear friend, that you can be wiser than the Holy Spirit? And if his choice must be a wise one, will yours be a wise one if you begin to take of the things of something or somebody else? You will have the Holy Spirit near you when you are receiving of the things of Christ; but, as the Holy Spirit is said never to receive anything else, when you are handling other things on the Sabbath-day, you will be handling them alone; and the pulpit is a dreary solitude, even in the midst of a crowd, if the Holy Ghost is not with you there. You may, if you please, excogitate a theology out of your own vast brain; but the Holy Ghost is not with you there. And, mark you! there are some of us that are resolved to tarry with the things of Christ, and keep on dealing with them as far as he enables us to do so; and we feel that we are in such blessed company with the divine Spirit, that we do not envy you that wider range of thought, if you prefer it.

The Holy Spirit still exists, and works, and teaches in the church; but we have a test by which to know whether what people claim to be revelation is revelation or not: "He shall receive of mine." The Holy Ghost will never go farther than the cross, and the coming of the Lord. He will go no farther than that which concerns Christ. "He shall receive of mine." When, therefore, anybody whispers in my ear that there has been revealed to him this or that, which I do not find in the teaching of Christ and his apostles, I tell him that we must be taught by the Holy Spirit. His

one vocation is to deal with the things of Christ. If we do not remember this, we may be carried away by vagaries, as many have been. Those who will have to do with other things, let them; but as for us, we shall be satisfied to confine our thoughts and our teaching within these limitless limits: "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

I like to think of the Holy Spirit handling such things. They seem so worthy of him. Now has he got among the hills. Now is his mighty mind among the infinities when he has to deal with Christ, for Christ is the Infinite veiled in the finite. Why, he seems something more than infinite when he gets into the finite; and the Christ of Bethlehem is less to be understood than the Christ of the Father's bosom. He seems, if it were possible, to have out-infinite the infinite, and the Spirit of God has themes here worthy of his vast nature.

When you have been the whole Sunday morning whittling away a text to the small end of nothing, what have you done? A king spent a day in trying to make a portrait on a cherry-stone—a king, who was ruling empires; and here is a minister, who professes to have been called of the Holy Ghost to the employ of taking of the things of Christ, who spent a whole morning with precious souls, who were dying while he spoke to them, in handling a theme concerning which it did not signify the turn of a hair whether it was so or not. Oh, imitate the Holy Spirit! If you profess to have him dwelling in you, be moved by him. Let it be said of you in your measure, as of the Holy Ghost without measure, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

But, next, what does the Holy Ghost do? Why, he deals with feeble men, yea, he dwells with us poor creatures. I can understand the Holy Ghost taking the things of Christ, and rejoicing therein; but the marvel is, that he should glorify Christ by coming and showing these things to us. And yet, brethren, it is among us that Christ is to get his glory. Our eyes must see him. An unseen Christ is little glorious; and the things of Christ unknown, the things of Christ untasted and unloved seem to have lost their brilliance to a high degree. The Holy Spirit, therefore, feeling that to show a sinner the salvation of Christ glorifies him, spends his time, and has been spending these centuries, in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us. Ah! it is a great condescension on his part to show



them to us; but it is a miracle, too. If it were reported that suddenly stones had life, and hills had eyes, and trees had ears, it would be a strange thing; but for us who were dead and blind and deaf in an awful sense—for the spiritual is more emphatic than the natural—for us to be so far gone, and for the Holy Ghost to be able to show the things of Christ to us, is to his honor. But he does do it. He comes from heaven to dwell with us. Let us honor and bless his name.

I never could make up my mind which to admire most as an act of condescension; the incarnation of Christ, or the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The incarnation of Christ is marvellous—that he should dwell in human nature; but, observe, the Holy Ghost dwells in human nature in its sinfulness; not in perfect human nature, but in imperfect human nature; and he continues to dwell, not in one body, which was fashioned strangely for himself, and was pure and without taint; but he dwells in our body. Know ye not that they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which were defiled by nature, and in which a measure of defilement still remains, despite his indwelling? And this he has done these multitudes of years, not in one instance, nor in thousands of instances only, but in a number that no man can number. He continues still to come into contact with sinful humanity. Not to the angels, nor to the seraphim, nor to the cherubim, nor to the host who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, does he show the things of Christ; but he shall show them unto us.

I suppose that it means this, that he takes of the words of our Lord—those which he spoke personally, and by his apostles. Let us never allow anybody to divide between the word of the apostles and the word of Christ. Our Savior has joined them together. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." And if any begin rejecting the apostolic word, they will be outside the number for whom Christ prays; they shut themselves out by that very fact. I wish that they would solemnly recollect that the word of the apostles is the word of Christ. He tarried not long enough, after he had risen from the dead, to give us a further exposition of his mind and will; and he could not have given it before his death, because it would have been unsuitable. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot

bear them now." After the descent of the Holy Ghost, the disciples were prepared to receive that which Christ spoke by his servants Paul and Peter, and James and John. Certain doctrines which we are sometimes taunted about as being not revealed by Christ, but by his apostles, were all revealed by Christ, every one of them. They can all be found in his teaching; but they are very much in the parabolic form. It is after he has gone up into glory, and has prepared a people by his Spirit to understand the truth more fully, that he sends his apostles, and says, "Go forth, and open up to those whom I have chosen out of the world the meaning of all I said." The meaning is all there, just as all the New Testament is in the Old; and sometimes I have thought that, instead of the Old being less inspired than the New, it is more inspired. Things are packed away more tightly in the Old Testament than in the New, if possible. There are worlds of meaning in one pregnant line in the Old Testament; and in Christ's words it is just so. He is the Old Testament to which the Epistles come in as a kind of New Testament; but they are all one and indivisible; they cannot be separated.

Well, now, the words of the Lord Jesus, and the words of his apostles, are to be expounded to us by the Holy Spirit. We shall never get at the center of their meaning apart from his teaching. We shall never get at their meaning at all, if we begin disputing about the words, saying, "Now, I cannot accept the words." If you will not have the shell, you will never have the chick. It is impossible. "The words are not inspired," they say. Here is a man in the witness-box, and he has sworn to speak the truth, and he says that he has done so; and now he is cross-examined, and he says, "Now, I have spoken the truth, but I do not stand by my words." The cross-examining lawyer has got hold of a certain statement of his. The witness says, "Oh, I do not swear to the words, you know." The question is asked, "What, then, do you swear to? There is nothing else. We do not know anything about your meaning. All that you have sworn to must be your words." But what the fellow means is this, that he is a liar; he is a perjurer. Well, I say no more than common-sense would suggest to you if you were sitting in a court. Now, if a man says, "I have spoken the truth, but still I do not swear to the words;" what is there left? If we have no inspiration in the words, we have got an impalpable inspiration that oozes away between your fingers, and leaves nothing behind.

Well, take the words, and never dispute over them. Still, into their soulfulness of meaning you cannot come until the Holy Ghost shall lead you into them. They that wrote them for you did not fully understand what they wrote in many instances. There were some of them who enquired and searched diligently to know what manner of things those were whereof the Holy Ghost had spoken to them, and of which he had made them speak. And you to whom the words come will have to do the same. You must go and say, "Great Master, we thank thee for the Book with all our hearts; and we thank thee for putting the Book into words; but now, good Master, we will not cavil over the letter, as did the Jews and the rabbis and the scribes of old, and so miss thy meaning. Open wide the door of the words, that we may enter into the secret closet of the meaning; and teach us this, we pray thee. Thou hast the key. Lead us in."

Dear friends, whenever you want to understand a text of Scripture, try to read the original. Consult anybody who has studied what the original means; but remember that the quickest way into a text is praying in the Holy Ghost. Pray the chapter over. I do not hesitate to say that, if a chapter is read upon one's knees, looking up at every word to him that gave it, the meaning will come to you with infinitely more light than by any other method of studying it. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." He shall re-deliver the Master's message to you in the fullness of its meaning.

But I do not think that is all that the text means. "He shall receive of mine." In the next verse the Lord goes on to say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." I do think that it means, therefore, that the Holy Spirit will show us the things of Christ. Here is a text for us—"The things of Christ." Christ speaks as if he had not any things just then which were specially his own, for he had not died then; he had not risen then; he was not pleading then as the great Intercessor in heaven: all that was to come. But still, he says, "Even now all things that the Father hath are mine: all his attributes, all his glory, all his rest, all his happiness, all his blessedness. All that is mine, and the Holy Ghost shall show that to you."

But I might almost read my text in another light, for he has died, and risen, and gone on high, and lo, he cometh. His chariots are on the way. Now, there are certain things which the Father hath, and which Jesus

Christ hath, which are truly the things of Christ, emphatically the things of Christ; and my prayer is, that you and I, preachers of the gospel, might have this text fulfilled in us: "He shall take of mine—my things—and shall show them unto you."

Suppose, dear brethren, that we are going to preach the word again, and the Holy Spirit shows to us our Master in his Godhead. Oh, how we will preach him as divine—how surely he can bless our congregation! How certainly he must be able to subdue all things unto himself, seeing that he is very God of very God! It is equally sweet to see him as man. Oh, to have the Spirit's view of Christ's manhood! distinctly to recognize that he is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and that in his infinite tenderness he will compassionate me, and deal with my poor people, and with the troubled consciences that are round me; that I have still to go to them, and tell them of One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as they still are! Oh, my brothers, if we once, nay, if every time before we preach, we get a view of Christ in his divine and human natures, and come down fresh from that vision to speak about him, what glorious preaching it would be for our people!

It is a glorious thing to get a view of the offices of Christ by the Holy Spirit; but especially of his office as a Savior. I have often said to him, "You must save my people. It is no business of mine. I never set up in that line, or put over my door that I was a saviour; but thou hast been apprenticed to this trade. Thou hast learned it by experience, and thou dost claim it as thine own honor. Thou art exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior. Do thine own work, my Lord." I took this text, and used it with sinners the other Sunday night, and I know that God blessed it when I said to them, "May the Holy Ghost show you that Christ is a Savior! A physician does not expect you to make any apologies when you call upon him because you are ill, for he is a physician, and he wants you in order that he may prove his skill; so Christ is a Savior, and you need not apologize for going to him; because he cannot be a Savior if there is not somebody to be saved." The fact is, Christ cannot get hold of us anywhere except by our sin. The point of contact between the sick one and the physician is the disease. Our sin is the point of contact between us and Christ. Oh, that the Spirit of God would take of Christ's divine offices,

especially that of a Savior, and show them unto us!

Did the Holy Ghost ever show to you these thing of Christ, namely, his covenant engagements? When he struck hands with the Father, it was that he would bring many sons unto glory; that of those whom the Father gave him he would lose none, but that they should be saved; for he is under bonds to his Father to bring his elect home. When the sheep have to pass again under the hand of him that telleth them, they will go under the rod one by one, each one having the blood-mark; and he will never rest till the number in the heavenly fold shall tally with the number in the book. So I believe and it has seemed delightful to me to have this shown to me when I have gone to preach. It is a dull, dreary, wet, foggy morning. There are only a few present. Yes; but they are picked people, whom God hath ordained to be there, and there will be the right number there. I shall preach, and there will be some saved. We do not go at a peradventure; but, guided by the blessed Spirit of God, we go with a living certainty, knowing that God has a people that Christ is bound to bring home, and bring them home he will; and while he shall see of the travail of his soul, his Father shall delight in every one of them. If you get a clear view of that, it will give you backbone and make you strong. "He shall take of mine, and shall show you my covenant engagements, and when you see them you shall be comforted."

But, beloved, the Holy Ghost favors you by taking what is peculiarly Christ's, namely, his love, and showing that to you. We have seen it, seen it sometimes more vividly than at other times. But if the full blaze of the Holy Spirit were to be concentrated upon the love of Christ, and our eyesight enlarged to its utmost capacity, it would be such a vision that heaven could not excel it. We should sit with our Bible before us in our study, and feel, "Well now, here is a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell. Such a man is caught up into the third heaven." Oh, to see the love of Christ in the light of the Holy Ghost! When it is so revealed to us, it is not merely the surface which we see, but the love of Christ itself. You know that you never saw anything yet, strictly speaking. You only see the appearance of the thing—the light reflected by it; that is all you see. But the Holy Ghost shows us the naked truth, the essence of the love of Christ; and what that essence is—that love without beginning,

without change, without limit, without end; and that love set upon his people simply from motives within himself, and from no motive ab extra—what that must be, what tongue can tell? Oh, it is a ravishing sight!

I think that if there could be one sight more wonderful than the love of Christ, it would be the blood of Christ.

"Much we talk of Jesu's blood,  
But how little's understood."

It is the climax of God. I do not know of anything more divine. It seems to me as if all the eternal purposes worked up to the blood of the cross, and then worked from the blood of the cross towards the sublime consummation of all things. Oh, to think that he should become man! God has made spirit, pure spirit, embodied spirit; and then materialism; and somehow, as if he would take all up into one, the Godhead links himself with the material, and he wears dust about him even as we wear it; and taking it all up, he then goes, and, in that fashion, redeems his people from all the evil of their soul, their spirit, and their body, by the pouring out of a life which, while it was human, was so in connection with the divine, that we speak correctly of "the blood of God." Turn to the twentieth chapter of the Acts, and read how the apostle Paul puts it: "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." I believe that Dr. Watts is not wrong when he says—"God that loved and died." It is an incorrect accuracy, a strictly absolute accuracy of incorrectness. So it must be ever when the finite talks of the Infinite. It was a wonderful sacrifice that could absolutely obliterate, annihilate, and extinguish sin, and all the traces that could possibly remain of it; for "He hath finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." Ah, dear friends! you have seen this, have you not? but you have to see more of it yet; and when we get to heaven, we shall then know what that blood means, and with what vigor shall we sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood"! Will anybody be there to say, "Is not that the religion of the shambles?" as they blasphemously call it. Ah, my friends! they will find themselves where they will wish they had believed "the religion of the shambles"; and I think that it will burn like coals of juniper into the soul of any man that has ever dared to talk like that, that

he did despite unto the blood of God, and so, by his own wilful deeds, will be cast away for ever.

May the Holy Spirit show unto you Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha! and then, may it please him to give you a sight of what our Lord is now doing! Oh, how it would cheer you up at any time when you were depressed, only to see him standing and pleading for you! Do you not think that if your wife is ill, and your child is sick, and there is scant food in the cupboard; if you were to go out at the back door, and you saw him with the breastplate on, and all the stones glittering, and your name there, and him pleading for you, you would go in and say, "There, wife, it is all right. He is praying for us"? Oh, it would be a comfort if the Holy Ghost showed you a pleading Christ! And then, to think that he is reigning as well as pleading. He, is at the right hand of God, even the Father, who hath put all things under his feet. And he waits till the last enemy shall lie there. Now, you are not afraid, are you, of those who have been snubbing you and opposing you? Remember, he hath said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Next, and best of all, may the Holy Spirit give you a clear view of his coming. This is our most brilliant hope: "Lo, he cometh!" The more the adversary waxes bold, and the less of faith there is, and when zeal seems almost extinct, these are the tokens of his coming. The Lord always said so; and that he would not come unless there was a falling away first; and so the darker the night grows, and the fiercer the storm becomes, the better will we remember that he of the lake of Galilee came to them upon the waves in the night when the storm was wildest. Oh, what will his enemies say when he comes? When they behold the nail-prints of the Glorified, and the Man with the thorn Crown—when they see him really come—they that have despised his word, and his ever-blessed blood, how will they flee before that face of injured love! And we, on the contrary, through his infinite mercy, will say, "This is what the Holy Ghost showed us; and now we behold it literally. We thank him for the foresights which he gave us of the beatific vision."

I have not done on the first head yet, because there is one point which I want you to recollect. When the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ,

and shows them to us, he has a purpose in so doing. You will not laugh, I hope, when I remind you of what the little boys sometimes do at school with one another. I have seen a boy take out of his pocket an apple, and say to his schoolmate, "Do you see that apple?" "Yes," says the other. "Then, you may see me eat it," says he. But the Holy Ghost is no Tantalus, taking of the things of Christ, and holding them up to mock us. No: he says, "Do you see these things? If you can see them, you may have them." Did not Christ himself say, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"? Looking gives you a claim; and if you can see him, he is yours. It is with you, with regard to the Spirit showing you things, as it was with Jacob. You know Jacob lay down, and went to sleep, and the Lord said to him, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it." Now, wherever you go, throughout the whole of Scripture, if you can find a place where you can lie down, that is yours. If you can sleep on a promise, that promise is yours. "Lift up now thine eyes," said God to Abraham, "and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it." The Lord increase our holy vision of delighted faith; for there is nothing you see but you may also enjoy; all that is in Christ is there for you.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT, AND WHAT HE REALLY ACCOMPLISHES. "He shall glorify me."

Ah, brothers! the Holy Ghost never comes to glorify us, or to glorify a denomination, or, I think, even to glorify a systematic arrangement of doctrines. He comes to glorify Christ. If we want to be in accord with him, we must preach in order to glorify Christ. May we never have this thought,—"I will put that bit in; it will tell well. The friends will feel that oratory is not quite extinct, that Demosthenes lives again in this village." No, no. I should say, brother, though it is a very delightful piece, strike that out ruthlessly; because if you have had a thought of that kind about it, you had better not put yourself in the way of temptation by using it. "Yes, that is a magnificent sentence! I do not know where I met with it, or whether it is my own. I am afraid that most of our friends will not understand it; but then it will give them an impression that they have a deep thinker in their pulpit." Well then, it may be very admirable, and,



further, it might be a very right thing to give them that precious piece; but if you have that thought about it, strike it out. Strike it out ruthlessly. Say, "No, no, no! If it is not distinctly my aim to glorify Christ, I am not in accord with the aim of the Holy Ghost, and I cannot expect his help. We shall not be pulling the same way, and therefore I will have nothing of which I cannot say that I am saying it simply, sincerely, and only that I may glorify Christ."

How, then, does the Holy Spirit glorify Christ? It is very beautiful to think that he glorifies Christ by showing Christ's things. If you wanted to do honor to a man, you would perhaps take him a present to decorate his house. But here, if you want to glorify Christ, you must go and take the things out of Christ's house, "the things of Christ." Whenever we have to praise God, what do we do? We simply say what he is. "Thou art this, and thou art that." There is no other praise. We cannot fetch anything from elsewhere, and bring it to God; but the praises of God are simply the facts about himself. If you want to praise the Lord Jesus Christ, tell the people about him. Take of the things of Christ, and show them to the people, and you will glorify Christ. Alas! I know what you will do. You will weave words together, and you will form and fashion them, in a marvellous manner, till you have produced a charming piece of literature. When you have carefully done that, put it in the fire under the oven, and let it burn. Possibly you may help to bake some bread with it. Brethren, it is better for us to tell what Christ is, than to invent ten thousand fine words of praise in reference to him. "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Again, I think that the blessed Spirit glorifies Christ by showing us the things of Christ as Christ's. Oh, to be pardoned! Yes, it is a great thing; but to find that pardon in his wounds, that is a greater thing! Oh, to get peace! Yes, but to find that peace in the blood of his cross! Brethren, have the blood-mark very visibly on all your mercies. They are all marked with the blood of the cross; but sometimes we think so much of the sweetness of the bread, or of the coolness of the waters, that we forget whence these came, and how they came, and then they lack their choicest flavour. That it came from Christ is the best thing about the best thing that ever came from Christ. That he saves me is, somehow, better than my being saved. It

is a blessed thing to go to heaven; but I do not know that it is not a better thing to be in Christ, and so, as the result of it, to get into heaven. It is himself, and that which comes of himself, that becomes best of all, because it comes of himself. So the Holy Ghost shall glorify Christ by making us see that these things of Christ are indeed of Christ, and completely of Christ, and still are in connection with Christ; and we only enjoy them because we are in connection with Christ.

Then it is said in the text, "He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you?" Yes, it does glorify Christ for the Holy Spirit to show Christ to us. How often I have wished that men of great minds might be converted! I have wished that we could have a few Miltons, and such like men, to sing of the love of Christ; a few mighty men, who teach politics, and the like, to consecrate their talents to the preaching of the gospel. Why is it not so? Well, because the Holy Ghost does not seem to think that that would be the way to glorify Christ supremely; and he prefers, as a better way, to take us common-place sort of persons, and to take the things of Christ, and to show them to us. He does glorify Christ; and blessed be his name that ever my blear eyes should look upon his infinite loveliness; that ever such a wretch as I, who can understand everything but what I ought to understand, should be made to comprehend the heights and depths, and to know, with all saints, the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge. You see, in a school, that clever boy. Well, it is not much for the master to have made a scholar of him. But here is one who shines as a scholar, and his mother says that he was the greatest dolt in the family. All his schoolfellows say, "Why, he was our butt! He seemed to have no brains; but our master, somehow, got some brain into him, and made him know something which he appeared, at one time, incapable of knowing." Somehow, it does seem to be as if our very folly, and impotence, and spiritual death—if the Holy Ghost shows to us the things of Christ—will go towards the increase of that great glorifying of Christ at which the Holy Spirit aims.

Then, beloved brethren, since it is for the honor of Christ for his things to be shown to men, he will show them to us, that we may go and show them to other people. This we cannot do, except as he is with us to make the others to see; but he will be with us while we tell forth what he has taught

us; and so the Holy Ghost will really be showing to others while he is showing to us. A secondary influence will flow from this service, for we shall be helped to use the right means to make others see the things of Christ.

III. Our time is almost gone; but in the third place I must just point out to you HOW HE IS IN BOTH OF THESE THINGS OUR COMFORTER.

He is so, firstly, for this reason—that there is no comfort in the world like a sight of Christ. He shows to us the things of Christ. Oh, brethren, if you are poor, and if the Holy Ghost shows you that Christ had not where to lay his head, what a sight for you! And if you are sick, and if the Holy Ghost shows you what sufferings Christ endured, what comfort comes to you! If you are made to see the things of Christ, each thing according to the condition which you are in, how speedily you are delivered out of your sorrow!

And then, if the Holy Ghost glorifies Christ, that is the cure for every kind of sorrow. He is the Comforter. I may have told you before, but I cannot help telling you again, that many years ago, after the terrible accident in the Surrey Gardens, I had to go away into the country, and keep quite still. The very sight of the Bible made me cry. I could only keep alone in the garden; and I was heavy and sad, for people had been killed in the accident; and there I was, half dead myself; and I remember how I got back my comfort, and I preached on the Sabbath after I recovered. I had been walking round the garden, and I was standing under a tree. If it is there now, I should know it; and I remember these words: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior." "Oh", I thought to myself, "I am only a common soldier. If I die in a ditch, I do not care. The king is honored. He wins the victory;" and I was like those French soldiers in the old times, who loved the emperor; and you know how, when they were dying, if he rode by, the wounded man would raise himself up on his elbow, and cry once more, "Vive l'Empereur!" for the emperor was graven on his heart. And so, I am sure, it is with every one of you, my comrades, in this holy war. If our Lord and King is exalted, then let other things go which way they like: if he is exalted, never mind what becomes of us. We are a set of pigmies; it is all right if he is exalted. God's truth is safe, we are perfectly willing to be forgotten, derided, slandered,

or anything else that men please. The cause is safe, and the King is on the throne. Hallelujah! Blessed be his name!

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## **The Honoured Guest**

And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. - Luke 19:6

Are you prepared, like Zaccheus, to give the Lord Jesus Christ a glad and grateful welcome? If we would obtain the full benefit of his devoted life, his atoning death, and his triumphant resurrection, we must receive him into our hearts by simple faith, and entertain him with tender love. Outside the door of our heart Jesus is a stranger; he is no Saviour to us; but inside the heart which has been opened, by divine grace, to admit him, his power is displayed, his worth is known, and his goodness is felt. My dear hearer, you have heard his fame, you have witnessed the miracles he has wrought upon others, and now it remains that you receive him yourself to ensure your own well-being. He stands at the door and knocks; you must open to him. The promise is, "If any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him." "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Not upon all who heard was the privilege conferred, for many, when they heard, did not believe. Alas! they provoked him, and so they perished in their sins. But those who hail Jesus as a friend salute him as an honoured guest, sit at his feet, and hang on his lips, find how he lights every chamber of their soul with joy, satisfies every craving of their better nature, and enriches them with all the endowments of adopted children.

In many respects Zaccheus supplies us with a noble example. He shows us how to receive the Saviour. You will observe that he received him speedily. "He made haste and came down." It is not always easy to come down from a tree with great speed. He came down, however, as fast as he

could. There was no demur or hesitancy in his manner. I daresay his heart was down before his feet. In like manner they who would receive Christ must receive him now. This is not a call or a counsel to be trifled with. The procrastination of Felix, which led him to say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee," is a very dangerous spirit. Let those who talked as Felix talked beware lest they perish as Felix perished. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Zaccheus made haste. They who receive Christ heartily must receive Christ immediately.

We notice, too, that Zaccheus received the Lord obediently. When the Master said, "Make haste," he made haste. Hardly had he said, "Come down," when down he came. If thou, my hearer, be likewise willing and obedient, thou shalt eat of the good of the land. Christ likes us to be obedient to him, though he speaks to us less as a Lawgiver than as a Saviour and a Friend. If we refuse to take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, how can we reasonably expect to find rest unto our souls? The words of Jesus must be deeply respected and diligently observed by those who would have him for their Rock, their Refuge, and their Hiding Place. Let him be your Councillor if you want to partake of his redemption. Render allegiance to him as your King, if you would enjoy all the grace of his priestly mediation and intercession.

There was also a thorough heartiness on the part of Zaccheus in receiving Christ. He made a great feast for him. He did not admit him as one who intruded. It was not with cold civility, but with cordial hospitality that he greeted him. I think I see the satisfaction that sparkled in his face! I think I hear the salutation that leaped from his tongue, "Come in— come in, my gracious Lord; never did my house entertain so welcome a guest as thou art!" Would you receive Christ, you must throw the doors of your heart wide open; then your eyes, your lips, every muscle of your body will express your earnestness. Your whole spirit, soul and strength will be stirred to enthusiasm if you know his worth, and feel the honour he confers on you. A man who findeth a treasure hid in a field will congratulate himself on his good fortune. A woman, when she embraceth her first-born child, will dote on him with exquisite fondness. Shall no strong emotions prove our sincerity when we receive the Lord of life and

glory?

And mark you, too, this Chief of the Publicans received Christ spiritually. His convictions were in keeping with his conduct. When he distributed his goods to the poor, and made a bold confession of his faith before his fellow-men, there was proof positive that Christ had not only crossed the threshold of Zaccheus's house, but had also penetrated the chambers of his heart. Ah! beloved, it is useless to receive Christ nominally, professionally, ceremonially, or with rites and ceremonies, to do him empty homage. By a sincere reception of him who was sent of God, your nature, your disposition, and your habits will be transformed from what they were, and conformed to what he is; and the change will be conspicuous, for if ye be in Christ, and Christ be in you, all things will become new.

A prominent feature, however, so distinctly stated that it should not be carelessly overlooked was this, that he received him joyfully. This was crowning evidence of the purity of his motives, and the artlessness of his actions. In such mirth there could be no guile. Ask now, Why do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully? How is it that some men receive him with such exuberant joy? In what ways do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?

### I. Why Is It That All Men Do Not Receive Christ Joyfully?

This is our first question. They need him, all of them. There is no difference in this respect. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are all sold under sin. God has concluded the whole race of man in unbelief. He has shut them all up in condemnation. There is no escape from the universal doom except by the way of the cross. Jesus Christ comes to save; comes with pardon in his hands, with messages of love, with tokens of favour; yet most men bar the doors of their hearts against him. There is no cry heard in their souls, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" Instead thereof, there is a sullen cry, "Come prejudice; come unbelief; come hardness of heart; come love of sin; bar ye the doors and barricade the gates lest, perhaps, the King of Glory should force an entrance!" Men treat the Saviour as they would treat an invader who attacked their

country. They seek to drive him away; they would fain be rid of him. They cannot endure his presence. Nay, they can scarce endure, some of them, to hear about him in the street. Why is this? The chief reason lies in the depravity of man's nature. You never know how bad man is till he comes in contact with the Cross.

Although the crimes of savage, uncivilized men may appear to you far more heinous than any that are committed in our favoured country, where just laws are for the most part enacted, and opportunities of education generally enjoyed, yet the propensity to do that which is evil in the teeth of a knowledge of that which is good, the subtlety of perverting truth in the clear light of divine revelation, the perfidiousness of that foul ingratitude which can betray the tenderest friendship, are never so painfully illustrated as in view of the Crucified. To despise the grace of Jesus, to reject the love of God, to conspire against the Ambassador of peace, to take the inhuman, devilish counsel—"This is the heir; let us kill him!"—this was the last offence of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. Nor does the parable exaggerate the treachery. For this is the greatest offence of human nature, when it says, in effect, "This is the Incarnate God, let us reject him; this is the Word made flesh, let us traduce him; this is the Father's beloved Son—let us betray him!" Oh! Human Nature, how blind must be thy heart, how seared thy conscience, not to see the beauties of Christ! How base must thou be to despise the love and tenderness of such a Saviour!

Were we to select secondary causes, however, which spring out of this deep-seated depravity, and discriminate between the various classes of offenders, we should say that many men reject Christ instead of receiving him joyfully out of sheer ignorance. For this ignorance there is not much valid excuse. There are thousands of persons, even in this highly-favoured greatly-enlightened country, who really do not know what the gospel means. The knowledge of salvation is within their reach, but they have no desire to acquaint themselves with this best of all the sciences. We are all sinners, they say; but they do not know what they mean. In the jargon of general confession they lose sight of their own personal transgressions. The plan of salvation by a Substitute, which is the gist of the whole matter, never dawned on their understanding. They do not

know the great truth that Jesus took our sins and suffered for us in our room, and in our stead, that justice might be satisfied, that mercy might be magnified, and that we sinners might be liberated. Hence it comes to pass that whosoever trusteth in Christ is saved. Being ignorant of this, they are still depending upon their own works, merits, and professions, or they are relying upon their baptism, their confirmation, or their identification with some ecclesiastical system by means of some outward ceremony, instead of understanding that salvation is by faith, a thing of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter. This ignorance of the blessed Saviour prevents many from receiving him joyfully. So was it with the woman of Samaria; hence the Saviour said to her, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that speaks to thee, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water." Lest ye perish through lack of knowledge, brethren, do entreat the Lord so to guide you in the reading of Scripture, and in listening to the exposition of Scripture that you may get a clear understanding of the way of the Lord. "That the soul should be without knowledge is not good," for ignorance is the parent of many infatuations.

To refuse attention, to resist evidence, to rebut exhortation, in the instance of full many exhibits a spirit of gross unbelief. They will not believe in Jesus; they will not acknowledge him to be the Son of God; they will scarcely believe that the man ever lived who had a right to the homage which his few disciples offered him. The Atonement they look upon as an old wives' fable, and they account the resurrection from the dead as an idle dream. I will say but little of their excuse. They are not open to conviction. They live in darkness because they have barred every window of their soul against the light. The precious doctrine of Christ bears on its face the genuine stamp. Its authenticity is graven upon its very forefront. Their stolid disputations cannot diminish its value or its virtue. They wrong themselves when they denounce or disparage the truth as it is in Christ.

Others are actuated by a positive aversion to the Saviour. They have no sinister reflections to cast on the story of his life, the purity of his manners, the holiness of his character, or the benevolence of his mission, but they do not desire to be saved from their sins; they rather enjoy



revelling, unrebuked and undisturbed, in the gratification of their own sensual propensities. They do not want to be saved from drunkenness; they would rather go on with the drink. They do not want to be saved from the lusts of the flesh; they would sooner pamper its gross appetites. They do not want to be saved from pride or self-confidence; they would rather indulge their towering ambition. They do not want, in fact, to have a divorce proclaimed between them and their sins; they would sooner discard the high obligations of the divine law, and act upon the expedience of the life that now is, than forego a pursuit or a pleasure in hope of eternal life. Hence they cannot bear the name of Jesus! they recoil from it, unable to conceal their antipathy. Religion is not merely insipid; it is positively nauseous to them. The singing of a hymn in the house would put them out of temper. Did their wife or their child mention the Cross of Christ, or faith in his precious blood, they would either sneer and ridicule with unseemly jest, or else their temper would boil over with malice and wrath. The Lord pluck that black heart out of thee, man! The Lord give thee a new heart and a right spirit. Thou wilt have to bend or else to break. If thou wilt not turn, thou must burn. If thou dost not repent of this hatred of Christ now, thou wilt feel remorse enough for it hereafter. In the day when he cometh in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead, thou wilt seek in vain to elude his eye, or escape from his wrath.

You will find that the reason for not receiving Christ in many others is the fact that they are worldly, and eaten up with too many cares. A pitiful apology and very perilous! Such paltry forgets will bring poignant regrets. The hour of death can do little to rectify the years of life misspent. Not then can you seek God, if you have never sought him before. Oh! you are taken up with the farm and the merchandise, with your daily labours and diversions, your losses, and your gains, heaping up, not knowing who shall inherit. These canker-worms eat up your souls. Would that men were not such fools as to be always providing for this poor tenement of the body, while they neglect the precious jewel it encloses—their immortal soul; occupied with trivial personalities, while reckless of their real estate. They are crying, "Buy, buy," in Vanity Fair, while the Lord of life and glory passeth by. Yet they heed not. Talk of the main chance, but they miss the wise choice. They sell gold for dross; they lose their souls

and get perdition.

Still more inexcusable, methinks, are those who reject Christ, because they are taken up with the world's frivolities. Some people live in a whirl of fashion, where repentance would be accounted vulgar. Not in sportive gaieties, but in pensive solitudes do penitence and contrition find room for exercise. Ridiculous as it may sound, some people are far too genteel, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is fit company, in their esteem, for publicans and sinners, but into their drawing-rooms were he to enter he would soon be expelled. They want him not in the upper circle of the haut ton; neither would he be kindly received in the lower circles, among the frequenters of music-halls and dancing saloons. Ah! no; as of old, so now: "There is no room for him in the inn." The world is ready enough to welcome actor, singer, dancer, punster, anyone who can amuse them; but as for Christ, who stands with bleeding hands, and cries, "Come unto me and I will give you rest," they despise him. They miss the soul of beauty for meretricious charms; they turn from the source of joy to indulge in giggling laughter; they spurn the real, and leap after the shadow; they forsake the overflowing fountain, and fly to the broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Ah! brethren, this is a miserable spectacle. It is a dreary sight to see a sinner despising mercy, a drowning man rejecting the life-belt, a sick man declining the physician, a man entering the gates of death refusing life and immortality. Oh! sin, how thou hast befooled men! How thou hast made them hate themselves, and act cruelly to their own souls! What suicides they commit! What a sacrifice of their noblest nature! They go down to hell with a verdict of *felo de se*. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself! Thou hast destroyed thyself! They reject him shamefully whom they should have received joyfully. They carry out their own will, and they perish in their wilfulness. And now we ask in the next place:

## II. Why Do Some Men Receive Him Joyfully?

The answer simply is because grace has made them to differ. Grace has subdued their stubborn will, illuminated their darkened understanding, changed their depraved affections, and made their whole mind to judge of things after a different fashion. Do not suppose that we who have

received Christ were naturally any better disposed to him than others. Oh! no. If, when the seed was sown, we were like the honest and good ground in which it took root, there had been a previous tillage upon our hearts to make them ready, we should not have been found willing had it not been the day of God's power. I think we all unite in saying:—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast  
That sweetly forced us in;  
Else we had still refused to taste,  
And perished in our sin."

As for the reasons and inducements which prompted us to receive Christ joyfully, I may speak very plainly for myself. I received Christ because I could not help it. I was at my wits' end. Methinks no man ever flees to Christ for refuge, or seeks shelter in the port of gospel peace, until he is quite certain that every other harbour is shut up. We make Christ our last resource. We try everything else—grand resolutions to do good works, or to attend gorgeous ceremonies, trivial formalities, or paltry superstitions; anything, the silliest conceit or the emptiest quackery. We go the round of folly before we discover the path of wisdom. At length I must go to Christ, or else woe is unto me if I win him not. Helpless and hopeless, in sheer distress we cry out, "Give me Christ, or else I die." Henceforth he is not merely our choice, but a positive necessity to us to have him as our hourly, daily, and eternal portion. Oh! the strait unto which I was brought when I received Christ. It was Christ or death; salvation by Christ, or damnation without him. I received him because I could not help it. I had no alternative. How many of you are in the like dilemma? How many of you will fly to him in similar destitution? Driven before the tempest, catching a glimpse of the lighthouse, you cry out:—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly."

Well may we receive Christ joyfully since he works such wonderful changes in us, and so beneficent. He cheers the grievous past. It was all black and threatening with the memory of our provocations. He sprinkles his blood upon it, and now it becomes bright and beaming with mementoes of the loving-kindnesses and tender mercies of the Lord. He

illuminates the present. There was nought but gloom and blank despair till he shone as the light of life in our dwelling. Then life and salvation dawn upon us like the dayspring from on high. He disperses the clouds that hung over the future. The outlook was dark and threatening till Jesus came, bright and glorious, and discovered a hereafter. Beyond the black river of death we now discern the gleaming of the spirit-land, and the place of meeting where we shall see his face. Thus, when Jesus comes into the heart, the three realms of the past, the present, and the future, all glow with light. When the sun rises, the hills, and valleys, and rivers, above and beneath, are all sown with orient pearl.

Right joyfully do we receive Christ because he comes into our hearts with such gracious offices. He came as a priest to put away sin; who could but be glad? He came as a king; who would not receive such a monarch with sound of trumpets and flaunting of banners? He came to us as a shepherd; shall not the flock of his pasture be glad of the sight of him? He came as a dear and tender friend; does not his sweet sympathy excite any joy? Think, too, of the yet more endearing relationship in which he came. He came as a husband, and our souls are married unto him. Blessed bridegroom! Thou adorable Saviour! Thou hast engrossed our heart and won our love. Does not the bride rejoice when the husband comes home? Is there not gladness in her heart when the nuptial day approaches? Oh! well, well might we welcome Christ when he comes, dressed in such robes and wearing such offices as these! When he came, he came with such wondrous blessings—pardon and peace, justification and acceptance, sanctification and honour, wisdom and righteousness—all these; and now he proclaims himself to be our protector; his paths drop fatness; he maketh rich and addeth no sorrow; such as find him find in him such wealth of goodness—deep, mysterious, unknown—as far exceeds all earthly pleasure, all worldly fortune. Surely on the lowest ground we might afford him the loftiest welcome. Even churlish Laban received Eliezer with courtesy when he saw the presents he brought—the bracelets, and the earrings, and the jewels, and should not we receive Jesus when we mark those costly gifts in his hand, the purchase of his own blood, which he freely gives to those who receive him?

And shall we not receive him joyfully because he comes in such a blessed

spirit? He upbraideth not. He was all gentleness, meekness, grace, when here below; though of divine pedigree, the Only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Should we not then receive him with sound of the trumpet, with the psalter and harp, yea, and with joy of heart unspeakable? Let me add that the better we know him the more joyfully we should receive him for his own sake. Oh! I could stand here and weep to think that I do not speak better of my Lord and Master. Truly I know more of his grace and goodness than I should ever be able to tell. I trust you can say the same. It is one thing to know the sweetness of his savour, and quite another thing to have to tell that savour to others. There is no exaggeration in the language of the spouse when she says, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." Such as receive him with their hearts will find that the most rapturous expressions that saints have ever used do not exceed, but fall infinitely short of the delight, the heavenly joys, which he brings into the soul. If one might choose a heaven upon earth, it would be to rest for ever in quiet meditation upon the beauties of his person, the perfection of his character, the power of his blood, the prevalence of his plea, the glory of his resurrection, the majesty of his Second Advent. Everything about Christ is delightful. There is not a truth he ever teaches but is fragrant with choice perfume. There is not a word he utters but smelleth of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces from which he came. If you have not received Christ, my dear hearer, you have missed the brightest feature of divine revelation. For a foreigner to visit England and never see the Metropolis of London; for a man to have lived in the world without ever seeing the sun; for one to have beheld tables spread with the most sumptuous provisions, but never to have tasted any of them—in any such case there would be little cause for congratulation. So you do not know what life is; you are dead to all its charms; you do not know what light is; you have only dwelt in the shade, or in the twilight at the best, if you have not beheld the Saviour, entertained him, and tasted that he is gracious. You have missed the cream. You have been stopping outside in the farmyard feeding with the swine. You do not know what the fatted calf is, upon which the children feed at the Father's table. You have been a dog, satisfied with the bones, not knowing the fatness and the marrow of true life. But the Christian, dear friends, finds Christ to be so inconceivably precious, such a fountain of delight, such a river of mercy, that when he receives him, he receives him joyfully, and the longer he knows him the

more joyful he is to think that he ever received him at all. And now, such being the reasons why some receive Christ joyfully, let us ask:—

### III. How Do They Show It? In What Ways and by What Means Do They Express Their Joy?

I have known some who have taken very strange ways of showing their joy. They have been inclined to stand up and shout in the very place where they found the Saviour, while others could only sit still and water the floor with their tears, feeling as if for the next week or two they did not want to look anybody in the face, but just in solemn silence of the mind to revel in the company of their adorable Lord. We do not wonder that some people show a little strange enthusiasm when they first come to know Christ. It is no marvel. When a man has been in prison for months he may well be a little demonstrative in his joy on obtaining his liberty; so when a soul has been under the burden of sin, and bound with its galling chain, he may well leap, as Bunyan tells us his pilgrim did, when the burden was loosed off him and rolled away.

Yet there are other and better ways of expressing satisfaction and pleasure than these which have much of the flesh, much of the natural disposition about them. Though not to be condemned, still they are not to be commended. A better way of showing that you have received Christ joyfully is by turning out his enemies. When you receive Christ in at the front door, you must not keep the devil in the back parlour. Every traitor sin must be ejected when the Great King takes up his residence in your heart. The thorough cleansing of your house from every defilement is the smallest tribute we can expect you to pay in deference to your royal guest. The soul that receives Christ joyfully sighs and groans because it cannot make, as it would, a clean sweep of its sin. I know you do not love Christ if you cling to your sins; if you love Christ heartily, you will put away your iniquities:—

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be;  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee."

And when you do receive Christ joyfully, you will be eager to obey his instructions. Like Zaccheus, you will ask, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Christ was going to Zaccheus's house; and you know what people say when they have a guest they are anxious to please. They entreat him thus, "Now just do as you like; consider yourself at home; whatever you want, ask for; only tell us what we can do to make you happy, and we shall be glad to do it." This is how every cheerful holy soul dealeth with Christ. He says, "Lord, tell us what thou wouldst have me to do; only let me know thy will; tell me by thy Word, by thy minister, by thy Holy Spirit; work in my own heart personally; teach me thy way, and oh! my God, my heart shall be glad to conform to thy wishes." Have you all done this? Have you been obedient to all the Saviour's commands, or have you sought to observe them? If you have, this should be an evidence of your receiving him joyfully.

Another proof of our joy in receiving Christ is receiving his people. This, in more ways than one, he has made the test of attachment to himself. "Love one another." "Feed my lambs." "If ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me". Just as Laban said when he took in Eliezer, "There is room for thee, and room for the camels," so let there be room in our hearts for Jesus. There will be room for some of these poor troubled ones, these burdened saints. They may not always be pleasant company, but we shall be willing to receive them, and to join with them, because of their Master. Now, dear friend, if you are a Christian, and have received Christ, unite yourselves with his people; make a profession of your faith; come out and join the people of God, and do not be ashamed with them to suffer the reproach of Christ.

And if you have received Christ joyfully, you will love his cross. I mean not only the cross which he had to carry, but the cross which you now have to carry for him. You will count it a great privilege to suffer reproach for his sake. You will love the cross. "No cross no crown," is an ancient motto; but it is just as true today as it was a thousand years ago. The faith that Moses illustrated you will follow, counting the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. If you receive the Master in good part, you will say, "Come in, my Master; come in, and bring thy cross, too, and I will bear it cheerfully, for thy sake."

Moreover, you will prove the grateful welcome you give him by wishing that other people may receive him joyfully too. I cannot believe thou knowest my Master if thou doest not wish to make him known. Were you cured of some sad disease, and met with a sufferer as bad as you once were, your tongue would be quick to tell him of the medicine that can cure him. And surely, if you have been saved from the damning power of sin by Christ, you will want to be telling it to the sons of men that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there. Perhaps you cannot preach. Possibly not half a dozen people might be edified were you to try. But you can talk to a neighbour. You can speak with your children. I was pleased today, in reading the life of John Wesley's mother, to notice how she set apart Monday to speak to one of her daughters; Tuesday to speak to another; Wednesday to speak, as she says, "to Jack," meaning John Wesley; and Thursday to speak to Charles; so that they each had a day, and there was an hour each day given to speak to each child about the affairs of the soul. That is the way to win the children for God. Depend upon it, reader, the blessing of God, the Holy Spirit, if we experimentally know the joy of religion ourselves, will be the means of much good to others, if we make it a point to "tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour we have found."

May the Lord, in his mercy, call you as he called Zaccheus. May many of you receive him joyfully as Zaccheus did. Seek him, and he shall be found of you. Trust him; he will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon him; he will be as good as his Word. Mark his promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Faithful is he that gives you this grateful encouragement. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now, and through countless ages you will look back upon this fleeting hour with joy unspeakable, perennial—with gratitude that eternity cannot exhaust. Amen.

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## The Hope Of Future Bliss

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. - Psalm 17:15

It would be difficult to say to which the gospel owes most, to its friends or to its enemies. It is true, that by the help of God, its friends have done much for it; they have preached it in foreign lands, they have dared death, they have laughed to scorn the terrors of the grave, they have ventured all things for Christ, and so have glorified the doctrine they believed; but the enemies of Christ, unwittingly, have done no little, for when they have persecuted Christ's servants, they have scattered them abroad, so that they have gone everywhere preaching the Word; yea, when they have trampled upon the gospel, like a certain herb we read of in medicine, it hath grown all the faster: and if we refer to the pages of sacred writ how very many precious portions of it do we owe, under God, to the enemies of the cross of Christ! Jesus Christ would never have preached many of his discourses had not his foes compelled him to answer them; had they not brought objections, we should not have heard the sweet sentences in which he replied. So with the book of Psalms: had not David been sorely tried by enemies, had not the foemen shot their arrows at him, had they not attempted to malign and blast his character, had they not deeply distressed him, and made him cry out in misery, we should have missed many of those precious experimental utterances we here find, much of that holy song which he penned after his deliverance, and very much of that glorious statement of his trust in the infallible God. We should have lost all this, had it not been wrung from him by the iron hand of anguish. Had it not been for David's enemies, he would not have penned his Psalms; but when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, when driven like the timid roe before the hunter's dogs, he waited for awhile, bathed his sides in the brooks of Siloa, and panting on the hill-top a little, he breathed the air of heaven and stood and rested his weary limbs. Then was it that he gave honour to God, then he shouted aloud to that mighty Jehovah, who for him had gotten the victory. This sentence follows a description of the great troubles which the wicked bring upon the

righteous, wherein he consoles himself with the hope of future bliss.; As for me," says the patriarch, casting his eyes aloft; As for me," said the hunted chieftain of the caves of Engedi - "As for me," says the once shepherd boy, who was soon to wear a royal diadem - "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

In looking at this passage to-night, we shall notice first of all, the spirit of it; secondly, the matter of it; and then, thirdly, we shall close by speaking of the contrast which is implied in it.

I. First, then, the SPIRIT OF THIS UTTERANCE, for I always love to look at the spirit in which a man writes, or the spirit in which he preaches; in fact, there is vastly more in that than in the words he uses.

Now, what should you think is the spirit of these words? "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

First, they breathe the spirit of a man entirely free from envy. Notice, that the Psalmist has been speaking of the wicked. "They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly." "They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." But David envies them not. "Go," says he, "rich man, in all thy riches - go, proud man, in all thy pride - go, thou happy man, with thine abundance of children; I envy thee not; as for me, my lot is different: I can look on you without desiring to have your possessions. I can well keep that commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet,' for in your possessions there is nothing worth my love; I set no value upon your earthly treasures; I envy you not your heaps of glittering dust; for my Redeemer is mine." The man is above envy, because he thinks that the joy would be no joy to him - that the portion would not suit his disposition. Therefore, he turns his eye heavenward, and says, "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Oh! beloved, it is a happy thing to be free from envy. Envy is a curse which blighteth creation; and even Eden's garden itself would have become defaced, and no longer fair, if the wind of envy could have blown on it, envy tarnisheth the gold; envy dimmeth the silver; should envy breathe on the hot sun, it would quench it; should she cast her evil eye on the moon, it would be turned into

blood, and the stars would fly astonished at her. Envy is accursed of heaven; yea, it is Satan's first-born - the vilest of vices. Give a man riches, but let him have envy, and there is the worm at the root of the fair tree; give him happiness, and if he envies another's lot, what would have been happiness becomes his misery, because it is not so great as that of some one else. But give me freedom from envy; let me be content with what God has given me, let me say, "Ye may have yours, I will not envy you - I am satisfied with mine," yea, give me such a love to my fellow creatures that I can rejoice in their joy, and the more they have the more glad I am of it. My candle will burn no less brightly because theirs outshines it. I can rejoice in their prosperity. Then am I happy, for all around tends to make me blissful, when I can rejoice in the joys of others, and make their gladness my own. Envy! oh! may God deliver us from it! But how, in truth, can we get rid of it so well as by believing that ye have something that is not on earth, but in heaven? If we can look upon all the things in the world and say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied by-and-bye!" then we cannot envy other men, because their lot would not be adapted to our peculiar taste. Doth the ox envy the lion! Nay, for it cannot feed upon the carcass. Doth the dove grieve because the raven can gloat itself on carrion? Nay, for it lives on other food. Will the eagle envy the wren his tiny nest? Oh, no! So the Christian will mount aloft as the eagle, spreading his broad wings, he will fly up to his eyrie amongst the stars, where God hath made him his nest, saying, "As for me, I will dwell here; I look upon the low places of this earth with contempt. I envy not your greatness, ye mighty emperors; I desire not your fame, ye mighty warriors; I ask not for wealth, O Croesus; I beg not for thy power, O Caesar; as for me, I have something else, my portion is the Lord." The text breathes the spirit of a man free from envy. May God give that to us!

Then, secondly, you can see that there is about it the air of a man who is looking into the future. Read the passage thoroughly, and you will see that it all has relation to the future, because it says, "As for me, I shall." It has nothing to do with the present: it does not say, "As for me I do, or I am, so-and-so," but "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake." The Psalmist looks beyond the grave into another world; he overlooks the narrow death-bed where he has to

sleep, and he says, "When I awake." How happy is that man who has an eye to the future; even in worldly things we esteem that man who looks beyond the present day, he who spends all his money as it comes in will soon bring himself to rags. He who lives on the present is a fool; but wise men are content to look after future things. When Milton penned his book he might know, perhaps, that he should have little fame in his lifetime; but he said, "I shall be honoured when my head shall sleep in the grave." Thus have other worthies been content to tarry until time has broken the earthen pitcher, and suffered the lamp to blaze; as for honour, they said, "We will leave that to the future, for that fame which comes late is often most enduring," and they lived upon the "shall" and fed upon the future. "I shall be satisfied" by-and-bye. So says the Christian. I ask no royal pomp or fame now; I am prepared to wait, I have an interest in reversion; I want not a pitiful estate here - I will tarry till I get my domains in heaven, those broad and beautiful domains that God has provided for them that love him. Well content will I be to fold my arms and sit me down in the cottage, for I shall have a mansion of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do any of you know what it is to live on the future - to live on expectation - to live on what you are to have in the next world - to feast yourselves with some of the droppings of the tree of life that fall from heaven - to live upon the manna of expectation which falls in the wilderness, and to drink that stream of nectar which gushes from the throne of God? Have you ever gone to the great Niagara of hope, and drank the spray with ravishing delight; for the very spray of heaven is glory to one's soul! Have you ever lived on the future, and said, "As for me I shall have somewhat, by-and-bye?" Why, this is the highest motive that can actuate a man. I suppose this was what made Luther so bold, when he stood before his great audience of kings and lords, and said, "I stand by the truth that I have written, and will so stand by it till I die; so help me God!" Me thinks he must have said, "I shall be satisfied by-and-bye. I am not satisfied now, but I shall be soon." For this the missionary ventures the stormy sea; for this he treads the barbarous shore; for this he goes into inhospitable climes, and risks his life, because he knows there is a payment to come by-and-bye. I sometimes laughingly tell my friends when I receive a favor from them, that I cannot return it, but set it up to my Master in heaven, for they shall be satisfied when they awake in his likeness. There are many things that

we may never hope to be rewarded for here, but that shall be remembered before the throne hereafter, not of debt, but of grace. Like a poor minister I heard of, who, walking to a rustic chapel to preach, was met by a clergyman who had a far richer berth. He asked the poor man what he expected to have for his preaching. "Well," he said, "I expect to have a crown." "Ah!" said the clergyman, "I have not been in the habit of preaching for less than a guinea, anyhow." "Oh!" said the other, "I am obliged to be content with a crown, and what is more, I do not have my crown now, but I have to wait for that in the future." The clergyman little thought that he meant the "crown of life that fadeth not away!" Christian! live on the future; seek nothing here, but expect that thou shalt shine when thou shalt come in the likeness of Jesus, with him to be admired, and to kneel before his face adoringly. The Psalmist had an eye to the future.

And again, upon this point, you can see that David, at the time he wrote this, was full of faith. The text is fragrant with confidence. "As for me," says David, no perhaps about it. "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness." If some men should say so now, they would be called fanatics, and it would be considered presumption for any man to say, "I will behold thy face, I shall be satisfied;" and I think there are many now in this world who think it is quite impossible for a man to say to a certainty, "I know, I am sure, I am certain." But, beloved, there are not one or two, but there are thousands and thousands of God's people alive in this world who can say with an assured confidence, no more doubting of it than of their very existence, "I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness." It is possible, though perhaps not very easy, to attain to that high and eminent position wherein we can say no longer do I hope, but I know; no longer do I trust, but I am persuaded; I have a happy confidence; I am sure of it; I am certain; for God has so manifested himself to me that now it is no longer "if" and "perhaps" but it is positive, eternal, "shall." "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." How many are there here of that sort? Oh! if ye are talking like that, ye must expect to have trouble, for God never gives strong faith without fiery trial; he will never give a man the power to say that "shall" without trying him; he will not build a strong ship without subjecting it to very mighty

storms; he will not make you a mighty warrior, if he does not intend to try your skill in battle. God's swords must be used; the old Toledo blades of heaven must be smitten against the armor of the evil one, and yet they shall not break, for they are of true Jerusalem metal, which shall never snap. Oh! what a happy thing to have that faith to say "I shall." Some of you think it quite impossible, I know; but it "is the gift of God," and whosoever asks it shall obtain it: and the very chief of sinners now present in this place may yet be able to say long before he comes to die, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Methinks I see the aged Christian. He has been very poor. He is in a garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is his bed. His clothes ragged and torn. There are a few sticks on the hearth: they are the last he has. He is sitting up in his chair; his paralytic hand quivers and shakes, and he is evidently near his end. His last meal was eaten yester-noon; and as you stand and look at him, poor, weak, and feeble, who would desire his lot? But ask him, "Old man, wouldst thou change thy garret for Caesar's palace? Aged Christian, wouldst thou give up these rags for wealth, and cease to love thy God?" See how indignation burns in his eyes at once! He replies, "'As for me, I shall,' within a few more days, 'behold his face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied soon; here I never shall be. Trouble has been my lot, and trial has been my portion, but I have 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'" Bid high; bid him fair; offer him your hands full of gold; lay all down for him to give up his Christ. "Give up Christ?" he will say, "no, never!"

"While my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the miser's gold."

Oh! what a glorious thing to be full of faith, and to have the confidence of assurance, so as to say, "I will behold thy face; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Thus much concerning the spirit of David. It is one very much to be copied and eminently to be desired.

II. But now, secondly, THE MATTER OF THIS PASSAGE. And here we will dive into the very depths of it, God helping us; for without the Spirit of God I feel I am utterly unable to speak to you. I have not those gifts

and talents which qualify men to speak; I need an afflatus from no high, otherwise I stand like other men and have nought to say. May that be given me; for without it I am dumb. As for the matter of this verse, methinks it contains a double blessing. The first is a beholding - "I will behold thy face in righteousness," and the next is a satisfaction - "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Let us begin with the first, then. David expected that he should behold God's face. What a vision will that be, my brethren! Have you ever seen God's hand? I have seen it, when sometimes he places it across the sky, and darkens it with clouds. I have seen God's hand sometimes, when the ears of night drag along the shades of darkness. I have seen his hand when, launching the thunder-bolt, his lightning splits the clouds and rends the heavens. Perhaps ye have seen it in a gentler fashion, when it pours out the water and sends it rippling along in rills, and then rolls into rivers. Ye have seen it in the stormy ocean - in the sky decked with stars, in the earth gemmed with flowers; and there is not a man living who can know all the wonders of God's hand. His creation is so wondrous that it would take more than a life-time to understand it. Go into the depths of it, let its minute parts engage your attention; next take the telescope, and try to see remote worlds, and can I see all God's handiwork - behold all his hand? No, not so much as one millionth part of the fabric. That mighty hand wherein the callow comets are brooded by the sun, in which the planets roll in majestic orbits; that mighty hand which holds all space, and grasps all beings - that mighty hand, who can behold it? but if such be his hand, what must his face be? Ye have heard God's voice sometimes, and ye have trembled; I, myself, have listened awe-struck, and yet with a marvellous joy, when I have heard God's voice, like the noise of many waters, in the great thunderings. Have you never stood and listened, while the earth shook and trembled, and the very spheres stopped their music, while God spoke with his wondrous deep bass voice? Yes, ye have heard that voice, and there is a joy marvellously instinct with love which enters into my soul, whenever I hear the thunder. It is my Father speaking, and my heart leaps to hear him. But you never heard God's loudest voice. It was but the whisper when the thunder rolled. But if such be the voice, what must it be to behold his face? David said, "I will behold thy face." It is said of the temple of Diana, that it was so splendidly

decorated with gold, and so bright and shining, that a porter at the door always said to every one that entered, "Take heed to your eyes, take heed to your eyes; you will be struck with blindness unless you take heed to your eyes." But oh! that view of glory! That great appearance. The vision of God! to see him face to face, to enter into heaven, and to see the righteous shining bright as stars in the firmament; but best of all, to catch a glimpse of the eternal throne! Ah! there he sits! 'Twere almost blasphemy for me to attempt to describe him. How infinitely far my poor words fall below the mighty subject! But to behold God's face. I will not speak of the lustre of those eyes, or the majesty of those lips, that shall speak words of love and affection; but to behold his face' Ye who have dived into the Godhead's deepest sea, and have been lost in its immensity, ye can tell a little of it! Ye naughty "ones, who have lived in heaven these thousand years perhaps ye know, but ye cannot tell, What it is to see his face. We must each of us go there we must be clad with immortality. We must go above the blue sky, and bathe in the river of life: we must outsoar the lightning, and rise above the stars to know what it is to see God's face. Words cannot set it forth. So there I leave it. The hope the Psalmist had was, that he might see God's face.

But there was a peculiar sweetness mixed with this joy, because he knew that he should behold God's face in righteousness. "I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Have I not seen my Father's face here below? Yes, I have, "through a glass darkly," But has not the Christian sometimes beheld him, when in his heavenly moments earth is gone, and the mind is stripped of matter? There are some seasons when the gross materialism dies away, and when the ethereal fire within blazes up so high that it almost touches the fire of heaven. There are seasons, when in some retired spot, calm and free from all earthly thought, we have put our shoes from off our feet because the place whereon we stood was holy ground; and we have talked with God! even as Enoch talked with him so has the Christian held intimate communion with his Father. He has heard his love whispers, he has told out his heart, poured out his sorrows and his groans before him. But after all he has felt that he has not beheld his face in righteousness. There was so much sin to darken the eyes, so much folly, so much frailty, that we could not get a clear prospect of our Jesus. But here the Psalmist says, "I will behold thy face in righteousness."



When that illustrious day shall arise, and I shall see my Saviour face to face, I shall see him "in righteousness." The Christian in heaven will not have so much as a speck upon his garment; he will be pure and white; yea, on the earth he is

"Pure through Jesus' blood, and white as angels are."

But in heaven that whiteness shall be more apparent. Now, it is sometimes smoked by earth, and covered with the dust of this poor carnal world; but in heaven he will have brushed himself, and washed his wings and made them clean; and then will he see God's face in righteousness. My God; I believe I shall stand before thy face as pure as thou art thyself, for I shall have the righteousness of Jesus Christ there shall be upon me the righteousness of a God. "I shall behold thy face in righteousness." O Christian, canst thou enjoy this? Though I cannot speak about it, dost thy heart meditate upon it? To behold his face for ever; to bask in that vision! True, thou canst not understand it; but thou mayest guess the meaning. To behold his face in righteousness!

The second blessing, upon which I will be brief, is satisfaction. He will be satisfied, the Psalmist says, when he wakes up in God's likeness. Satisfaction! this is another joy for the Christian when he shall enter heaven. Here we are never thoroughly satisfied. True, the Christian is satisfied from himself; he has that within which is a wet-spring of comfort, and he can enjoy solid satisfaction. But heaven is the home of true and real satisfaction. When the believer enters heaven I believe his imagination will be thoroughly satisfied. All he has ever thought of he will there see; every holy idea will be solidified; every mighty conception will become a reality, every glorious imagination will become a tangible thing that he can see. His imagination will not be able to think of anything better than heaven; and should he sit down through eternity, he would not be able to conceive of anything that should outshine the lustre of that glorious city. His imagination will be satisfied. Then his intellect will be satisfied.

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know,  
All I desired, or wished, below."

Who is satisfied with his knowledge here? Are there not secrets we want to know, depths in the arcana of nature that we have not entered? But in that glorious state we shall know as much as we want to know. The memory will be satisfied. We shall look back upon the vista of past years, and we shall be content with whatever we endured, or did, or suffered on earth.

"There, on a green and flowery mound,  
My wearied soul shall sit,  
And with transporting joys recount  
The labors of my feet."

Hope will be satisfied, if there be such a thing in heaven. We shall hope for a future eternity, and believe in it. But we shall be satisfied as to our hopes continually: and the whole man will be so content that there will not remain a single thing in all God's dealings, that he would wish to have altered; yea, perhaps I say a thing at which some of you will demur - but the righteous in heaven will be quite satisfied with the damnation of the lost. I used to think that if I could see the lost in hell, surely I must weep for them. Could I hear their horrid wailings, and see the dreadful contortions of their anguish, surely I must pity them. But there is no such sentiment as that known in heaven. The believer shall be there so satisfied with all God's will, that he will quite forget the lost in the idea that God has done it for the best, that even their loss has been their own fault, and that he is infinitely just in it. If my parents could see me in hell they would not have a tear to shed for me, though they were in heaven, for they would say, "It is justice, thou great God; and thy justice must be magnified, as well as thy mercy;" and moreover, they would feel that God was so much above his creatures that they would be satisfied to see those creatures crushed if it might increase God's glory. Oh! in heaven I believe we shall think rightly of men. Here men seem great things to us; but in heaven they will seem no more than a few creeping insects that are swept away in ploughing a field for harvest; they will appear no more than a tiny handful of dust, or like some nest of wasps that ought to be exterminated for the injury they have done. They will appear such little things when we sit on high with God, and look down on the nations of the earth as grasshoppers, and "count the isles as very little things." We shall be

satisfied with everything; there will not be a single thing to complain of. "I shall be satisfied."

But when? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." But not till then. No, not till then. Now here a difficulty occurs. You know there are some in heaven who have not yet waked up in God's likeness. In fact, none of those in heaven have done so. They never did sleep as respects their souls; the waking refers to their bodies, and they are not awake yet - but are still slumbering. O earth! thou art the bedchamber of the mighty dead! What a vast sleeping-house this world is! It is one vast cemetery. The righteous still sleep; and they are to be satisfied on the resurrection morn, when they awake. "But," say you, "are they not satisfied now? They are in heaven: is it possible that they can be distressed?" No, they are not; there is only one dissatisfaction that can enter heaven - the dissatisfaction of the blest that their bodies are not there. Allow me to use a simile which will somewhat explain what I mean. When a Roman conqueror had been at war, and won great victories, he would very likely come back with his soldiers enter into his house, and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city and then come in again in triumph. Now, the saints, as it were, if I might use such a phrase, steal into heaven without their bodies; but on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter in their triumphal chariots. And methinks I see that grand procession, when Jesus Christ, first of all, with man; crowns on his head, with his bright, glorious body, shall lead the way. I see my Saviour entering first. Behind him come the saints, all of them clapping their hands all of them touching their golden harps, and entering in triumph. And when they come to heaven's gates, and the doors are opened wide to let the king of glory in, now will the angels crowd at the windows, and on the house-tops, like the inhabitants in the Roman triumphs, to watch them as they pass through the streets, and scatter heaven's roses and cities upon them, crying, crying, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" "I shall be satisfied" in that glorious day, when all his angels shall come to see the triumph, and when his people shall be victorious with him.

One thought here ought not to be forgotten; and that is, the Psalmist says we are to wake up in the likeness of God. This may refer to the soul; for

the spirit of the righteous will be in the likeness of God as to its happiness holiness, purity, infallability, eternity, and freedom from pain; but specially, I think, it relates to the body because it speaks of the awaking. The body is to be in the likeness of Christ. What a thought! It is - and alas! I have had too many such to-night - a thought too heavy for words. I am to awake up in Christ's likeness. I do not know what Christ is like, and can scarcely imagine. I love sometimes to sit and look at him in his crucifixion. I care not what men say - I know that sometimes I have derived benefit from a picture of my dying crucified Saviour; and I look at him with his crown of thorns, his pierced side, his bleeding hands and feet, and all those drops of gore hanging from him; but I cannot picture him in heaven, he is so bright, so glorious; the God so shines through the man; his eyes are like lamps of fire; his tongue like a two-edged sword; his head covered with hair as white as snow, for he is the Ancient of days, he binds the clouds round about him for a girdle; and when he speaks, it is like the sound of many waters! I read the accounts given in the book of Revelation, but I cannot tell what he is; they are Scripture phrases, and I cannot understand their meaning; but whatever they mean, I know that I shall wake up in Christ's likeness. Oh; what a change it will be, when some of us get to heaven! There is a man who fell in battle with the word of salvation on his lips, his legs had been shot away, and his body had been scarred by sabre thrusts; he wakes in heaven, and finds that he has not a broken body, maimed and cut about, and hacked and injured, but that he is in Christ's likeness. There is an old matron, who has tottered on her staff for years along her weary way; time has ploughed furrows on her brow; haggard and lame, her body is laid in the grave. But oh! aged woman, thou shalt arise in youth and beauty. Another has been deformed in his life-time, but when he wakes, he wakes in the likeness of Christ. Whatever may have been the form of our countenance, whatever the contour, the beautiful shall be no more beautiful in heaven than those who were deformed. Those who shone on earth, peerless, among the fairest, who ravished men with looks from their eyes, they shall be no brighter in heaven than those who are now passed by and neglected: for they shall all be like Christ.

III. But now to close up, **HERE IS A VERY SAD CONTRAST IMPLIED.** We shall all slumber A few more years and where will this company be?

Xerxes wept, because in a little while his whole army would be gone; how might I stand here and weep, because within a few more years others shall stand in this place, and shall say, "The fathers, where are they?" Good God! and is it true? Is it not a reality? Is it all to be swept away? Is it one great dissolving view? Ah! it is. This sight shall vanish soon, and you and I shall vanish with it. We are but a show. This life is but "a stage whereon men act;" and then we pass behind the curtain, and we there unmask ourselves, and talk with God. The moment we begin to live we begin to die. The tree has long been growing that shall be sawn to make you a coffin. The sod is ready for you all. But this scene is to appear again soon. One short dream, one hurried nap, and all this sight shall come o'er again. We shall all awake, and as we stand here now, we shall stand together, perhaps, even more thickly pressed. But we shall stand on the level then - the rich and poor, the preacher and hearer. There will be but one distinction - righteous and wicked. At first we shall stand together. Methinks I see the scene. The sea is boiling; the heavens are rent in twain, the clouds are fashioned into a chariot, and Jesus riding on it, with wings of fire, comes riding through the sky. His throne is set. He seats himself upon it. With a nod he hushes all the world. He lifts his fingers, opens the great books of destiny, and the book of our probation, wherein are written the acts of time. With his fingers he beckons to the hosts above. "Divide," said he, "divide the universe." Swifter than thought all the earth shall part in sunder. Where shall I be found when the dividing comes? Methinks I see them all divided, and the righteous are on the right. Turning to them, with a voice sweeter than music, he says, "Come! Ye have been coming - keep on your progress! Come! it has been the work of your life to come, so continue. Come and take the last step. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.'" And now the wicked are left alone; and turning to them, he says, "Depart! Ye have been departing all your life long; it was your business to depart from me; ye said, 'Depart from me, I love not thy ways.' You have been departing, keep on, take the last step!" They dare not move. They stand still. The Saviour becomes the avenger. The hands that once held out mercy, now grasp the sword of justice; the lips that spoke lovingkindness, now utter thunder; and with a deadly aim; he lifts up the sword, and sweeps amongst them. They fly like deer before the lion, and enter the jaws of the bottomless pit.

But never, I hope, shall I cease preaching, without telling you what to do to be saved. This morning I preached to the ungodly, to the worst of sinners, and many wept - I hope many hearts melted - while I spoke of the great mercy of God. I have not spoken of that to-night. We must take a different line sometimes; led, I trust, by God's Spirit. But oh! ye that are thirsty, and heavy laden, and lost and ruined, mercy speaks yet once again to you! Here is the way of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "And what is it to believe?" says one; "is it to say I know Christ died for me?" No, that is not to believe, it is part of it, but it is not all. Every Arminian believes that; and every man in the world believes it who holds that doctrine, since he conceives that Christ died for every man. Consequently that is not faith. But faith is this: to cast yourself on Christ. As the negro said, most curiously, when asked what he did to be saved; "Massa," said he, "I fling myself down on Jesus, and dere I lay; I fling myself flat on de promise, and dere I lay." And to every penitent sinner Jesus says, "I am able to save to the uttermost;" throw thyself flat on the promise, and say, "Then, Lord, thou art able to save me." God says, "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Cast thyself on him, and thou shalt be saved. "Ah!" says one, "I am afraid I am not one of God's people; I cannot read my name in the book of life." A very good thing you can't, for if the Bible had every body's name in it, it would be a pretty large book; and if your name is John Smith and you saw that name in the Bible, if you do not believe God's promise now, you would be sure to believe that it was some other John Smith. Suppose the Emperor of Russia should issue a decree to all the Polish refugees to return to their own country; you see a Polish refugee looking at the great placards hanging on the wall he looks with pleasure, and says, "Well, I shall go back to my country." But some one says to him, "It does not say Walewski." "Yes," he would reply, "but it says Polish refugees: Polish is my Christian name, and refugee my surname, and that is me." And so, though it does not say your name in the Scriptures, it says lost sinner. Sinner is your Christian name, and lost is your surname; therefore, why not come? It says, "lost sinner;" - is not that enough? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." "Yes, but," another one says, "I am afraid I am not elect." Oh! dear souls,

do not trouble yourselves about that. If you believe in Christ you are elect. Whoever puts himself on the mercy of Jesus is elect; for he would never do it if he had not been elect. Whoever comes to Christ, and looks for mercy through his blood, is elect, and he shall see that he is elect afterwards; but do not expect to read election till you have read repentance. Election is a college to which you little ones will not go till you have been to the school of repentance. Do not begin to read your book backwards, and say Amen before you have said your paternoster. Begin with "Our Father," and then you will go on to "thine is the kingdom the power and the glory;" but begin with "the kingdom," and you will have hard work to go back to "Our Father." We must begin with faith. We must begin with -

"Nothing in my hands I bring."

As God made the world out of nothing, he always makes his Christians out of nothing; and he who has nothing at all to-night, shall find grace and mercy, if he will come for it.

Let me close up by telling you what I have heard of some poor woman, who was converted and brought to life, just by passing down a street, and hearing a child, sitting at a door, singing -

"I am nothing at all  
But Jesus Christ is all in all."

That is a blessed song; go home and sing it; and he who can rightly apprehend those little words, who can feel himself vanity without Jesus, but that he has all things in Christ, is not only far from the kingdom of heaven, but he is there in faith, and shall be there in fruition, when he shall wake up in God's likeness.

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## **The Horns Of The Altar**

And he said, Nay; but I will die here. - 1 Kings 2:30

He must tell you the story. Solomon was to be the king after David, but his elder brother, Adonijah, was preferred by Joab, the captain of the host, and by Abiathar, the priest; and, therefore, they got together, and tried to steal a march upon dying David, and set up Adonijah. They utterly failed in this; and when Solomon came to the throne Adonijah was afraid for his life, and fled to the horns of the altar at the tabernacle for shelter. Solomon permitted him to find sanctuary there, and forgave him his offence, and said that if he proved himself a worthy man he should live without further molestation. But very soon he began plotting again, and sought to undermine Solomon now that their venerable father was dead. It became therefore necessary, especially according to oriental ideas, for Solomon to strike a heavy blow; and he determined to begin with Joab—the bottom of all the mischief, who, though he had not followed after Absalom in David's time, was now following after Adonijah. No sooner had the king determined upon this, than Joab, conscience-stricken, began to look to himself and fly. Read the twenty-eighth verse. "Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." I suppose that he thought that, as Adonijah had done this successfully before, Joab might repeat it, and have some hope for his life. Of course, he had no right to enter into the holy place, and lay hold on the horns of the altar; but being driven to desperation, he knew not what else to do. He was a man of hoary head, who had thirty or more years before committed two atrocious murders, and now they came home to him. He did not know where to fly except he fled to the horns of an altar, which he had very seldom approached before. As far as we can judge, he had shown little respect to religion during his lifetime. He was a rough man of war, and cared little enough about God, or the tabernacle, or the priests, or the altar; but when he was in danger, he fled to that which he had avoided, and sought to make a refuge of that which he had neglected. He was not the only man that had done the same. Perhaps there are some here who before long will be trying to escape from impending woe by like means.



Now, I want you to notice that when Joab fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and took hold of the horns of the altar, it was of no use to him. "And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus saith Joab, and thus he answered me. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men, more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa, the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab. So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness."

I have two lessons I am anxious to teach at this time. The first is derived from the fact that Joab found no benefit of sanctuary even though he laid hold of the horns of the altar of God's house, from which I gather this lesson—that outward ordinances will avail nothing. Before the living God, who is greater and wiser than Solomon, it will be of no avail to any man to lay hold upon the horns of the altar. But, secondly, there is an altar—a spiritual altar—whereof if a man do but lay hold upon the horns, and say, "Nay; but I will die here," he shall never die; but he shall be safe against the sword of justice for ever; for the Lord has appointed an altar in the person of his own dear Son, Jesus Christ, where there shall be shelter for the very vilest of sinners if they do but come and lay hold thereon.

I. To begin, then, first, **OUTWARD ORDINANCES AVAIL NOT.** The laying hold upon the literal horns of an altar, which can be handled, availed not Joab. There are many—oh, how many still!—that are hoping to be saved, because they lay hold, as they think, upon the horns of the sacraments. Men of unhallowed life, nevertheless, come to the sacramental table, looking for a blessing. Do they not know that they

pollute it? Do they not know that they are committing a high sin, and a great misdemeanour against God, by coming amongst his people, where they have no right to be? And yet they think that by committing this atrocity they are securing to themselves safety. How common it is to find in this city, when an irreligious man is dying, that someone will say, "Oh, he is all right; for a clergyman has been, and given him the sacrament." I often marvel how men calling themselves the servants of God can dare thus to profane the ordinance of the Lord. Did he ever intend the blessed memorial of the Lord's supper to be a kind of superstitious vialicum, a something upon which ungodly men may depend in their last hour, as if it could put away sin. I do not one half so much blame the poor ignorant and superstitious persons who seek after the sacrament in their dying hours, as I do the men who ought to know better, but who pander to what is as downright a superstition as anything that ever came from the church of Rome, or, for the matter of that, from the fetish worship of the most deluded African tribe. Do they conceive that grace comes to men by bits of bread and drops of wine? These things are meant to put us in memory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as far as they do that, and quicken our thoughts of him, they are useful to us; but there is no wizardry or witchcraft linked with these two emblems, so they convey as form of grace. If you do rely upon such things, I can only say that this error is all of a piece: it is a superstition which begins with, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven"; which statement is altogether false; and then it continues the delusion by prostituting an ordinance meant for the living child of God, and giving it to the ungodly, the ignorant, and the superstitious, as though it could make them meet for entering heaven. I charge you, as before the Lord, cleanse yourselves of this superstition. There is no salvation apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and you might as well trust in your sins as in sacraments. In fact, the sacraments become sins to men who trust in them, for those men sin against the ordinances of the Lord by putting them where they never ought to be, and making an Antichrist of them, so as to push Christ out of his place with their baptisms and their masses. If you died with the sacramental bread in your mouths, ye will lost unless your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Your hands, which are superstitiously laid upon the altar's horns, might as well be placed upon your weapons of rebellion. Outward

emblems can do you no good whatsoever if you remain unspiritual. Without faith in Christ, even the ordinances of God become things to condemn you. If ye eat and drink unworthily ye eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body; and, if this be true, how dare any unconverted, unbelieving man put his trust in the outward ordinance of which he has no right to partake?

There are others who put their trust in religious observances of sundry kinds. Their visible altar-horn is something which they believe to be very proper and right, and which, indeed, may be so if wisely used, for the thing is good if used lawfully; but it will be their ruin if it be put out of its own place. For instance, there are, doubtless, some who think that they are all right because they frequent sermons. They delight to be found hearing the gospel. Now, in this you do well, for, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"; but, if you suppose that the mere hearing of a sermon with the outward ear can save you, you suppose what is untrue, and you build the house of your hope on sand. "Oh, sir, I have sat to hear the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ these many years." Yes, and these many years you have rejected it. The kingdom of God has come nigh unto you, but I fear it will work your damnation through your unbelief; for it will be a savour of death unto you. I fear that in the last great day it shall be seen that I have ministered unto some of you to your hurt. It will not be laid to my charge, but to yours, if I have been faithful in the declaration of the word. Oh, may God grant that no man or woman among you may ever put the slightest faith in the mere hearing of the word! Except ye receive it by faith ye deceive your own souls; if ye are hearers only, what good can come of it?

"Oh, but," says another, "I attend prayer meetings." I admit that it is not every hypocrite that will regularly come to prayer-meetings, but there are some that do; and, though you are so fond of prayer-meetings, yet, my dear friend, unless it can be said of you, "Behold he prayeth," you need not make sure of safety. Your being found in the place where prayer is wont to be made may be no true sign of grace. "Ay, but I do more than that, for I have prayers in my own house." Yes, and very proper, too. I would that all did the same; I am grieved that any should neglect the ordinance of family prayer. But yet, if you think that the reading of a form

of prayer in your household, or even the use of extempore prayer, is a thing to be relied upon for salvation, you do greatly err. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life", but he that believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ does but offer unbelieving prayer to God; and what is that but a vain sacrifice which he cannot accept? Oh, do not rely upon the habit of outward worship, or you will lean on a bulrush!

"But I regularly read a chapter," says one. I am extremely glad you do, and God bless that chapter to you! I would that all were in the habit of reading right thought the Bible regularly, and endeavouring to understand it; but, if you trust in your Bible-readings as a ground of salvation, you are resting upon a mere soap-bubble which will burst under your weight. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, producing in the soul a change of heart, a new birth unto God, this is what is wanted; and, apart from that, all the Bible reading you ever practice can do you no good whatsoever. "Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again"; and if they be not this inward change, then vain is all outward observance. You may wash a corpse, you may clothe that corpse in the purest white shroud that was ever woven, but when all is done it does not live; and what are all the outward devotions of a carnal man but dead things which bring no life with them to men dead in sin?

Some are foolish enough to put their confidence in ministers. It would seem to me to be the maddest thing in all the world for anybody to have confidence in me as to helping him in his salvation; and I trust that nobody is such a fool. I cannot even save myself; what can I do for others? Do not come to me with "Give us of your oil," for I have not enough for myself, except as I keep on begging a supply. When I look at the priests in whom some trust, especially such as I have seen abroad, they may be very fine fellows, but I would not trust some of them with a half-crown, let alone my soul. The very look of most priests makes me wonder how they manage to secure power over people's minds. They may know a great deal, but they do not look as if they were overdone with wit. I would as soon trust my soul in the hands of a gipsy with a red cloak as I would with the best-ordained priest or bishop that ever lived. There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, and he who sets up another is an enemy of souls. There is but one who can be trusted with our soul

affairs, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and woe to us if we put our confidence in men! Ordained or unordained, shaven or unshorn, they cannot help us. Yet I know that people do trust in ministers most foolishly. I remember years ago being at three o'clock in the morning in a house now pulled down, which stood not far from the London Bridge railway-station. A gentleman of considerable means had spent the Sunday at Brighton, had come home, and had been taken with cholera on a sudden, and nothing would do him, when he was in the pangs of death, but he must send for me. I went, not knowing what was required of me. But when I got there what could I do? There was a little consciousness left to the man, and I spoke to him of Jesus. I asked if he had a Bible. The people of the house searched high and low, but there was no such thing to be found. The mind was soon too beclouded for further comprehension, and as I came away I asked, "Has he ever gone to a place of worship?" No, never—never cared for such a thing; but as soon as he was ill, then, "Oh, send for Mr. Spurgeon!" He must come, and nobody else: and there I stood, and what could I do? There died in the City of London, not long ago, a tradesman of much wealth; and when he came to die, though I had never seen the man in my life before, he importunately asked for me. I could not go. My brother went to see him, and, after setting before him the way of salvation, he enquired, "What made you wish to see my brother?" "Well," he said, "you know whenever I have a doctor I always like to get the best; and when I employ a lawyer I like a man who is high in the profession. Money is no object. I want the best possible help." Ah me! I shuddered at being so regarded. The best help he could get! That best is nothing—less than nothing, and vanity. What can we do for you, dear hearts, if you will not have our Saviour? We can stand and weep over you, and break our hearts to think that you reject him; but what can we do? Oh, if we could let you into heaven, if we could renew your hearts, how joyfully would we perform the miracle; but we claim no such power, no such influence! Go you to Christ, and lay hold upon the true altar-horn; but do not be so foolish as to put confidence in us or in any other ministers.

"Ah, well," says one, "I am free of that. I am a professor of religion, and have been a member of a church now these twenty years." You may be a member of a church fifty years, but you will be damned at last unless you are a member of Christ. It matters not though you are a church-officer, a

deacon, an elder, a pastor, a bishop, or even Archbishop of Canterbury, or an apostle, you will perish as surely as Judas, who betrayed his Master with a kiss, unless your heart is right with God. I pray you, put no confidence in your profession. Unless you have Christ in your heart, a profession is but a painted pageantry for a soul to go to hell in. As a corpse is drawn to the grave by horses adorned with nodding plumes, so may you find in an outward profession a pompous way of being lost. God save us from that!

"No," says one, " but I do not trust in mere profession. I have great reliance upon orthodoxy. I will have sound doctrine." That is right, friend, I would have all men value the truth. "My confidence is in my sound doctrine." That is not mine, friend, and I hope that it will not be yours long, for many lost souls have firmly believed orthodox doctrine. In fact, I question whether any one is more orthodox than the devil, for the devils believe and tremble. Satan is no skeptic; he has too much knowledge for that. Devils believe and tremble, and yet they are devils still. Put no confidence in the mere fact that you hold to an orthodox faith, for a dead orthodoxy soon corrupts. You must have faith in Christ, or else this altar-horn of a correct creed, on which you lay your hand, will bring you no salvation.

I will not enlarge upon this topic. Whatever you depend upon apart from the blood and righteousness of Christ, away with it! Away with it! If you are even depending upon your own repentance, and your faith, away with them! If you are looking to your own prayers or alms, I can only cry again, —Away with them! Nothing but the blood of Jesus; nothing but the atoning sacrifice; but, if you come and lay your hand upon that, blessed shall you be.

II. That assurance is the second part of our discourse, on which I will speak briefly. **COMING TO THE SPIRITUAL ALTAR, AND LAYING OUR HAND UPON IT, WILL SAVE US.**

Now, notice first, the act itself. Joab came within the tabernacle. So, poor soul, come and hide yourself in Christ. Joab took hold of the horns, the projecting corners of the altar, and he would not let go. Come, trembling sinners, and take hold on Christ Jesus.

"My faith doth lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine;  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin."

Lean with your hand of faith upon your Lord, and say, "This Christ is mine. I accept it as the gift of God to me, unworthy though I be."

When that is done, a fierce demand may be made upon you. The enemy will probably cry, "Come forth! Come forth!" The self-righteous will say, "What right has a sinner as you to trust Christ? Come forth!" Mind you say to them, "Nay, but I will die here." Your sins and your guilty conscience will cry to you, "Come forth! Come forth! You must not lay hold of Christ. See what you have been, and what you are, and what you are likely to be." Answer to these voices, "Nay, but I will die here. I will never give up my hold of Christ." Satan will come, and he will howl out, "Come forth! What right have you with the Lord Jesus Christ? You cannot think that he came to save such a lost one as you are." Do not listen to him. As often as he howls at you, only say to yourself, "Nay, but I will die here." I pray God that every sinner here may be brought to this desperate resolve, "If I perish, I will perish trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. If I must die, I will die here." For certain, we shall die anywhere else. If we trust in any but Jesus, we must perish. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not,"—whatever else he trusts to,—"is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Make, then, this desperate resolve -

If I must die, here will I die,  
Here at the cross I bide;  
To whom or whither should I fly?  
Where else can I confide?

Say to all those who call you away, "Nay, but I will die here"; for nobody ever did perish trusting in Jesus. There has not been through all these centuries a single instance of a soul being cast away that came all guilty and hell-deserving, and took Christ to be its salvation. If you perish, you

will then be the first that perished with his hand laid upon Christ. His love and power can never fail a sinner's confidence. Wherefore, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to resolve, "If I must die, I will die here." Listen to me, soul, whoever thou mayest be out of the crowd, man or woman, whatever thy life may have been, even though it should have been that of a harlot or a thief, a drunkard or a profligate, if thou wilt now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved; for, if not, then God himself will have missed his greatest design. What did he give Jesus for but to save sinners? What did he lay sin upon Jesus for, but that he might take it off the sinner, and let him go free, and be pardoned? If, then, Christ fails, God's grandest expedient has broken down. That method by which the Lord resolved to show what his almighty grace can do has proved to be a failure if a believing sinner is not saved. Dost thou think that such a thing can ever be? It is blasphemy to think that Jehovah can be defeated. He that believes in Christ shall be saved; nay, he is saved.

If thou art not saved believing in Christ, then Christ himself is dishonoured. Oh, let them once know, down in the dark abode of fallen spirits, that a man has trusted in Christ and yet has not been saved, I tell you that they will make such exultation over Christ as Philistia made over Samson when his eyes were put out. They would feel that they had defeated the Prince of Glory. They would trample on his blood, and ridicule his claim to be the Saviour of men. If any soul can truly say hereafter, "I went to Christ, and he refused me," then Christ does not speak the truth when he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Then he has changed his nature, foregone his word, and foresworn himself. But that also can never be. Wherefore, dear heart, cling to Jesus, and say still, "If I die, I will die here."

Moreover, if thou canst perish trusting in Christ thou wilt discourage all the saints of God; for if Christ can break his promise to one, then why not to another? If one promise fails, why not all the promises? If the blood has lost its power, how can any of us ever hope to enter heaven? I say it will breed great discouragement in the hearts of all people if this be true; for what a wet blanket would e throne over all thy fellow-sinners! If they are coming to Christ, they will start back, and say, "What is the good of it? Here is one that came to Jesus, and he did not save him. He trusted in the



precious blood, and yet his sin was laid to his charge." If one fails, why not the rest? I must give up preaching the gospel when once I hear of a man trusting Jesus and not being saved; for I should be afraid to speak with boldness, as I now do.

If one poor soul that puts his trust in Christ should be cast away it would spoil heaven itself. What security is there for glorified spirits that their splendours shall endure except the promise of a faithful, covenant-keeping God? If, then, looking down from their celestial seats, they behold the great Father breaking his promise, and the Son of God unable to save those for whom he died, then will they say, "We will lay our harps aside, and put our palms away, for we, too, after all, may perish." See, then, O man, heaven and earth, ay, God and his Christ, as to their credit and their glory, do stand and fall with the salvation of every believing sinner. If I were in your stead tonight, I think that I should bless God to have this matter put so plainly to me. I know that years ago, when I was under a sense of sin, if I had heard even such a poor sermon as this I should have jumped for joy at it, and would have ventured upon Christ at once. Come, poor soul; come at once. You have heard the gospel long enough; now obey it. You have heard about Christ long enough; now trust in him. You have been invited and entreated, and pleaded with; now yield to his grace. Yield to joy and peace by trusting in him who will give you both of these as soon as you have rested in him.

Look! sinner, look! A look out of thyself will save thee. Look away from all thy works, and prayers, and tears, and feelings, and church-goings, and chapel-goings, and sacraments, and ministers. Look alone to Jesus. Look at once to him who on the bloody tree made expiation, and who bids thee look, and thou shalt live.

God make this present hour to be the period of thy new birth. I pray it, and so do his people. The Lord hearken to our intercessions, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## Hosanna

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried saying, Hosanna the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. - Matthew 21:9

After the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, a great fame went abroad concerning our Lord. He rested still at Bethany, and the people who came up to the feast in great number went out—an easy walk from Jerusalem to Bethany—to see Jesus, and to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. These people, on a certain day, formed a company, and marched with Jesus towards Jerusalem. On the way our Lord sent two of his disciples to fetch an ass and its colt; and upon this last he rode into the city. Another crowd, coming out of Jerusalem, met the company attending upon Jesus, and, forming one great procession, the whole multitude marched into the city escorting the Lord Jesus in humble state, and paying him honor as King in Zion. Upon no stately war-horse, but riding upon a colt the foal of an ass, the meek and lowly King entered the city of David attended by vast and enthusiastic crowds, who strewed the fronds of palms, and the branches of trees, and their own garments in the way along which he rode. Our Lord thus received a right royal and popular reception to the metropolis of his nation. This was a strange event, so very different from anything else that happened to our Savior, that one wonders at it with great wonderment. That it is to be viewed as an important event is clear, since every one of the four Evangelists takes pains to record it (see Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12.). Even of certain of the greater events of our Lord's life the Holy Spirit has not preserved us four accounts; but since he has done so in this case, he thereby calls us to give the more earnest heed to it. Herein is a mine of teaching; let us dig into it.

Assuredly, this honor paid to our Lord was passing strange; a gleam of sunlight in a day of clouds, a glimpse of summer-tide in a long and dreary

winter. He that was, as a rule, "despised and rejected of men", was for the moment surrounded with the acclaim of the crowd. All men saluted him that day with their Hosannas, and the whole city was moved. It was a gala day for the disciples, and a sort of coronation day for their Lord.

Why was the scene permitted? What was its meaning? The marvel is, that the like had not occurred before; for our Lord had healed many sick folk, and these and their friends must have felt favourably towards him. He had fed thousands at a time with the bread of this life, and hosts had been cheered and comforted by his teaching. The common people heard him gladly, and were ready to gather around him. Among an excitable people it was a wonder that they had not long ago taken him by force, and made him a king. No one had yet appeared so like the Messiah of their prophets; no one had so well deserved the people's gratitude. If they had from the first accepted him as their monarch, and if they had watched every opportunity of doing him homage, nobody could have been surprised. The marvel is, that the popular enthusiasm had been repressed so long.

It was the Lord himself who had suppressed the popular enthusiasm. With great skill he had succeeded in bridling a dangerous fanaticism. He "did not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets"; and with such a cry, and such a voice as he had, the marvel was that he preserved quiet, and kept the nation from revolt. Had he withdrawn his hand, the people would have been eager to assail their foreign rulers. Had this been the errand on which he came, he might at any moment have been saluted as "the King of the Jews." He, with a masterly art, repressed everything that would have made him a popular hero. He uttered unpalatable truth, or he stole away from the scene of his miracles, or he kept himself in obscure villages, and thus he eluded their honors. When he had fed the multitudes, he took ship, and went to the other side of the lake that they might not follow him. Many men live for ambitious ends, but our Lord lived to escape the honors of men. The proud hunt after praise; but our Lord fled from preferment, hid himself from fame, and shunned the throne which by descent belonged to him. He often bade those whom he healed go home and tell no man what he had done; for the dense throngs that gathered about him rendered it difficult for him to

move on his mission of mercy. "He went about doing good", and did not wait in any place to reap the laurels which his miracles had earned him. No wonder that at last the people felt forced to surround him with their praises. The pent-up fires of gratitude at last had vent. The covered flames of admiration leaped up at last, and cast a brilliant light over the old city. Men's hearts had been somewhat worse than diabolical if they had not felt a grateful enthusiasm for so grand a benefactor. No one before had ever so greatly blessed Judea; ten thousand voices felt it joy to cry "Hosanna" before such a one.

It came at last, you see: I have read you the story in John and in Matthew. They saluted him with their shouts of loyal welcome. But there was little in the acclamation when it did come. There was great shouting for the while, and abundant strewing of branches, and lining of the road with garments; but there was little else. Remember what happened less than a week after awards! If not the same individuals, yet people of the same city cried, Crucify him, crucify him." The Hosannas may be very loud, but they will not be long. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" sounds very sweetly; but how much more vehement will be the cry, "Let him be crucified"! Everything which comes to Jesus and his cause by popular acclamation, requires to be duly weighed; and when weighed it will be found wanting. "Vox populi, vox Dei" they used to say; but the saying is false: the voice of the people may seem to be the voice of God when they shout "Hosanna in the highest"; but whose voice is it when they yell out, "Crucify him, crucify him"? "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." So little value did our Lord place on popular applause that he repressed it; and when it did burst forth, so little did it elevate his spirit that we find him in the midst of it, gazing upon the city with tears in his eyes. While others were glad, he was weeping for the woes which his prophetic eye foresaw. The throng was carried away by the present moment and the enthusiasm of the hour; but his heart was anticipating that dreadful day when they would find his blood upon them and upon their children, and the Romans would utterly destroy their city, and quench the light of Zion in rivers of blood. It may be well that an enthusiastic admiration of religion should be professed by the multitude; but it is not more stable than smoke. It may seem good that the Christian minister should be popular, but popularity is lighter

than vanity. Once the Savior rides in state as a King, but soon he walks down those very streets bearing his cross like a criminal. How soon is the public voice purchased for evil! What dependence can be placed on the clamor of the streets?

We, however, have the story placed before us four times by the Evangelists, and therefore let us now give it our attentive consideration. May the good Spirit impart instruction to us by this strange stir and singular scene! May some divine impulse come to us out of this riding of our lowly King into Jerusalem!

First, I shall ask you to think of Christ triumphant in Jerusalem. Secondly, I shall bid you see herein Christ glorified in his church; and then, thirdly, we will think of Christ entering into the heart. Under these three divisions we may arrange our thoughts, and, God helping us, we may meditate to profit.

I. First, I ask you to view CHRIST TRIUMPHANT IN JERUSALEM. Why this procession? Why these shouts of homage? Our Lord always had a reason, and an excellent one, for all that he arranged or permitted. What meant he by this? How shall we interpret the scene?

I think it was, first, that he might most openly declare himself. He had frequently avowed his mission in plain speech; he had told them who he was, and why he came; but they would not hear; so that they dared to say to him, "If thou be the Christ tell us plainly." He had plainly told them times without number. Now he will assure them still more positively of his kingdom by openly riding into the city of Jerusalem in state. Now shall they see that he claims to be the Messiah, sent of God, of whom the prophet said, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh." Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings shall his fame be proclaimed; multitudes of people shall acknowledge with loud voices that "he cometh in the name of the Lord"; until the envious Pharisees shall be driven to ask, "Hearest thou what these say?" You will remember that our Lord rode into Jerusalem as a King, but he was also brought there as the Lamb of God's passover, whose blood must save the people. It was not meet that the Lamb of God should go to the altar without observation; it

was not fit that he who taketh away the sin of the world should be led to the temple unobserved. The day was near when he was to be offered up, and all eyes were called to look on him and know who and what he was. Therefore he permitted this great gathering and this honorable attention to himself, that he might say to Israel, by deeds as well as by words, "I am he that should come. I am he who of old had said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." Thus he beyond all question manifested himself to the people. When they crucified him the rulers knew what he professed to be. Albeit many of them were in ignorance as to the truthfulness of his claims, yet they knew right well that they were crucifying one who professed to be the Lord of glory, one who was acknowledged to be the Son of David, one who had in public avowed himself to be King in Zion. I think this was one reason for the joyous entry into the city of God.

Next, it was our Lord's public claiming of authority over Israel. He was the son of David, and therefore he was by natural right the King of the Jews. If he had taken possession of his own he would have been sitting on the throne of the chosen dynasty of David by right of birth. He was, moreover, as the Messiah, and Christ, the King of his people Israel. Concerning him it had been said by the prophet, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Our Lord Jesus literally came to Zion in this manner. As King he rode to his capital, and entered his palace. In his priestly royalty the Son of God went to his Father's house, to the temple of sacrifice and sovereignty. Among the tribes of Israel is he seen to be "one chosen out of the people," whom the Lord had given to be a leader and commander for the people. Although they might afterwards choose Barabbas, and cry that they had no king but Caesar, yet Jesus was their King, as Pilate reminded them, when he said, "Shall I crucify your king?" and as his cross declared when it bore the legal inscription, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Before his trial and his condemnation he had put in a public claim to the rights and prerogatives of Zion's king, whom God has set upon his holy hill. Would to God all my hearers fully recognized our Lord's kingdom, and yielded to his sway! Oh, that you would bow before him, and put your trust in him! Part of his intent in

riding through Jerusalem was that we also who dwell in the isles of the sea might know him and reverence him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Let each one cry in his inmost soul—

Great King of Grace, my heart subdue,  
I would be led in triumph too,  
A willing captive to my Lord,  
To sing the victories of his word."

Possibly our Savior intended, also, by this singular procession, to let his enemies know his real strength among the people. If he could gather so great a crowd of adherents without any summons or prearrangement, surely the whole population must have been, to a large degree, in his favor. If such an enthusiastic reception was spontaneously given him, how many would have gathered if a plan had been arranged? Had he agreed to lead them against the Romans, thousands of fanatics would have followed his banner. If he had designed to make himself a king, and had permitted his servants to fight, the old fierce courage of the Jewish race would have burned up like a flame of fire, and his enemies would have fled before him. He came not with war in his heart, but he would let the foeman see the hilt of the sword which he might have drawn from its sheath: he would let scribe and Pharisee bite their lips, while they said, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him." If the Savior had willed to use the baser methods that men nowadays would freely employ, by asking the world's alliance, he might have made himself a King at once. Had he blended politics with religion, and yielded something to general prejudice, he might at once have set up a worldly kingdom. But no, he knew no selfish ambition, his kingdom was not of this world; he came not that he might be honored here, but that he might be put to shame for our redemption. The diadem to which he aspired was a crown of thorns; yet he lets his adversaries see that he was not lowly because he was weak, nor gentle because he was feeble. They might, if they would, have seen by that day in Jerusalem the greatness of the self-denial which abstained from earthly honors.

Nor have I exhausted the Savior's reasons. We are told by the Evangelist that he did this that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.

I have just now quoted the text from Zec 9:9 ;. Our Lord was ever careful and earnest to fulfill each prophecy of Holy Scripture. He held the inspired Word in high esteem, and was careful of each letter of it. You never hear a word from him derogatory of the inspiration, authority, accuracy, or infallibility of the law and the prophets. He fulfils the Word of the Lord even to its jots and tittles. He directed his life by that old chart, in which the way of the Messiah was laid down long before he came to earth. Oh, for the same reverence of Scripture among preachers nowadays! God forbid that we should be lowering men's ideas of inspiration, as some are fond of doing. May we value every word which came from the Lord in old time! May we willingly change the course of our thought and teaching rather than neglect a single word of inspiration! When we see what the will of the Lord is, let us follow it implicitly. Obedience to the rule of Scripture was the way of the Head; it should also be the way of the members. If the King himself is careful in his walk towards the Word, surely we ought to be.

I think also that as our Lord thus looked back and fulfilled Scripture, he was looking forward to give us a prophetic type of the future. Beloved, our Lord will not always be rejected. There are days of triumph for him. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This is the age of iron, but there comes a golden age of love and light. We look for his appearing and his reign; his reign of peace and joy. There will come a day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. He shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah! Hath not Jehovah said to him, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"? Yes, there will come a day when he that was the reproach of men shall be the glory of his people. Kings shall bow down before him. All generations shall call him blessed. When I see that joyful procession going up the hill to Zion; and mark how they that went before joined with those who followed after, while the King himself rode in the center, I seem to see a rehearsal of the long succession of the faithful in all ages. The prophets have gone before him: hark to their loud Hosannas! We come behind him, even we upon whom the ends of the earth have come, and we have our glad Hosannas, too! Here patriarchs



join with apostles, prophets are one with martyrs, and priests keep rank with pastors and deacons, all with one voice lifting up the self-same note, "Hosanna! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." We see, then, in the simple state of our Lord in the streets of Jerusalem, a vision of the long glories which await him in the New Jerusalem, where he shall sit upon his throne, and his enemies shall be made his footstool.

One thing more I cannot help mentioning: surely, our Lord allowed the populace a vent for their enthusiasm with the desire to delight his friends. Do you not think that the sympathetic Jesus thought it worth while to give his little band of followers what our forefathers would have called "a gaudy day"—a high day, a holiday? These had been with him in his humiliation, and he would give them a taste of his glory. They had seen him despised and rejected of men; and he relieved the monotony of his humiliation with a glimpse of his glory. For once they should be allowed to cast their garments under his feet and strong fragrant branches on his path. For once their zeal should have license to climb the trees and break down the boughs to strong his pathway. Nothing on that day filled their ears but the praises of their loved Lord and honored Master. They would soon have enough sorrow when they would see him seized in the garden and taken away bound to Caiaphas and Pilate to be condemned to die. He would give them a breathing space, an interval of pleasure, wherein their spirits should no longer drag on earth, but rise on wings, into a lofty joy. Our Lord loves his people to be glad. His tears he kept to himself, as he wept over Jerusalem; but the gladness he scattered all around, so that even the boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem made the temple courts to ring with their merry feet and gladsome songs. Hear how they clap their hands with delight! "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" You hear it everywhere, and the Lord smiles as he sees the joy which pours in floods around him. The Lord loves to cast into our cup some drops of heaven's own honey, until the bitterness of grief is sweetened, and his followers are made happy by their joy in himself." Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." I wish I could express myself in tones more clear and musical; but though bodily weakness compels me to be measured in my utterance, my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Savior. May the Lord himself cast into your hearts the burning coals of joyful love to him, and so may your souls take fire, and blaze aloft

with vehement flames of delight! May this day be to your spirits a day of palms and psalms, of prayers and praises, of Hallelujahs and Hosannas. Let us sing all day, as we sung in our opening hymn—

Hosannah to th' anointed King,  
To David's holy Son!  
Help us, O Lord! descend and bring  
Salvation from thy throne.  
Blest be the Lord, who comes to men  
With messages of grace;  
Who comes in God his Father's name,  
To save our sinful race.

Hosannah in the highest strains  
The church on earth can raise;  
The highest heavens, in which he reigns,  
Shall give him nobler praise.

II. Secondly, my text is to my mind a parable of CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS CHURCH. There are choice days when the shout of a King is heard in our assemblies. We have not yet fallen to a dull monotony of barrenness; we have hills like those of Carmel. The low-water mark of lukewarmness is covered deep beneath flood-tides of holy exultation. I am going to speak about these hallowed seasons.

I think that such days come to the church of God after special miracles of grace have been wrought. Lazarus is raised from the dead, and when the people thus see the greatness of the Prophet of Nazareth, they begin to commend and extol him, and this leads on to holy excitement. If the Lord will be pleased to work remarkable conversions among us, we shall have grand times. If special instances of his gracious power are seen by us, we will bear our palms of victory before him, and many hearts shall enquire, "Who is this?" Our hearts shall rejoice as with the joy of harvest when we see the Lord saving great sinners; yea, we will shout as victors who divide the spoil. Do you not think that when Saul of Tarsus was converted, and the churches had rest, that they had also great exultation in their King? Everywhere it must have been talked of that the fierce Pharisee had

become a bold preacher of the faith which once he sought to destroy. What joy there is in saintly hearts when ring-leaders in sin become champions for truth! Oh that our God would work such transformations in this city! Pray, my brothers and sisters, that the Lord would do the like for us, and for all his churches just now. Oh, for displays of his power to quicken the dead! Oh, for Lazarus to be raised, and to live among us as a wonder of grace whom neighbors would come to see! O Lord, give us this signal of delight! Let us see thine arm made bare in the eyes of all the people.

Next, it was a time of testimony; for those who had been present, and had seen Lazarus raised from the dead, bore witness. One stepped forward and said, "With these eyes I saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb of rock." "As for me", said another, "I saw him buried, I helped to carry him to the grave; but I saw him come back to the house alive." "Yes", said a third, "I rolled away the stone, and as I stood watching for the result, I saw the dead man come forth alive, and I helped to loose his grave-clothes." All these bore witness to what they had seen. You cannot tell what a joyful effect it produces, and what enthusiasm is stirred, when one after another bears personal witness. Lord, open men's mouths! Lord, make the quiet ones to tell forth thy praise! Your silent tongues deprive us of our joy. Your cowardly reticence robs Christ of his glory and the church of its increase. If God has done anything for you, or you have seen him do anything for others, bear testimony to it. It is the Lord's due, and your duty, that you should speak to the glory of Christ Jesus. When great wonders have been done, and those who saw them are willing to bear their testimony "hereunto, then we may look for red-letter days, wherein gladness and praise shall be in the ascendant.

It was a good sign, too, of joy to come, that the enemies were now raging worse than ever. They sought to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. If the devil never roars the church will never sing. God is not doing much if the devil is not awake and busy. Depend upon it, that a working Christ makes a raging devil. When you hear ill reports, cruel speeches, threats, taunts, and the like, believe that the Lord is among his people, and is working gloriously. We look upon the "many adversaries" as one of the tokens that a great door and effectual is set before us. When we hear thunder we look

for rain. Wrath in the lowest hell is a prognostic of Hosanna in the highest heaven.

It is also a cheering sign when there is a general eagerness among the people concerning our Lord. When the disciples gather around their Master, and are prompt to do his bidding, then good times are come. When all agree, it is also well. When they that go before, and they that follow after, are all of the same mind, then is it a day of joy. When grey heads grow young, and young heads grow wise, it is a token for good. When the aged lift up their eyes to heaven, and say, "God, even our own God, shall bless us", things look well. When our matrons and our sires grow hopefully confident, and say, "The Lord has blessed us in days gone by, and he is going to bless us yet again", then the weather-glass points to "Set fair." When the younger sort, that follow after, who have been converted but lately, burn with a holy zeal, and cry, "We will give the Lord no rest until he bless us", then the sun of the church is shining high up in the sky. When we are all ready, each man, each woman ready, to take our share in the harvesting, then will the sheaves be garnered. It is cheering when the congregation shares the excitement with the church and its ministers, and the prospect of a divine blessing is before the mind of all who seek better things. Surely, the time to favor Zion, yea, the set time has come, when her King is longed for, and every heart beats high with love of him.

The case is clear when all this is attended with an abounding generosity. It is well when disciples are not only willing to fetch another man's colt, but are willing to lay their own garments thereon; when they will not only gather palm fronds to strew the path, but will take off their own coats to carpet the way of the King. When everybody does something, or gives something, or at any rate joins in the hearty Hosannas, then is the King come into our midst. Our King is not where hearts are miserly and souls are selfish; but one token of his presence is that his people offer willingly unto the Lord. At such times believers feel that they are not their own, but are bought with a price; and things which once looked like sacrifices too great to be expected of them, are cheerfully presented as sacrifices of joy.

Beloved, we must not forget that it is a token of God's having come to his

church and of his having given her a joyful day, when the children share in it. Luther was greatly encouraged when he found that the children met together for prayer. He said, "God will hear them. The devil himself cannot defeat us now the children begin to pray." It is very beautiful to read Mr. Whitefield's remarks about his sermons at Moorfields and elsewhere in London, when mud and stones were cast upon him, and yet a group of children always surrounded his pulpit; and though some of them were hurt, yet he noticed how bravely they stood by him through the service. He thought it a token for good that children drank in his words. When God moves the children to earnestness, he will soon move their fathers and mothers. When boys and girls meet to praise God, do not despise their little meetings, nor say, "It is only a parcel of children." The children are in God's esteem the most precious portion of the race. He sets high store by his little ones, and he has set a special curse upon those who offend one of the little ones that believe in him. Jesus, Master, come, we pray thee! Come in thy lowly pomp, in all thy gentleness, and grace, and then will the children of these modern days sing loud Hosannas to thy name, like those in thy temple of old.

I want you to notice in our text, that our Savior was received with the shout of Hosanna! The best interpretation I can give is—"Save, oh, save! Save, oh, save!" Different nations have different ways of expressing their good will to their monarchs. A Roman would have shouted, "Io triumphe!" We sing, "God save our gracious Queen." The Persians said, "O King, live for ever." The Jews cried, "Hosanna!" "Save," or, "God save the King!" The French have their "Vivas," by which they mean, "Long live the man." Hosanna is tantamount to all these. It is a shout of homage, welcome, and loyalty. It wishes wealth, health, and honor to the king. In the Saxon we say, "Hurrah"; in Hebrew, "Hosanna." That mighty shout startled all the streets of the old city: "Hosanna, Hosanna, the King is come. Save him, O Lord! Save us through him! Long live the King!" While it was a shout of homage, it was also a prayer to the King. "Save, Lord; save us, O King! O King, born to conquer and to save, deliver us!" It was, moreover, a prayer for him—"God save the King, God bless and prosper his majesty." Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised." We never cease to pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Let us then cry, Hosanna, making it

at once a loyal shout; a prayer to our King, and a prayer for him. All these things appear in the benediction which follows: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Would it be amiss if we were to indulge in a hearty shout for our King? May we never grow enthusiastic? May we never overleap the bounds of prim propriety? Shall we never cry Hallelujah! Shall no Hosannas burst from our lips? Surely, if our King will come into the midst of his church again, and end these black days of doubt, we must and will shout, or else the very stones will cry out, Yes, O Lord Jesus, thou shalt have our Vivas: we will shout, "Long live the King!"

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall."

Nor will we cease to pray to thee! Some of you that have not yet been saved by him will, I trust, say, "Save me, Lord! O Jesus, save me!" You will not disturb but delight the present meeting if you will in your hearts cry, "Lord, save me!" Remember the cry of two blind beggars on this very journey of our Lord, and how he opened their eyes when they cried, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us."

Will we not also put up prayer for our Lord this morning? Will not each one in his pew now breathe a petition to God, saying, "Father, glorify thy Son"? Thou hast said that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: make it so. O Jehovah, thou art well pleased with Jesus; show thy good pleasure towards him by giving him to conquer ten thousand times ten thousand hearts. Let a nation be born in a day. May he reign for ever and ever! Hosanna! Hosanna!

III. I have only a little time for my third point, and yet it is of great importance: CHRIST RECEIVED IN THE HEART. His triumphant ride into Jerusalem was a type of his entering the renewed heart. I pray that you who have never received him may listen, and may, by the listening, be led to pray for his coming into your heart.

On that day, when Christ came up from Bethany, the city gates were wide

open. We read nothing about them, because they were not in the way; they were no shut gates to him. He rode into Jerusalem without let or hindrance. Are your gates wide open this morning? If not, I would say, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in." He is willing to abide in your hearts, and go no more out for ever; be sure that your gates are set wide before him. May the Holy Ghost open your hearts! Do not tolerate the thought of shutting out your Lord. Never! Throw wide the portals of your soul. Yea, go forth by willing obedience and say, Come in, my Lord! Come in! He was cheerfully received as King. Our Lord did not come to subdue the citizens at the point of the sword. He did not come with force of arms to coerce the city. You must receive Jesus willingly, or not at all. He comes to reign; but he comes in the gentleness of love. He rides on no high-mettled charger, he lays his hand on no sharp sword which clatters at his side, about him are no men-at-arms, behind him come no heavy guns, dragged along the trembling streets. Jesus was willingly received: everyone exultingly welcomed him. Will you so receive Jesus? Has he made you willing in the day of his power? You may well salute him, and welcome him to your heart and your home; for you have never before received so blessed a guest. Set open wide the gates, and entreat him to come in; for he will bring heaven with him. He never uses force; he conquers only by love. The Holy Spirit works upon the will of man; but he leaves it still a will, so that we freely choose our Lord, and delight in him as our King.

Remember, beloved, the coming of Christ is with gentleness and love. Riding on a colt, the foal of an ass, is a very different thing from riding the fiery war-horse. I like not men who seem as if they were converted to hate everybody else. It is not Christ who has come unto you if you have grown prouder, harder, more passionate than ever. No, the Christ who enters to save, is himself so meek and lowly of heart that those who take his yoke upon them learn of him, and they become meek and lowly too. Admit the lowly Christ, and be of one mind with him. He will kill your bad temper, conquer your malice, and cast out your pride. Come and be the willing subject of a King who rideth forth in lowliest guise.

His entrance caused great joy. No man's heart was made heavy that day.

The face of the King frowned on none. Other kings have found it needful to force their way through crowds of rebels to their capital, and wade through slaughter to a throne; but none was found to hurt or devour in all the holy mountain when Jesus came to Zion. Women have been ravished, men have been murdered, even babes have been massacred when monarchs have entered cities; but when our King cometh, boughs and palm fronds, shouts and songs, are the setting of a very different scene. Instead of shrieks and groans, we hear the ringing music of children, with their glad Hosannas. Oh, will you not admit the Lord Jesus? Who will refuse an entrance to One who brings with him joy and peace?

He shall come down like showers  
Upon the fruitful earth;  
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers,  
Spring in his path to birth."

When he comes, men feel a burning enthusiasm for him. It should not be needful that I should plead for his admission. Surely you should run down the hill to meet him, and then come back, following after him with glad Hosannas. Lord Jesus, we cannot be cold in thy presence. Our souls burn as with coals of juniper when we remember thee.

But I must tell you one thing which I am sure will not damp your ardor, if you are in a right state. If Jesus comes into your souls he will come as a Reformer. He will make your heart a temple, and out of it he will drive the buyers and the sellers, and all else that would pollute the soul. With his scourge of small cords he will whip out many a naughty thing from the heart which he makes his temple. Ay, let the thieves go! If your heart has been made a den of thieves by evil desires, should not these be chased out without mercy? So let it be. Welcome, thou great Refiner! Fain would we lose our dross.

I feel so glad to have to add that when he comes into your heart he will hold a lev, e. Did I not note it to you when we were reading the fourteenth verse?—"The blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them." Dear heart, if Jesus comes to you, all that is blind and lame about you shall be healed. That was a singular lev, e, was it not? Many of



that select company came on crutches, and some with legs doubled up, or malformed. Blind men were there, with useless eyeballs or empty sockets where eyes should have been. Into this limping, groping circle came the King of glory, and he did not repel them, but he healed them. Admit the Lord into your heart, and the limping of your unbelief will be exchanged for the reapings of faith. Then shall you see those things to which your heart has long been blind. Let him in! Let him in! Believe on him, and trust him, and so let him into your heart, and you shall find him the physician of your soul.

Last of all, you that have not yet received him, we want you to join with the rest of us in honoring him and glorifying him as he comes into your heart. "Oh!" saith one, if he will only come into my heart I will indeed praise him." Have your Vivas ready! Receive the Lord Jesus Christ with all honors. Mention his name with rejoicing. Have your Hurrah ready to welcome the King, the Conqueror, as he enters your soul. Be jubilant! Be enthusiastic! Rejoice that such a one as he should come to dwell with such a one as you, and bring such blessing with him. Praise him! Praise him! Extol him in the highest heavens! Then pray to him. "Save, Lord! Save, oh, save!" Then pray for others to him in the same words, "Hosanna; save, Lord, save!"

And when you have done with Hosannas and prayers, conclude as the Psalmist did in that famous hundred-and-eighth psalm, wherein he cried, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Ask God of his love to-day to bind you to Christ, the altar, with one of those wreaths of love and ribands of triumphant grace which you now throw at his feet. Oh, for a twisted garland of mercies, the roses of gladness, and the lilies of delight, to bind our heart to Christ for ever! These cords of love may seem weak, but in very deed they hold us faster than chains of steel. Nothing holds a man like the silken cord of gratitude. When you know how Jesus loves you, when you see how he died for you, then you are drawn to love him in return, and are held to serve him in life, in death, and to eternity. Thus do we celebrate our Lord's triumphant entrance into the City of Mansoul, and we feel that we could prolong the celebration throughout the whole of our lives.

Yes, we will praise thee, dearest Lord,  
Our souls are all on flame,  
Hosanna round the spacious earth  
To thine adored name.

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## **Household Salvation**

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. - Acts 16:32-34

It sometimes happens that a good man has to go alone to heaven: God's election has separated him from the midst of an ungodly family, and, notwithstanding his example and his prayers, and his admonitions, they still remain unconverted, and he himself, a solitary one, a speckled bird amongst them, has to pursue his lonely flight to the skies. Far oftener, however, it happens that the God who is the God of Abraham becomes the God of Sarah, and then of Isaac, and then of Jacob, and though grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet doth it very frequently—I was about to say almost always—happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to himself. He calls an individual, and then uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the gospel net. John Bunyan, in the first part of his "Pilgrim's Progress," describes Christian as a lonely traveler, pursuing his road to the Celestial City alone; occasionally he is attended by Faithful, or he meets with a Hopeful; but these are casual acquaintances, and are not of his kith or kin: brother or child after the flesh he has none with him. The second part of Bunyan's book exhibits family piety, for we see Christiana, and the children, and many friends, all travelling in company to the better land; and, though it is often said that

the second part of Bunyan's wondrous allegory is somewhat weaker than the former, and probably it is so, yet many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former, and it has given to many a loving heart great delight to feel that there is a possibility, beneath the leadership of one of the Lord's Greathearts, to form a convoy to the skies, so that a sacred caravan shall traverse the desert of earth, and women and children shall find their way, in happy association, to the City of Habitations. We rejoice to think of whole families enclosed within the lines of electing grace, and entire households, redeemed by blood, devoting themselves to the service of the God of love. I am sure any of you, who yourselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are most anxious to bring others into reconciliation with God. It is an instinct with the Christian to desire that his fellow-men should, as he has done, both taste and see that the Lord is good. Judaism wraps itself up within itself, and claims a monopoly of blessing for the chosen nation. The heir after the flesh gnashes with his teeth when we declare that the true heirs of Abraham are born after the Spirit and are found in every land. They would reserve all heavenly privileges to the circumcised, and keep up the ancient middle wall of partition. It is the very genius of Christianity to embrace all mankind in its love. If there be anything true, let all believe it: if there be anything good, let all receive it. We desire no gates of brass to shut out the multitude; and if there be barriers, we would throw them down, and pray eternal mercy to induce the teeming millions to draw near to the fountain of life. It will not be wrong, but, on the contrary, most natural and proper, that your desire for the salvation of others should, first of all, rest upon your own families. If charity begins at home, so, assuredly, piety will. They have special claims upon us who gather around our table and our hearth. God has not reversed the laws of nature, but he has sanctified them by the rules of grace; it augurs nothing of selfishness that a man should first seek to have his own kindred saved. I will give nothing for your love for the wide world, if you have not a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here; we are to "do good unto all men, but specially unto such as be of the household of faith;" so are we to seek the good of all mankind, but specially of those who are of our own near kindred. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Solomon, let Andrew find first his brother Simon, and Eunice train her Timothy: they will be none the less large or

prevalent in their pleadings for others, because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood.

To allure and encourage you to long for family religion, I have selected this text this morning. God grant it may answer the purpose designed. May many here have a spiritual hunger and thirst, that they may receive the blessing which so largely rested upon the Philippian jailer.

Note in our text five things. We have a whole household hearing the word, a whole household believing it, a whole household baptized, a whole household working for God, and then, a whole household rejoicing.

I. Observe, first, in the passage before us, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD HEARING THE WORD. I do not know whether they had ever heard the Gospel before: perhaps they had. We have no certain proof that the jailer heard the name of Jesus Christ for the first time amidst the tumult of the earthquake; he may have listened to Paul in the streets, and so have known something of the Gospel and of the name of Jesus Christ; but this is hardly probable, as he would then have scarcely treated the apostle so harshly. Most likely the word of God sounded at midnight in the ears of the jailer and his household for the first time, and, on that remarkable occasion, they all heard it together. The father first, in his alarm, asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" and received personally the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and then it appears that all the family gathered around their parent, and the two holy men, while Paul and Silas spake unto him the word of the Lord, and also to all that were in his house. We do not know whether there were children there, but if so, and we will assume it for this occasion, all were hearers that night. There was not a solitary exception, no one was away from that sermon in a jail. His wife, his children, his servants, all that were in his house, listened to the heavenly message. It is true, he who preached was a prisoner, but that made the word none the less powerful, for he was to them an ambassador in bonds. Prisoner as he was, he preached to them a free gospel, and a gospel of divine authority. He erred not from the truth in what he taught; he preached unto them the "word of God." Would to God that all preachers would keep to the word of God, and, above all things, would exalt The Incarnate Word of God. This were infinitely better than to delude men's minds with those "germs of

thought," those strikingly new ideas, those metaphysical subtleties, and speculations, and theories, and discoveries of science, falsely so called, which are now-a-days so fashionable. If all ministers could preach the word, the revealed mind and will of God, then hearers would in larger numbers become converts; for God will bless his own word, but he will not bless anything else. The jailor's household all heard God's word faithfully declared, and there was the main cause of blessing, for, alas! with many hearers, the Sabbath is utterly wasted; for, though they are attentive listeners, they are left without a blessing, because that which they hear is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have myself heard sermons which, I am persuaded, God Almighty himself could not bless to the conversion of anybody. He could not, because it would have been a denial of himself. The discourses were not true, nor according to his word; they were not such as were calculated to honor himself, and how can he bless that which is not to his own honor? and how can he set his seal to a lie? The word of God must be preached, and then the place, the hour, or the garb of the preacher will matter nothing. The minister may have been led up from a prison, and the smell of the dungeon may be upon him, but when he opens his mouth with the glad tidings, the name of Jesus will be as ointment poured forth.

I began my remarks on this point by noting that they all heard Paul; and observe the need of this, as a starting-point, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is not all who hear that will be saved, but the ordinary way with God is for men first to hear, then to believe, and so to be saved. "Being in the way, God met with me," said Obadiah; and the road which a soul should follow to be met with by God is the way of hearing. Though it may seem a very trite thing to say, it is nevertheless exceedingly important, if we are to have household conversion, that there should be a household hearing of the word. This is the chosen instrumentality, and we must bring all under the instrumentality if we wish them to obtain the blessing. Now, in this City, many fathers never hear the word of God, because they regard the Sabbath Day as a day of laziness. They work so hard all the week, they say, that they are not fit to rise from their beds in the morning, and then, after a heavy dinner, the evening must be spent in loitering about, and chatting away time.

Brethren, if you want to see your fellow-workmen saved, you should earnestly endeavor to bring them under the sound of the gospel. Here is a very useful occupation for many of you. You cannot preach, but you can gather a congregation for those who do. A little persuasion would succeed in many cases, and once bring them here, we would hope to hold them. If I could not be the instrument of converting a soul by preaching the gospel myself, I would habitually addict myself to the bringing of strangers to listen to those whom God has owned to the conversion of souls. Why, our congregations need never be thin—I speak not now for myself, for I have no need—but in no place where the gospel is preached need there be a thin audience, if those who already appreciate the Gospel would feel it to be a Christian duty to bring others to hear it. Do this, I pray you. I believe it to be one of the most important efforts which a Christian man can make, to endeavor to bring the working men of London, and, indeed, all classes of men everywhere, to listen to the Gospel of Christ. The men, the fathers, the heads of households, we must have.

If we are to have the household saved, however, the mothers must hear the word as well as the fathers. Many of them do, but I know cases, and, perhaps, there may be such present, and I wish to speak what is practical; where a man comes to hear the word himself, but his wife is detained at home with the children. Perhaps she is not converted, and has not much care to go to the service; perhaps she is a Christian woman, and though she would wish to go she must look after the children; in either case it is the duty of every such father, if he does not keep a servant to attend to the children, to take his turn with the wife and let her have her fair share of opportunity for hearing the gospel. He meanly shirks the duty of a husband, who, being a working man, does not take his turn at home and give his wife as good an opportunity of learning the way of salvation as himself. This may be a new suggestion to some, I only hope they will carry it out. It is plain that if we are to have whole households saved, we must have whole households hearing the word, and if the mother cannot hear the word, we cannot rationally expect the blessing to come to her.

Then the children also must be thought of. We desire to see them converted as children. There is no need that they should wait until they are grown up, and have run into sin as their fathers did, that they may be

afterwards brought back; it would be infinitely better if they were preserved from such wanderings, and early brought into the fold of Jesus. The blessing which God gave to the jailor's children by hearing, he gives in the same way to other children. Let the little ones be brought to hear the Gospel. They can hear it in the Sabbath School, and there are special services adapted to them; but, for my part, I like also so to preach that boys and girls shall be interested, and I shall feel that I am very faulty in my style if children cannot understand much that I teach in the congregation. Bring all who have reached years of understanding with you. Suffer none to be at home, except for good reasons. Bring each young Samuel to the house of the Lord. Let it be said of you, as it is written in the Book of Chronicles, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." If nothing else shall come from children's attending our worship, the holy habit of going up to God's house will be a perpetual heritage to them; and who knows but while they are yet young their hearing the word shall be the means of their salvation.

Then there are the servants, and by no means are they to be overlooked. To have all that are in the house saved, all that are in the house must hear the Gospel. Do you all make such opportunities for your servants on the Sabbath as you should? I do not know, of course, how you conduct your family arrangements; but I know of some who do not think enough of their servants' hearing the Gospel. Servants frequently are sent out in the afternoon, when there is no preaching worth the hearing. It may be unavoidable in many cases; but I would ask, What is the use of their going out at an hour when no preaching is to be found? If we give them only opportunities of going out when there is nothing to hear, we certainly have not given them a fair portion of the Lord's-day. By some contrivance or other, perhaps with a little pinch and self-sacrifice, our servants might hear our own minister. You cannot pray God to save your household, and be honest, unless you give the whole household an opportunity of being saved, and God's way of saving souls, we repeat it, is by the preaching and the hearing of the word. Oh! let every one of us be able to say, as masters and as parents, "I cannot save my children, and I cannot save my servants, but this I have done, I have directed them to a man of God who preaches the gospel faithfully; I do not send them to a

place merely because there is talent or fashion there, but I have selected for them a ministry which God blesses, and I do my best to put them all in the way of the blessing, praying and beseeching the Lord to call them all by his grace." I anticipate the many difficulties you will urge, but would again say, if we love souls, we should try to meet these difficulties, and if we cannot do all we would, we should at least do all we can, that we may have all our households every Sabbath-day hearing the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

II. We now turn to the next, which is a most comfortable and cheering sight. Here is A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BELIEVING. We know that the whole household believed, for we are told so in the thirty-fourth verse; "Believing in God with all his house:"—all, all, all were powerfully affected, savingly affected by the gospel which Paul preached to them. I have already remarked, that they were very probably new hearers. Certainly, if they had heard the word before, it could not have been many times; and yet they all believed. Is it not a most sad fact that many of my old hearers have not believed? The battering-ram has beaten often on their walls, but it has not shaken them yet; wooing invitations of the gospel have been presented to them again and again, accompanied by the soul-piercing music of a Savior's dying cries; and yet, for all that, they remain unconverted still. Oh I the responsibilities that are heaped up upon gospel-hardened sinners! Take home to yourselves that warning word, I pray you. This household heard the gospel probably but once, certainly only once or twice, yet they believed, and here are some of us who have heard it from our youth up, and remain rebellious still.

Of this family it may be said that as they were new hearers, so they were most unlikely hearers. The Romans did not select for jailers the most tender hearted of men. Frequently they were old legionaries who had seen service in bloody wars, and been inured to cruel fights; and, when these men settled down as, in a measure, pensioners of the empire, they were allotted such offices as that which the jailer held. In the society and associations of a jail there was very little that could be likely to improve the mother, to benefit the children, or elevate the servants. They were, then, most unpromising hearers. Yet how often are the most unlikely persons convinced of sin, and led to the Savior. How true is it still of



many who are most moral and excellent, and even outwardly religious, that "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them." This is an encouragement to you who work in lodgings and in the slums of this vast city, to bring all kinds of people to hear the word, for if a jailer and his household were numbered among the first fruits unto God at Philippi, may we not hope that others of an unlikely class may be converted too? Who are you, that you should say, "It is of no use to invite such a man to hear, for he would not be converted?" The more improbable it seems to be in your judgment, perhaps the more likely it is that God will look upon him with an eye of love. How happy a thing it was for the jailer that, in the providence of God, his hardened but probably honest spirit was brought under the influence of the earnest apostle. Bring others, like him, into the place of worship, for who can tell?

Note, that though they were thus unlikely hearers, yet they were immediately converted, there and then. It took but a short time. I do not know how long Paul's sermon was; he was a wise man, and I should not think he would preach a long sermon in the dead of the night, just after an earthquake. I have no doubt it was a simple exposition of the doctrine of the cross. And then Silas talked too; perhaps, when Paul had done, Silas gave a little exhortation, a brief address to finish up with, and fill up anything which Paul had left out. The teaching was soon over, and at its close the jailer, his wife, his children (if he had any), his servants, and indeed all that were in the house, avowed themselves to be believers. It does not take a month to convert a soul. Glory be to God, if he wills to do it, he can convert all here this morning, in a moment. Once hearing the gospel may be sufficient to make a man a Christian. When the eternal word of God comes forth with omnipotent energy, it turns lions into lambs, and that in a single instant of time. As the lightning flash can split the oak from its loftiest bough to the earth in a single second, so the ever blessed lightning of God's Spirit can cleave the heart of man in a moment. Our text shows us a whole family saved at once.

It is said particularly of them all that "they believed." Was that the only thing? Could it not be said that they all prayed? I dare say it could, and many other good things; but then faith was at the root of them all. It was the sneer of an old Greek philosopher against the Christians his day:

"Faith," he said, "is your only wisdom." Yes, and we rejoice in the same wisdom now—faith; for the moment we receive faith we are saved. It is the one essential grace;—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The moment God gives a man faith—and that he can do at any time—the instant the heart casts itself into the arms of Jesus crucified, and rests there, whoever it is, he is saved in an instant: effectually and infallibly saved; he is, in all respects, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Faith is an instantaneous act at its beginning, and then it remains as an abiding grace; its first act, by the power of God, puts a man into the present possession of immediate salvation. I wonder if we preachers fully believe this as a matter of fact. If I were to go into a jail tomorrow evening, and were to preach to the jailer and his household, should I expect to see all saved there and then? And if they were, should I believe it? Most likely I should not see it, and the reason would lie because I should not have faith enough to expect it. We preach the gospel, no doubt, but it is with the slender hope that some may be converted, and they are converted, here and there; but if God would clothe us with the faith of the apostles, we should see far greater things. When he works in us a larger faith, he will also restore to us the hundredfold harvest, which, alas! is so rare in these days.

Notice very particularly, that these persons though converted thus suddenly, all of them were, nevertheless, very hearty converts. They did that night, as I shall show you soon, abundantly prove how thoroughly converted they were. They were quick to do all that in them lay for the apostle, and for the good cause. They were not half converted, as many people are. I like to see a man renewed all over from head to foot. It is delightful to meet your hearty Christian, who, when he gave his heart to Jesus, meant it, and devoted his whole body, soul, and spirit to the good Lord who had bought him with his blood. Some of you have only got a little finger conversion, just enough to wear the ring of profession, and look respectable, but oh! to have hand and foot, lungs, heart, voice, and soul, all saturated with the Spirit's influence and consecrated to the cause of God. We have a few such men, full of the Holy Ghost, but, alas, we have too many other converts, who are rather tinctured with grace, than saturated with it, and to whom sprinkling is a very significant ordinance, for it would appear that they never have received anything but a

sprinkling of grace. Oh, for saints in whom there will be a thorough death and burial to the world, and a new life, in the resurrection image of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the true baptism of the Holy Ghost.

However, I must return on this head to the point, that they all believed. What a sweet picture for you to look upon. The father is a believer in Jesus, but he has not to kneel down and pray, "Lord, save my dear wife;" for see, and rejoice as you see it, she is a believer too. And then there is the elder son and the daughters; we know not, and we must not guess, how many there might be, but there they are all rejoicing in their father's God. And then there are the servants, the old nurse who brought up the little ones, and the little maid, and the warders who have to look after the prisoners, they are all of them ready to sing the psalm of praise, and all delighted to look upon those who were once their prisoners as now their instructors and their fathers in the faith. O brethren, if some of us should ever see all our children and our servants saved, we would cry like Simeon of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." Many have seen it; the jailor's case is by no means an exceptional one, and I hope all of us are earnestly crying to God that we may gain the same unspeakable privilege.

III. We have, in the third place, in our text, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED. "He was baptized, he and all his straightway." In almost every case in Scripture where you read of a household baptism, you are distinctly informed that they were also a believing household. In the case of Lydia it may not be so; but then there are remarkable circumstances about her case which render that information needless. In this instance they were all believers, and, therefore, they were all of them baptized. First, "HE" was baptised,—the jailor; he was ready first to submit himself to the ordinance in which he declared himself to be dead to the world, and risen anew in Christ Jesus. Then "all his" followed. What a glorious baptism, amidst the glare of the torches that night! perhaps in the prison hath, or in the impluvium which was usually in the center of most oriental houses, or perhaps the stream that watered Philippi ran by the prison wall, and was used for the occasion. It matters not, but into the water they descended, one after another, mother, children, servants; and Paul and Silas stood there delighted to aid them in declaring themselves

to be on the Lord's side, "buried with him in baptism."

And this was done, mark you, straightway. There was not one who wished to have it put off till he had tried himself a little, and seen whether he was really regenerated. In those days no one had any scruple or objection to obey; none advocated the following of some ancient and doubtful tradition; all were obedient to the divine will. No one shrank from baptism for fear that water might damage his health, or in some way cause him inconvenience; but he and all his, wishing, to follow the plain example of our Lord Jesus Christ, were baptized, and that straightway,—at once, and on the spot. No minister has any right to refuse to baptise any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, unless there be some glaring fact to cast doubt upon the candidate's sincerity. I, for one, would never ask from any person weeks and months of delay, in which the man should prove to me that he was a believer; but I would follow the example of the apostle. The gospel of Christ was preached, the people were converted, and they were baptized, and all perhaps in the space of an hour. The whole transaction may not have taken up so much time as I shall occupy in preaching about it this morning. How, then, is it with you, who wait so long? Where is the precept or example to warrant your hesitation? Permit me to remind you that duties delayed are sins. Will you take that home with you, you who have been believers for years and yet are not baptised? Permit me to remind you, also, that privileges postponed are losses. Put the two together, and where duty and privilege meet do not incur the sin and the loss, but, like David, "make haste and delay not" to keep the divine command.

"Why say so much about baptism?" says somebody. Much about baptism! Never was a remark more ungenerous, if it is made against me. I might, far more justly, be censured for saying so little about it. Much about baptism! I call you all to witness that, unless it comes across my path in the Scriptures, I never go away from the text to drag it in. I am no partisan: I never made baptism my main teaching, and God forbid I should; but I will not be hindered from preaching the whole truth, and, I dare say, no less than I am now saying. The Holy Ghost has recorded the baptism here: will you think little of what he chooses to record? Paul and Silas, an apostle and his companion, dared not neglect the ordinance:

how dare you despise it?

It was the dead of the night, it was in a prison; if it might have been put off, it surely might have been then: it was not a reputable place to dispense baptism, some would have said; it was hardly a seasonable hour, but they thought it so important that there and then, and at once, they baptised the whole household. If this be God's command—and I solemnly believe it to be so—do not despise it, I beseech you; as you love Christ, do not talk about its being non-essential. If the Lord command, shall his servant talk about its being non-essential? It is essential in all things to do my Master's will, and to preach it; for hath he not said, "He that shall break one of the least of these my commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I hope it may be our privilege here to see whole families baptized. Come along with you, beloved father, if you are a believer in Jesus: come with him, mother: come with him, daughters: come with your mother, ye godly sons, and come ye servants too. If you have come to the cross, and all your hope is placed there, then come and declare that you are Christ's. Touch not the ordinance till you believe in Jesus Christ: it may work you mighty mischief if you do. The sacramentarianism, which is so rampant in this age, is of all lies I think the most deadly, and you encourage sacramentarianism if you give a Christian ordinance to an unconverted person. Touch it not, then, until you are saved. Until you are believers, ordinances are not for you, and it is a sacrilege for you to intrude yourselves into them. How I long to see whole households believe, for then I may safely rejoice at seeing them baptised!

IV. Next, we have A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD AT WORK FOR GOD. Read the passage, and you will see that they all did something. The father called for a light, the servants bring the torches, and the lamps such as were used in the prisons. He took his prisoners the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. Here is work for himself, and work for gentle hands to do, to assuage the pains of those poor bleeding backs; to wash out the grit that had come there through their lying on their backs on the dungeon floor, and to mollify and bind up their wounds. There was suitable occupation for the mother and for the servants, for they set meat before the holy men. The kitchen was sanctified to supply the needs of the

ministers of Christ. Everything was done for their comfort. They were hungry, and they gave them meat; they were bleeding and they bathed their wounds. The whole household was astir that night. They had all believed and been baptised, and their very first enquiry is, "What can we do for Jesus?" It was clear to them that they could help the two men who had brought them to Christ, and they did so affectionately. No Martha had to complain that her sister left her to serve alone. I am persuaded there was not one of the family who shirked the pleasant duty of hospitality, though it was at dead of night. They soon had a meal ready; and how pleased they felt when they saw the two holy men reclining at their ease at the table, instead of lying with their feet fast in the stocks in the prison. They did not take the food down to the prison to them, or wash them, and send them back to the dungeon; but they brought them up from the cell into their own house, and accommodated them with the best they had. Now, beloved, it is a great mercy when you have a family saved and baptized, if the whole household sets to work to serve God, for there is something for all to do. Is there a lazy church member here? Friend, you miss a great blessing. Is there a mother here whose husband is very diligent in serving God, but she neglects to lead her children in the way of truth? Ah, dear woman, you are losing what would be a great comfort to your own soul. I know you are; for one of the best means for a soul to be built up in Christ is for it to do something for Christ. We cease to grow when we cease either to labor or to suffer for the Lord. Bringing forth fruit unto God is, unto ourselves, a most pleasant and profitable operation. Even our children when they are saved can do something for the Master. The little hand that drops its halfpence into the offering box, out of love to Jesus, is accepted of the Lord. The young child trying to tell its brother or sister of the dear Savior who has loved it is a true missionary of the cross. We should train our children as the Spartans trained their sons early for feats of war. We must have them first saved, but after that we must never think that they may be idle till they come to a certain period of life. I have known a little boy take his young companion aside, and kneel down in a field and pray with him, and I have heard of that young lad's being now, in the judgment of his parents, a believer in Christ. I have seen it, and my heart has been touched when I have seen it—two or three boys gathered round another to seek that boy's salvation, and praying to God as heartily and earnestly as their parents

could have done. There is room for all to work to help on the growing kingdom; and blessed shall that father be who shall see all his children enlisted in the brand army of God's elect, and all striving together for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom.

V. That brings me to the fifth sight, which is A FAMILY REJOICING, for he rejoices in God with all his home. According to the run of the text the object of their joy was that they had believed. Believing obtains the pardon of all sin, and brings Christ's righteousness into our possession, it declares us to be the sons of God, gives us heirship with Christ, and secures us his blessing here and glory hereafter: who would not rejoice at this? If the family had been left a fortune they would have rejoiced, but they had found more than all the world's wealth at once in finding a Savior, therefore were they glad.

But though their joy sprang mainly from their believing, it also arose from their being baptized, for do we not read of the Ethiopian of old after he was baptised that he "went on his way rejoicing." God often gives a clearing of the skies to those who are obedient to his command. I have known persons habitually the subjects of doubts and fears, who have suddenly leaped into joy and strength when they have done as their Lord commanded them. Not for keeping, but "in keeping his commandments there is great reward."

They rejoiced, no doubt, also because they had enjoyed an opportunity of serving the church in waiting upon the apostle. They felt glad to think that Paul was at their table; very sorry that he had been imprisoned, but glad that they were his jailers; sorry that he had been beaten, but thankful that they could wash his stripes. And Christian people are never so happy as when they are busy for Jesus. When you do most for Christ you shall feel most of His love in your hearts. Why it makes my heart tingle with joy when I feel that I can honor my God. Rejoice, my brethren, that you have doors of usefulness set open before you, and say, now we can glorify the Savior's name; now we can visit the sick; now we can teach the ignorant; now we can bring sinners to the Savior. Why, there is no joy except the joy of heaven itself, which excels the bliss of serving the Savior who has done so much for us!

I have no doubt that their joy was permanent and continued. There would not be any quarrelling in that house now, no disobedient children, no short tempered father, no fretful mother, no cruel brother, no exacting sister, no purloining servants, or eyeservers; no warders who would exceed their duty, or be capable of receiving bribes from the prisoners. The whole house would become a holy house, and a happy house hence forth. It is remarkable they should be so happy, because they might have thought sorrowfully of what they had been. They had fastened the apostle's feet in the stocks. Ah! but that was all gone, and they were happy to know that it was all forgiven. The father had beers a rough soldier, and perhaps his sons had been little better; but it was all blotted out, Christ's blood had covered all their sin, they were happy though they were penitent. It is true, they had a poor prospect before them, as the world would say, for they would be likely to be persecuted, and to suffer much. Here were two of the great ones of the church who had been scourged and put in prison: the humble members could not expect to fare better. Ah, never mind, they rejoiced in God. If they had known they would have to die for it, they would have rejoiced, for to have a Savior is such a source of thankfulness to believing souls, that if we had to burn to-morrow, we would rejoice to-day; if we had to die a thousand deaths in the course of the next month, yet, to find a Savior such as Jesus Christ is, is joy enough to make us laugh at death itself. They were a rejoicing family because they were a renewed family.

In closing, regard these two words. That household is now in glory: they are all there—the jailer, and his spouse, and his children, and his servants; they are all there, for is it not written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved?" They were obedient to that word, and they are saved. Now, with some of you the father is in heaven, and the mother is on the road, but the children, ah, the children! With others of you, your little ones have gone before you, snatched away from the mother's breast; and your grandsire is also in glory; but, ah! husband and wife, your faces are turned towards the ways and wages of sin, and you will never meet your children and your parents. There will be broken households around the throne, and if it could mar their joy—if anything could—it would be the thought that there is a son in hell, or perhaps a husband in the flames, while the wife and mother sings the endless song. O God, grant it never



may be so. May no child of our loins die an heir of wrath; none that have slept in our bosoms be banished from Jehovah's presence. By the bliss of a united family, I beseech you seek after it that you may have that united family in heaven. For this is the last question, "Will my family be there?" Will yours be there? Turn it over in your minds, my brothers and sisters, and if you can give the happy answer, and say, "Yes, by the blessing of God, I believe we shall all be there," then, I will ask you to serve God very much, for you owe him very much. You are deep debtors to the mercy of God, you parents who have godly children. You ought to do twice as much; nay, seven times as much for Jesus as any other Christians. But on the other hand, if you have to give a painful answer, then let this day be a day of prayer, and I would say to you, could not you, fathers, who love the Lord, call your children together this afternoon, and tell them what I have been talking about. Say to the boy, "My dear boy, our minister this morning has been speaking about a household in heaven, and a household being baptized because they believed; I pray that you may be a believer." Pray with the boys, pray with the girls, pray with the mother; and I do not know but what this very afternoon your whole household may be brought to the Savior. Who can tell?

You, dear boys, just below me, who are a few out of my large family at the Orphanage, some of you have fathers in heaven, I hope you will follow them in the right way. The church of God tries to take care of you because you are orphans, and God has promised to be the father of the fatherless: O dear boys give him your hearts. Some of you have godly mothers, I know them, and I know that they pray for you. May their prayers be heard for you. I hope you will trust the Savior, and grow up to serve him. May it not be long before you profess your faith in baptism; and may we all of us meet in glory above, everyone without exception. The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## How Can I Obtain Faith?

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. -  
Romans 10:17

It is difficult to make men understand that the salvation of the gospel is not by works but entirely by grace, that it is not presented to men as the reward of their own endeavors, but is given to them freely upon their accepting it by an act of simple faith or trust in Jesus Christ. However plainly we may preach this truth, there will always be some who will misunderstand us, and as many more who will raise objections against it, as if it were their part to give an opinion, and not to do as they are bidden by the Lord. But when men are brought under the teaching of the word, to see that the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their souls does not lie with any merit of their own, or any doings of their own, another difficulty generally presents itself: they say, "What is this faith of which you speak?" and when we assure them that it is a simple trust or confidence in the finished work of Christ, then straightway they say, "How can we get this faith? How can we obtain this confidence?" To us, who have faith, this question is very easy to answer, for when we heard the gladsome news of a finished salvation for lost sinners, complete forgiveness for the guilty, and acceptance for the ungodly, simply upon believing in Jesus we came to Jesus, and we trusted in him, and we continue still to trust, and we have joy and peace through believing. We see far more reasons for belief than for doubt. Yet, nevertheless, there are hundreds and thousands who are awakened, and seriously enquiring, to whom this is a great difficulty—"How can I get the faith which gives me possession of Christ Jesus, and brings me salvation?" Our text is the ready answer, practically a complete answer; not doctrinally or theologically complete, but practically perfect. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "But faith is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is it not?" Certainly. "And it is given by the Spirit to God's own chosen?" Assuredly; yet, nevertheless, it was not necessary for the apostle to mention those facts here. Some persons are always for having a whole system of theology in every sermon, but it is not needful that they should be gratified. Paul is clear enough about the work of the Spirit in other

places, and it is not needful that he should introduce that subject into every line he writes. It was practically unnecessary for him to mention that subject in the present instance, and, therefore, he did not do so. It would sometimes puzzle rather than instruct an enquirer if we were to go into the full details of a matter. For instance, if I am thirsty, how shall I quench my thirst? By a draught of water. But in what way can I obtain water? It quite suffices for practical purposes for you to tell me to go to the tap or the fountain. There is no need to explain to me before I drink that the water is supplied by a company, and forced to the spilt by sundry machines, having been first extracted from the great fountains beneath by artesian wells, or drawn from the river at Thames Ditton. Nor would it be needful in answer to my question to trace the river to the clouds, and to treat upon the formation of vapor by the skill and wisdom of God. Practically, to the thirsty man all you want to say is, "There's the water, drink." I will add another illustration. A man is hungry, and he asks you, "How can I get bread?" "Go to the baker's," you say. The answer is complete enough for him; it meets the case at once. If he wants a larger declaration of how bread is obtained, we can give it to him at another time when he is no longer hungry; we will tell him how the corn is sown in the furrow of earth, and how by mysterious processes of nature it germinates, grows, and ripens; we will trace it from the reaper to the thresher, and from the thresher to the mill, and we will also show that daily bread is as much a gift from heaven as the manna which dropped down upon the hungry people in the wilderness. But, it is not needful for the feeding, of the hungry that we should on every occasion go into all those details, although we hold very sound views upon them. And when you are dealing with an anxious person, it will suffice to say to him, "Faith cometh by hearing;" further information can be supplied under happier circumstances. I mean to keep to our text this morning, and if any shall charge me with an omission of the work of the Spirit, or a failure to trace all saving faith to the electing grace of God, I shall bear the charge without murmuring, only saying that my soul rejoices as much as that of any man living in the work of the Spirit of God; and, that the electing love of God and his determinate purposes are precious truths to me. If the text was sufficient for Paul; it will, I trust, be sufficient for you.

May the Spirit of God assist us while we meditate upon the way by which faith cometh. This shall be followed by a brief indication of certain

obstructions which often lie in that way; and then we will conclude by dwelling upon the importance that faith should come to us by that appointed road.

I. First, then, THE WAY BY WHICH FAITH COMES TO MEN. "Faith cometh by hearing."

It may help to set the truth out more clearly, if we say, negatively, that it does not come by any other process than by hearing;—not by any mysterious and strange method, but in the most simple and natural mode conceivable, namely, by the hearing of the word.

Some imagine that faith comes by hereditary descent, and they act upon the supposition. Hence, in certain churches, birthright membership is thought to be a proper practice, and the child of a Christian is thought to be a Christian. In some other churches, though the theory would not be stated in so many words, yet it is practically accepted, and children of pious parents are regarded as scarcely needing conversion. The text is forgotten which saith that the heirs of salvation are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." The typical covenant secured outward privileges to the children born after the flesh, but under the covenant of grace the blessing is secured to the spiritual and not to the natural seed. "He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise." (Galatians 4:23). That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing more: the new-born nature is not transmissible from father to son like a natural temperament or a cast of countenance. I know the answer will be that "the promise is to us and to our children," but it will be well for the objector to reply to himself by completing the quotation—"even to as many as the Lord your God shall call." The fact is, that nothing spiritual is inherited by carnal generation. Our children, even if we are far advanced in grace, will still be "shapen in iniquity." No matter how high the sainthood of the professing Christian, his child (when capable of understanding) must for himself become a personal believer in Jesus.

It appears to be thought possible to infuse grace by sacraments. There are persons yet alive who teach that a babe may be regenerated by certain aqueous processes, and be thereby placed in "a state of salvation." But is

not faith a perpetual concomitant of regeneration? and what is that regeneration worth which leaves a person an unbeliever, and, consequently, "condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God?" Rest assured, that as faith does not come by descent, neither can it be produced by any rite which recognizes that descent: it comes in one way, and in one way only in every case, and that is, by the hearing of the word. To every person, whoever he may be, though nursed in the bosom of the church, and introduced to that church by the most solemn ritual, we are bound to say, you must hear as well as others, and you must believe as the result of that hearing as well as others, or else you will remain short of saving grace. Faith is not a mystery juggled into us by the postures, genuflexions, and mumblings of priests. We have heard a great deal about sacramental efficacy, but I think a man must have extraordinary hardihood who would say that either baptism, or the so-called Eucharist, are the sure creators of faith; yet see I not what saving service these forms can render to unbelieving men if they leave them in an unbelieving condition, and, consequently, in a state of condemnation. Seeing that without faith it is impossible to please God, the grace supposed to be conveyed by the mere participation in sacraments is of small value, it cannot give the cardinal requisite for acceptance before God. Faith cannot be washed into us by immersion, nor sprinkled upon us in christening; it is not to be poured into us from a chalice, nor generated in us by a consecrated piece of bread. There is no magic about it; it comes by hearing the word of God, and by that way only.

These are superstitions, you tell me, and scarcely need to be mentioned here; very well then, we will have done with them, and treat of superstitions which linger in our own congregations. There are some who fancy that faith cometh by feeling. If they could feel emotions either of horror or of exquisite delight, they would then, they think, be the possessors of faith; but till they have felt what they have heard described in certain biographies of undoubtedly good men, they cannot believe, or even if they have a measure of faith, they cannot hope that it is true faith. Faith doth not come by feeling, but through faith arises much of holy feeling, and the more a man lives in the walk of faith, as a rule, the more will he feel and enjoy the light of God's countenance. Faith hath something firmer to stand upon than those ever-changing frames and

feelings which, like the weather of our own sunless land, is fickle and frail, and changeth speedily from brightness into gloom. You may get feeling from faith, and the best of it, but you will be long before you will find any faith that is worth the having, if you try to evoke it from frames and feelings.

"My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name;  
On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand."

Some, also, have supposed that true faith will come to men by dreams and visions. It is surprising how a belief in these things lingers still in what is called this age of light; the notion is still current that if you dream of seeing Jesus, or fancy you have seen him while awake, or if a passage of Scripture strikes you, or if you hear or imagine that you hear a voice speaking to you, you are then a believer. Now, faith in Christ is like faith in anyone else, it comes to us by the same kind of mental processes, and is based upon simple principles and plain matters of fact, and needs no vision of the night. Though you should see all the angels in heaven, it would not prove that you would go to heaven, any more than my having seen the Pope's body guard would be a proof that I shall be made a Cardinal. Things which are seen of the eye save not, for the things which are seen are temporal, and cannot work eternal salvation. Moreover, men saw Christ, and yet pierced him and blasphemed him. Visions have been seen by heathens like Nebuchadnezzar, and angels have appeared to bad men like Balaam who, though he sighed out, "Let me die the death of the righteous," yet perished, fighting against the God of Israel. True faith has a more solid basis for its fabric than the fleeting fancies of the mind.

I beg you to notice, too, that it does not say in the text that faith comes through the eloquence, earnestness, or any other good quality of the preacher. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word, not of man, but of God. The word of God is the substance of faith-creating preaching; it is by the hearing of God's word, and not by any other hearing that saving faith comes to the soul. I may hear a man descant upon the gospel

with all the eloquence that can be commanded by the most fluent tongue, yet if my faith comes to me because the man spoke pathetically, or poetically, or argumentatively, or rhetorically, it is a poor miserable faith; being, of the power of the flesh, it will die, and so prove itself unlike the faith which springs from the incorruptible word of God, for that liveth and abideth for ever. On the other hand, I may hope for faith if I am listening to the true gospel, the very word of God, though the man who speaks it may be of stammering lips, and his voice may be disagreeable to my ear, and there may be much about his manner that does not commend itself to me. If he preaches truth it is by hearing not him, the man, but by hearing the word of God, that I shall come to faith. I do desire ever, as a preacher, to feel that it is not my word but God's word that saves souls; we are to explain it and expound it, but we are not to add to it, take from or conceive that we can improve it. We must not go into the pulpit and say, "I have been working out a subject from my own mind, and I am going to give you the result of my thoughts." We had better keep our own thoughts for some other place, and give the people the revealed truth of God. The theory now-a-days is that all preachers worth hearing by this refined generation must be profound thinkers, and inventors of improved theologies. Brethren, let man's thoughts perish for ever; the thoughts of God and not the thoughts of man will save souls. The truth of God should be spoken simply, with as little as possible of the embellishments of metaphysics, and philosophy, and high culture, and all that stuff. I say the word of God delivered as we find it is that which, when heard, brings faith to the souls of men. I counsel you, my occasional hearers, you who perhaps have come freshly to this city, or who reside where you have a choice of ministry, seek not that which tickles your ear, but that which your conscience approves as consistent with the word of God; and, though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you that which is not God's word, do not listen to us, for it will be mischievous to you. Hear you what God the Lord speaketh, and hear nothing else. What though he shall sound forth his word through a ram'shorn, if it be God's Spirit that giveth forth a certain sound, it shall be more profitable to your soul than though the silver trumpet should be set to the mouth of falsehood, and the sweetest music should regale your ear. The matter of a discourse is far more important than the manner. Saving faith never comes from hearing falsehood, but from the word of God alone.

I ought, perhaps, to add that the expression "by hearing," though of course literally it must be confined to the hearing of words vocally uttered, is meant to include in its spirit the reading of the word; for reading is a sort of hearing with the eyes, and faith has often come and will often come to men while they are reading the word of God for themselves. We must not kill the spirit of the text by excessive regard to the mere letter of it, and we should do so if we excluded readings, which is a quiet hearing of the still small voice of the printed page. Faith comes by the word of God reaching our minds, and our knowing and understanding it. The entrance of God's word giveth light. "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live." Thus, we have spoken of it negatively.

Now, positively: "Faith cometh by hearing." Sometimes faith has come into men's minds by hearing the simple statement of the gospel. They have longed to be saved, and they have been told that Jesus the Son of God condescended to come into this world and to take upon himself the form of man, and as man to be partaker of our infirmities, and to offer himself as a sacrifice in the room, place, and stead of sinners; they have, moreover, been told that whosoever trusts in this substitutional sacrifice shall be saved, and straightway they have believed. All they have wanted has been merely to be informed of the way of salvation. God's Spirit has so prepared them that they have believed almost as soon as they have heard the saving truth. In many cases the only difficulty in the way of salvation has been a want of understanding the word. I know in my own case I would have given all I had, if I might but have been informed what I must do to be saved. Though I frequented places where the gospel was preached, I did not catch the meaning of believing, it puzzled me much. I do not remember to have heard the simple declaration that to trust in Jesus Christ would save my soul; or, possibly, I did hear it with my outward ears, but I must have been strangely infatuated, for I did not understand the sense; and I have often thought if I could have heard the way of faith simply stated, my soul would have leaped into liberty long before. I will not so say; but I am persuaded that faith often comes by hearing the simple declaration that God accepts sinners, not for what they are in themselves but for what Christ is, and that when sinners believe in Jesus they are saved there and then, and are acceptable with



God through Jesus Christ his dear Son. The mere statement of this has brought, by the operation of the Spirit of God, faith into the soul. "How is this?" saith one. Well, it is because the gospel commends itself to some hearts as true upon the very first blush of it, it strikes them as being undoubtedly the gospel of God. It is the same in other matters; you sometimes hear a story about which you say, "Well, I do not know, it may be correct, but I shall have to look a little into that before I am certain;" but you often hear statements which you accept at once, because they commend themselves to your understanding, and you feel that they must be true. There are minds which God has so prepared that the moment they hear the gospel they respond to it. I think I hear the seeker after truth exclaim when he heard the gospel, "True? Why, how could it be otherwise? It is so divinely grand, so harmonious, so good, so gracious, so unexpected—nobody could have thought of it but God himself—it must be the truth." Having long sought goodly pearls of truth, the illuminated eye catches the gleam of the gospel and discerns it to be a priceless gem. Those are blessed indeed who are thus at once brought unto faith by the statement of the gospel.

To some others, the convincing point has been the suitability of the gospel to their case, for while they have heard it preached as a gospel for sinners, they have felt that they were certainly among that class. When the preacher has gone on to describe the misery of the fall, the utter ruin of human nature, its deceitfulness, feebleness, fickleness, and folly, the hearer has said, "Is the gospel sent to those who are thus lost, guilty, and impotent? Why, I am precisely in that condition?" And, then, when its great command is stated, namely, simple trust in Jesus, the soul perceives the suitability of the way of grace. We do not go to heaven to bring Christ down, or dive into the deeps to bring him up from the dead; we can neither keep the law nor find an atonement for our transgressions; but this simple trust, oh how suitable it is to undone sinners. Nothing to do—I can do nothing; noticing to bring—I have nothing to bring; it suits my case. Glory be to God for devising a plan so adapted to our wants. From the suitability of the gospel to the sinner, many have been by God's Spirit led to saving faith in Jesus, and so faith has come by hearing.

In many, I do not doubt, faith has come through hearing of the

condescending pity and the melting love of Jesus. Oh, that we dwelt more on this; that he loved his enemies, that he died for the ungodly, that his heart yearns over the lost sheep, that he is willing to receive prodigal sons, for he is full of grace and truth.

"His heart is made of tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love."

When such texts as the following have been preached on:—"This man receiveth sinners." "Come unto me all ye that labor." "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc. "All manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven unto men." "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," that melting strain has touched the heart, and led the most hardened to believe in a Savior so kind to the undeserving. Men have found it impossible not to believe in a friend so self-sacrificing, a Redeemer so altogether lovely. The sweet love of Jesus has an omnipotence in it to win souls. They yield "by mighty love subdued," unable to resist its charms, and as if they could hold out no longer, they throw themselves by an act of faith into the Savior's arms. I can well understand their singing, "I do believe, I must believe in such a friend as this." Faith comes by hearing of the free forgiveness procured by the agony, the stripes, the wounds, the death of Jesus, the lover of our souls.

At other times, faith has come not so much through hearing the statement of the gospel as from hearing of its authority. I may believe a statement because it looks like truth. I may, on the other hand, accept it not at all because I have myself perceived the apparent truth of it, but because of the person who tells it to me. And this is a very right and acceptable kind of faith. What has God said about my salvation? Before I hear it I am prepared to believe it on the testimony of God. He says it, and that is enough for me. I believe this Bible to be his book; I hear what it says, and whatsoever the Lord God hath said I must and will receive, whether it appears plain or not. There are persons who when they have heard the gospel preached have not at first believed it, but if it has pleased the Spirit of God to lead the minister to show that the gospel is of divine appointment, that the way proclaimed is ordained by God himself, and that God has set the sanction of his promise upon it—"He that

believeth and is baptised shall be saved"—and has also set upon it the second sanction of his threatening—"He that believeth not shall be damned"—then they have yielded and given over all further question. God bids them trust in Jesus, and they do so through his grace. Without canvassing the statement itself they receive what God teaches, and since he hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin they receive him us such: since he has said, "Look unto me and be saved," they look because God bids them look, and they are saved. To believe in Jesus is a command from God's own mouth, and is, therefore, to be obeyed, and the more so, because "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

In some cases, too, the coming of faith has been helped by hearing and perceiving the veracity of the subordinate testifiers of the gospel,—I mean the writers of the sacred book, the prophets, and chiefly the apostles. These men are worthy of credit—they were honest, unsophisticated men, and they certainly gained nothing by testifying that Christ was the Messiah, and that he died and rose again from the dead. One of them, the Apostle Paul, lost his position, which was one of great eminence, and spent his whole life in toil, and suffering, and reproach, and ended with a bloody death because of what he preached, and thus he proved that he was a sincere, honest, upright man. If Paul or any other of the apostles were in the witness-box, nobody could demur to their evidence; whatever they said we should believe, because the men were truthful witnesses. Now, sometimes, persons have been led into faith in Christ, by feeling that those whom he sent to be testifiers to his person, death, and resurrection were evidently true to the core, and, therefore, their word was worthy of all acceptation.

I believe, dear friends, that faith has come by hearing in another way. Perhaps the preacher has not so much stated the gospel, and brought forward its authority, as explained it. and so faith has come. If we spent our time in nothing else but just explaining the text, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," we might achieve a blessed life-work, and perhaps might see greater results than when our ministry takes a wider range. When the preacher takes up one by one the soul difficulties which

prevent man from seeing what faith is, and keep him away from looking to Christ, and when he tries to show, as he should, that all the hope of the sinner lies out of himself, none of it in himself, that all his help for salvation is laid upon one that is mighty, even Jesus Christ the Son of God, and that he must look away from his own feelings, and prayings, and doings, and even away from his own believings as any ground of confidence, and must rest simply and alone upon the one sacrifice of Jesus; it has often happened that faith has come through the hearing of such an explanatory word.

In some cases, too, faith has come when the word has possessed a peculiar soul-revealing pointedness in it to the hearer's particular case. Remember the Samaritan Woman. Our Lord Jesus Christ explained to her the gospel, but she does not appear to have been enlightened by his explanations: it was that home stroke of his—"Go, call thy husband and come hither," which won her to faith. Such revealings of the thoughts and intents of the heart will occur in any God-sent preaching of the gospel, just because the Word pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, and lays bare the secrets of the soul. Then it is that hearers cry, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Thus, by the guidance of the Spirit, the word finds out the man, and faith cometh by hearing.

Faith, also, comes in to many by hearing, when we detail the experience of those who have tasted and handled the good word of life; when the preacher or teacher tells how he trusted in Jesus, and found pardon, peace, and life eternal; when he is able to point to others who have felt the same, some of whom, perhaps, were even greater offenders than the person addressed, then conviction and faith are wrought in the mind. We bid you see what Jesus has done for us, in the hope that you will trust and try him for yourselves. Jesus prayed for those who shall believe on him through our word, and we hope you will be among the number.

To set the whole matter clearly, we will suppose that you are laboring under a very serious disease, and a physician professes to heal you. You are quite willing to believe in him, but you cannot blindly follow any man, for there are thousands of quacks and impostors. You naturally want to know something about him. Now, in what way would you go to work to

get faith in him? How would faith be likely to come to you? It would come by hearing. You hear him speak and you perceive that he understands your case, for he describes exactly all your symptoms, even those which none know but yourself and a skillful physician. You feel already some confidence in him. He next describes to you as much of the method of cure as you can comprehend, and it seems to you to be very reasonable, and withal suitable to the requirements of your case. His proposal commends itself to your best judgment, and you are already a stage nearer submission to his mode of operation. Then you enquire as to the man's character; you find that he is no mere pretender, but an authorized skillful, longestablished practitioner, well known for truthfulness, uprightness, and every good quality. Moreover, suppose in addition to this he charges you nothing whatever, but does everything gratis, having evidently no motive of gain, but being altogether disinterested, moved only by real pity for you, and a kind desire to remove your pain and save your life. Can you any longer refuse to believe and submit? But if, in addition to all this, he allows you his case-book, and bids you read case after case similar to your own in which he has effected perfect cure, and if some of these are your own acquaintances, if they are persons whom you know and esteem, why, sir, you will not insult him by saying, "I wish I could believe you;" but you will be unable to help trusting him, unless you are unwilling to be cured. Faith, in such a case, does not depend upon the will at all; you are convinced by hearing, and you become a believer. In the same way faith comes by hearing. You are unreasonable if you sit still and say, "I cannot make myself believe;" of course you cannot, but you hear, do you not, of how Christ heals sinners; you hear that he is backed by divine authority; you see that he really does save those who trust him, and what more of evidence do you want? O soul! it seems to me a harder thing not to believe in Jesus than to believe in him, if you are indeed willing to be made whole. When one has heard these things, and understands them, surely the mind, if it be not wilfully blinded, must receive the Savior. May God forgive your long perverseness, and by his Spirit open your eyes to see the simplicity of that faith which comes by hearing the word of God.

II. My time, however, flies much too rapidly this morning, and I must be brief on the second very important head, namely, OBSTRUCTIONS

## WHICH OFTEN BLOCK UP THIS WAY.

One is a want of intention, by which I mean that many persons come to hear, but they have no wish to be led into faith. Like the butterflies which flit from flower to flower, they extract no honey because they come not for such a purpose: while the bees dive into the cups and bells of the flowers, and come up loaded with their luscious food. Oh, if men came to hear, praying to be endowed with faith in Jesus, faith would surely come to them by hearing. Many persons in hearing a sermon, are like children looking, at a cornfield—it is full of yellow garlic, or perhaps of scarlet poppies, and they cry "What a lovely field;" but the farmer thinks not so, he is looking for the wheat. Many a hearer watches for pretty speeches and flowery metaphors, and cries, "How well he puts it! What a well-turned sentence! How sweetly he quotes poetry!" and so on. Bah! Is that what you come to God's house for? O fools and slow of heart, is this your end in hearing the life-giving gospel of the bleeding Lamb? I assure you it is not this that we are aiming at in preaching to you. If you came to look after the good corn, you would care little for the gaudy poppies of a flaunting eloquence so much regarded by the men of these days. Come with the intent to find faith in Jesus; cry to God to make his word effectual to our salvation, and then hearing will be quite another business with you. Alas I fear you will perish, let us preach as we may, while we are regarded by you as mere orators to be criticized, and not as witnesses whose testimony is to be weighed.

Some do not hear aright for want of attention. Sleepy hearers are not likely to be led to faith. Eutychus may fall from the third loft and be taken up for dead, but he is not likely to become a believer by sleeping, even though Paul should be the preacher. We want attention in order to the real reception of the word. Oh how pleasant it is to preach to earnest hearers who lean forward to catch every syllable, anxious to know how they can be saved. Wandering hearts lose the benefit of the truth, and vain minds trifle away the privilege of a gospel ministry. Take heed how ye hear, otherwise ye may remain hearers only, and so perish in unbelief.

With many a want of candor is another reason why faith does not come by hearing. If a man hears with a prejudiced heart, making up his mind before hand what he will believe, he is not likely to be convinced, he puts

himself as far as he can out of the reach of benefit. When the heart rebels against the word: when it says, "If this be true I am living a bad life, and I shall have to give up my pleasures, therefore will not accept it." Well then, faith does not come and cannot come by such hearing. Faith comes by hearing when a man does, as it were, give himself up to the word of God, like a person who is badly wounded and surrenders himself to the surgeon's hand. Oh, if I had a gangrened limb and it must be taken off, I think I would pray for patience enough to say, "O sir, if you can but spare my life cut to the very bone." When it is the soul that is concerned I would say to the preacher, "Sir, do not flatter me, do not tell me that which will please but delude me; I do not want your flattery, I do not want your fine words. "Sir, tell me what I am, and where I am in the sight of God, and how I can be saved; for it will little satisfy me to wake up in hell and remember that I used to hear a fine orator. I want to be saved in deed and of a truth." "Ah," says one, "but some preachers are not only bold, but rough in their expression." Yes, but suppose you were nearly drowned, and a strong swimmer plunged into the stream and plucked you out just as you were sinking for the last time, if he dislocated your arm would you grumble? No, you would say, "The bone can be set at another time, but my life could not have been restored." And so with the preacher, though he be rough, if it be the truth which he speaks, only pray that it may save your soul, and be content to put up with the man's infirmity, if by any means you may attain to salvation by Jesus Christ.

With some, how ever, hearing does not bring faith, because they hear without any after meditation. There is a great trial going on, as you know, in the Tichborne case. Every juryman, I doubt not, wants to judge righteously. I am sure the sleepy one is not likely to do so, and I am pretty clear that the juryman who is most likely to get at the truth will be the man who, when he gets away from the court, having heard attentively all the time, takes home the notes of the evidence, weighs it, and makes comparisons, and endeavors to sift out the truth. So I would say to you when you hear us preach, sift the sermon afterwards, turn our sermons over, pick holes in them if you like, and find out our mistakes; but oh, do search into the truth, and be not content till you find it. If you want to find Christ, the wisdom of God, you should seek for him as for silver. You are likely to believe the truth when your mind turns it over and over. Here

is a bag, and I am willing to make a man rich, and, therefore, I drop into it pound after pound, but I find that the bag is just as empty as before; the reason is plain,—there are holes in the bag, and the money drops through. Too many hearers are as a bag full of holes, and golden sermons will not bless them because they wilfully forget all. They will never come to faith because they do but look at their face in the glass of the word, and go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Oh for hearers who only need to know the gospel, and the evidence of it, and then consent thereto, saying, "It is the truth of God, I cannot quarrel with it; I joyfully receive it." Such are saved souls.

III. But, now, I am sorry to be so brief, but I must conclude by speaking, of **THE IMPORTANCE THAT FAITH SHOULD COME TO US BY HEARING**. I will let my words drop rapidly without any ornament, and remind you, dear friend, that if you have been a hearer and faith has not come to you, you are, this moment, in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. You believe not in Christ, and you make God a liar, because ye have not believed in his only-begotten Son. The wrath of God abideth on you. You are dead while you live. Without God, without Christ, and strangers to the covenant of promise. My soul pities you—will you not pity yourselves? Hearers only; faithless, graceless, Christless! Christ died, but you have no part in his death. His blood cleanses from sin, but your sin remains upon you. Christ has risen, and he pleads before the throne,—you have no part in that intercession. He is preparing a place for his people, but that place is not for you. Oh, unhappy soul! oh, wretched soul! out of favor with God, at enmity with eternal love, destitute of eternal life! Truly, if Jesus were here he would weep over you, as he did over Jerusalem, and say, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

Ah, remember, though your present state is terrible it is not all. You will soon die, and you will die without faith. Remember that word of Christ, it is one of the most terrible I know of, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." To die in a ditch, to die in a prison, to die on the gallows, none of us would desire it; but to die in your sins! O God, it is hell, it is eternal damnation. May the great Lord save you! But to perish for ever will be your lot as surely as you live, except you believe in Jesus



and that speedily, for soon you will be out of the reach of all hearing. No more sermons, no more invitations of grace. Oh, what would you give to have the gospel once more when you are cast away from it! No more the preacher's voice, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die!" No more the pitiful accents of one who loves your souls, and fain would snatch you as firebrands from the flame: around you all will be dark, and hard, and the only message for you will be this,— "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

"There are no acts of pardon passed,  
In that cold grave to which we haste;  
But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."

Ah! then it will be no assuagement of your miseries that you once heard the gospel; it will rather increase your torment. Conscience will cry aloud — "I heard the gospel of grace, and I heard the arguments which proved it true, but I rejected a gospel which God himself proclaimed, a gospel which was genuine on the face of it, a gospel full of such love as ought to have melted a rock, a gospel that was brought to me without money and without price, a gospel that was pressed upon me from my infancy to my hoar hairs—I rejected it, I wilfully rejected it, not because it was not true, but because I would believe a lie, and would not believe the living God." Eternal Father, thou who art mighty to save, let not one among us go down into the pit with a lie in his right hand, refusing to accept the gospel of thy blessed Son! The Lord save you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## How Saints May Help The Devil

That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. - Ezekiel 16:54

IT IS NOT a comfortable state to be at enmity with God, and the sinner knows this. Although he perseveres in his rebellion against the Most High, and turns not at the rebuke of the Almighty, but still goeth on in his iniquity, desperately seeking his own destruction, yet is he aware in his own conscience that he is not in a secure position. Hence it is that all wicked men are constantly on the look out for excuses. They find these either in pretended resolutions to reform at some future period, or else in the declaration that reformation is out of their power, and that, acting according to their own nature, they must continue to go on in their iniquities. When a man is willing to find an excuse for being God's enemy he need never be at a loss. He who hath to find a fact may find some difficulty; but he who would forge a lie may sit at his own fireside and do it. Now, the excuses of sinners are all of them false; they are refuges of lies; and therefore we need not wonder that they are exceedingly numerous, and very easy to come at.

One way in which sinners frequently excuse themselves is by endeavoring to get some apology for their own iniquities from the inconsistencies of God's people. This is the reason why there is much slander in the world. A true Christian is a rebuke to the sinner, wherever he goes he is a living protest against the evil of sin. Hence it is that the worldling makes a dead set upon a pious man. His language in his heart is, "He accuses me to my face; I cannot bear the sight of his holy character; it makes the blackness of my own life appear the more terrible, when I see the whiteness of his innocence contrasting with it." And then the worldling opens all his eyes, and labors to find a fault with the virtuous. If, however, he fails to do so, he will next try to invent a fault; he will slander the man; and if even there he fails, and the man is like Job, "perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil;" then the sinner will, like the devil of old, begin to

impute some wrong motive to the Christian's innocency. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" said the devil. He could find no fault with Job whatever, his character was untainted and unblemished; but, says he, "he keeps to his religion for what he gets by it." I reckon it to be a glorious accusation when we are falsely charged with being religious for the sake of gain. It shows that our enemies have no other charge that they can bring against us. They have ransacked all the files of their calumny, and they can find nothing tangible, and this is the last they can bring - an imputation upon the motive of the man who has no other motive in all the world than to glorify his God and win sinners from destruction. In this, then, let us glory. If sinners slander us, it is because we make them uneasy. They see that our lives are a protest against them: and what can they do? They must somehow or other answer the Bill which we have filed against them in Heaven's Chancery, and they do it by issuing a Rejoinder against us, and bringing us in as defendants in the case. We glory in this, that we are defendants who can prove our innocence, and we are not ashamed to stand before the her of God to have our motives tried. There is much I say to cheer us in the fact of such a libel. We know the work is done. We are sure our shots have told on their armor, when they are driven to return on us their calumnies and the venom of their wrath. Now we know that they feel the might of our arm, now we know we are not like them, mere drivellings and dwarfs. They have felt our might, and against it they kick, they foam, they forth their wrath. In this, I say, we glory. We have smitten them hard, or else they would not rise against us in this fashion.

Alas! alas! however, sinners have not always to use calumny and lies. It is too true that the church has given a real bona fide cause to the wicked for excusing themselves in their sin: the inconsistencies of professors, the want of heart in piety, the absence of devout earnestness, have given sad grounds to the ungodly to justify themselves in their sin. It is upon this melancholy subject that I am about to enter this morning; and may God grant unto all his people who shall feel convicted in their consciences, the spirit of mourning and contrition, that they may vex themselves before God, and confess this great iniquity that they have done, namely, that they have comforted sinners in their sin by their own inconsistency, and have justified the wicked in their rebellion by their own rebellings and revoltings.

This morning I shall deal thus with the subject. First, I shall point out the fact - the different acts of Christians which have helped to comfort sinners in their sin; and then, secondly, I shall observe the consequences of this evil - how much the world at large has been injured by the deeds of professed followers of Christ; and then I shall come with a solemn warning, bringing out the great battering ram, to dash against these refuges of lies and moreover crying with a loud voice to those who are the faithful servants of Christ, to withdraw their hands, and no longer to assist in keeping up the Jericho in which the wicked have entrenched themselves.

I. First, then, it shall be my sad and melancholy business this morning to show certain facts which it were dishonest to deny, namely, that **THE ACTS OF MANY OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF JUSTIFYING AND COMFORTINGS SINNERS IN THEIR EVIL WAYS.**

1. And first I would observe, that the daily inconsistencies of the people of God have much to do in this matter. By inconsistencies I do not exactly mean those grosser crimes into which, at sad and mournful periods, many professors fall; but I mean those frequent inconsistencies which become so common indeed that they are scarcely condemned by society.

The covetousness of too many Christians has had this offset. "Look," says the worldling, "this man professes that his inheritance is above, and that his affection is set not on things on earth, but on the things of heaven but look at him, he is just as earnest as I am about the things of this world; he can drive the screw home as tightly with his debtor as I can; he can scrape and cut with those that deal with him quite as keenly as ever I have done." Nay, beloved, this is not a mere tale; alas! I have seen persons held up to commendation as successful merchants, whose lives will not bear the test of Scripture, whose business transactions were as hard as griping, as grasping, as the transactions of the most worldly. How often has it happened that some of you have bent your knee in the sanctuary, and have said, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and one hour afterwards your finger has been almost meeting your thumb through the jugular vein of some debtor whom you had seized by the throat! The church of Christ appears to be as worldly as the world itself, and

professors of religion have become as sharp in trade and as ungenerous in their dealing as those that have never been baptised into the Lord Jesus, and have never professed to serve him. And now what does the world say? It throws this in our teeth. If it be accused of loving the things of time and sense, it answers, "And so do you." If we tell the world that it has set its hopes upon a shadow, it replica, "But we have set our hope upon the self-same thing in which you are trusting; you are as worldly, as grasping, as covetous as we are; your protest has lost its force; you are no longer witnesses against us - we are accusers of you."

Another point in which the sinner often excuses himself is the manifest worldliness of many Christians. You will see Christian men and women as fond of dress, and as pleased with the frivolities of the age, as any other persons possibly could be, just as anxious to adorn their outward persons, so as to be seen of men; just as ambitious to win the praise which fools accord to fine dressing, as the most silly fop or the most gaudy among worldly women. What saith the world, when we turn round to it, and accuse it of being a mere butterfly, and finding all its pleasures in gaudy toys? "Oh! yes," it says, "we know your cant, but it is just the same with you." Do you not stand up and sing,  
"Jewels to me are gaudy toys,  
And gold but sordid dust?"

And yet you are just as fond of glittering as we are; your doctors of divinity pride themselves just as much in their D.D. as any of us in other titles. You are Just as punctillious about terms of honor as any of us can be. You talk about carrying the cross; but we do not see it anywhere, except it be a golden cross sometimes hanging on your bosom. You say you are crucified to the world, and the world to you: it is a very merry sort of crucifixion. You say that you mortify your members and deny yourselves: your mortification must be suffered in secret, for it is but very little that we can see of it! Thus the worldling casts back to our challenge, declaring that we are not sincere, and thus he comforts himself a his sin, and justifies himself in his iniquity,

Look, too, at the manifest pride of many professors of religion. You see members of Christian churches as proud as they possibly can be. Their backs are as stiff as if an iron rod were in the center, they come up to the

house of God, and it is a Christian doctrine that God has made of one flesh all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, but the Christian is as aristocratic as anybody else, just as proud and just as stiff. Is the Christian clothed in broad cloth? How often does he feel it a condescension to own a smock frock! and how often do you see a sister of Christ in satin, who thinks it something wonderful if she owns a fellow-member in an unwashable print. It is of no use denying it. I do not think that the evil is so common amongst us as it is in some churches; but this I know, that there are respectable churches and chapels in which a poor man scarcely dares to show his face. The pride of the church surely has become almost as great as the pride of Sodom of old. Her fullness of bread and her stiffness of neck hath brought her to exalt herself; and whereas it is the real glory of the church that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them," and that the poor have received the Word with gladness, it becomes now the honor of the church to talk of her respectability of the dignity and station of her members, and of the greatness of her wealth. What, then, do worldlings say? "You accuse us of pride, you are as proud as we are. You the humble followers of Jesus, who washed his saints' feet? Not you; no, you would have no objection, we doubt not to be washed by others, but we do not think it likely that you would ever wash ours. You the disciples of the fishermen of Galilee? Not you; you are too fine and great for that. Accuse us not of pride: why, you are as stiff-necked a generation, as we ourselves are."

Now, these are only mentioned amongst us as inconsistencies - not as sins. Sins they verily are; and they are such sins that they restrain the Spirit of God from blessing the church. Sins, too, they are that render the wicked callous in their sins, blunt the edge of our rebukes, and prevent the Word of God from working in the hearts of men.

I might mention another sad fact with regard to the church, which often stings us sorely, - the various enmities, and strifes, and divisions, that arise. You tell the worldly man that Christians love each other. "Ah!" says he, "you should go over to Ebenezer or to Rehoboth, and see how they love each other. Don't talk of leading a cat and dog life! Look at many of your churches; see how the minister is treated, and how the deacons are in arms, and how the members hate one another. They can scarcely hold

a church meeting without abusing each other!" How often is this proved to be true in many churches! And then the worldling says, "You tell us that we bite and devour each other, and that our wars and fightings come from our lusts. Where do your wars and fightings is come from? You tell us that our anger and wrath are the effect of sin that dwelleth in us: what causes your divisions and your strifes?" In this way, you see, the testimony of the children of God is rendered invalid, and we help to comfort sinners in their sins.

2. Now it is my mournful duty to go a step further. It is not merely these inconsistencies, but the glaring crimes of some professed disciples, thee have greatly assisted sinners in sheltering themselves from the attacks of the Word of God. Every now and then the cedar falls in the midst of the forest. Some one who stood prominent in the church of God, as a professed follower of Jesus, turns aside. "They go out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless, they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us." We have wept over high professors becoming drunkards; we have seen mighty men at religious public meetings becoming scoundrel bankrupts. We have had it dashed in our faces, dozens of times, that religion how often become a cloak for fraud, and that when the world has trusted a religious man with its wealth, that religious man has carried it off with him, and has not been found at the proper time. Oh! this is the great curse of the church. I was thinking only yesterday, with much sorrow in my heart, of the present age, and I could not but come to the conclusion, that all the burnings of Pagan tyrants, that all the tortures of Popish executioners, that all the bloody deaths to which God's people were ever put, in any one age of the world, have never done so much hurt to the cause of Christ as the inconsistencies of professors of the present time. It was about three years ago I think, that failures among religious men seemed to be the order of the day, and our papers literally teemed with accusations against the church of God. O my brethren, let us not talk of these things, except with mourning and tears. Wrap thyself in sackcloth, O church of God; put away thy laughter, and cast ashes on thine head, for the crown of thy glory is departed, thy garments are stained, and the filthiness of thy skirts witnesses against thee. O church of Christ, thy Nazarites were purer than snow, they were

whiter than milk, but now their visage is blacker than a coal, and their hands are defiled with iniquity. Remember thou the time of thy purity, when thy priests were glorious, and thy sons and daughters were clothed in royal apparel. How art thou fallen! how art thou cast down from the high mountains! Thy princes are clothed in rags; the veils are plucked from the face of thy daughters, and thou thyself art become disconsolate and a widow, by reason of the iniquity of thy sons and of thy daughters. Woe unto us, for thy glory is departed, thy sun is covered with thick darkness, and thy stars withhold their light. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned.

My hearers, my soul has carried me away; breathless and panting I return to my humbler but not less earnest style. Remember how vast your powers for mischief! Your ministers may preach as long as they will; but you undo their preaching if you are unholy. If you are inconsistent in your lives, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas might preach with power; but they have not half the power to build up that you have to pull down. You are the mightiest workmen ye professors of religion; you can undo infinitely more than we can accomplish.

And now I pause, and relieve the shadow of this subject with something which, I fear, is in the sight of God equally vile. How often do the people of God comfort sinners in their sins by their murmurings and their complaints? Oh beloved, we are too much in the habit of covering our faces with sadness, on account of our temporal trials, and too little in the habit of weeping on account of the failings of the church of God! How frequently do you meet with a true Christian full of unbelieving cares! Ah! he says, "All these things are against me." He has food and raiment, but he is not content with it; he has more than that, but his store is a little diminished, and he is very cast down, and he has no faith, and cannot trust the Lord. "Oh!" says the worldling, "see these Christians; they talk about faith, but their faith is not of half so much service to them, as my desperation is to me that hardens my heart, and makes me stand up against affliction a great deal better than their faith in God's providence can do. Why, just look at these saints: - a drivelling set of crying creatures, they never have either peace or joy; they are everlastingly pulling long faces, and talking through their noses, about their sad trials



and troubles; they never have an hour of happiness. Who would be a Christian? I don't want to be converted," says the worldling. "Why should I pluck out the sunbeam from my eye, and take the smile from my brow? Why should I profess to follow a God whose servants only worship him by weeping, and never offer any sacrifice but that of groans, and sighs, and murmurs?" Might not a wicked man come in often, when Christians are grumbling together about the badness of the times, about the high price of commodities, and the low rate of wages, and so forth; and might he not say, "Yes, I can see your God treats you very badly; if I were you I'd strike, and have nothing to do with him?" And he would go away laughing, and saying, "Ah! Baal treats me better; I get more pleasure in this world than these Christian people do. Let them have their brave heaven to themselves, if they like; I'm not going snivelling through this world with them; let me have joy and rejoicing while I may." Don't you think that in this way you and I have done a world of damage to the cause of Christ, and may have helped to comfort sinners in their iniquities?

One other point, and I will have done with this. Perhaps the greatest evil has been done by the coldheartedness, and indifference of religious professors. I charge thee not, O church of God, with inconsistency; I lay no crime at thy door now; it is with another fault I charge thee - one as grievous these. I pray thee, plead guilty to it, for thou wilt but speak the truth, and then I pray God that this thy guilt may be cleansed, and that thou mayest offend him no longer with this thine evil. The church of God at the present age, is cold and lukewarm, and lifeless, compared with what it used to be. When I was preaching in Wales this week, I could not but observe the power which attended the ministry, when there was a living congregation and an earnest company gathered together to hear the Word of God. We have become accustomed to sit in a kind of solemn silence to hear the gospel. Not so in Wales. There is to be heard the voice of acclamation; every person expresses the feelings of his soul in audible prayers and cries to God; and at last, when the Spirit has descended, you hear the loud cries of "Gogoniant," - "Glory to God." As each precious sentence drops from the lips of the preacher, it seems to be taken up and fed upon by the people, while they shout aloud for joy. I believe it is a great improvement on our English congregations, and some of our English preachers could not go on in their dull style, if sometimes the

people had a chance of either hissing them or cheering them on. That, however, is but an index of the cold state of the churches. We are a phlegmatic, cold nation; even Scotch divines are more alive than we are, they speak the Word of God with more earnestness than many of our ministers do in England. Cold as we think the north is, yet hath even it become warmer than we are. And now what says the world to all our coldness? Why, it says - "Ah, this is the kind of religion we like," says the worldling; "we don't like those raving Methodists; we can't stand them; we don't like those earnest indefatigable Christians of the cars of Whitfield; oh! no, they were a raving set of folks; we don't like them; but we like these quiet folks." "Yes," says the worldling, "I think it is quite right that every man should go to his church and his chapel on a Sunday; but I never could go and hear such raving as Mr. So-and-so gives." Of course you could not; you are an enemy to God, and that is why you like a Laodicean church. That very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors. The world says, "We like everything to go on smoothly; we like a man to go to his own parish church, and hear a good, solid, substantial sermon read; we like to go up to the meeting house, and hear a sober, eloquent divine; we don't like any of this furious preaching, any of these earnest exhortations." No, of course you like that of which God has said, "Thou art neither cold nor hot;" God hates such, and that is why sinners love it. But what effect does all this have upon the worldling? Why, just this. He says, "I like you, because you don't rebuke me; I like that kind of religion, because it is no accusation against me. When I see a Christian hot and in earnest about being saved," he says, "it rebukes my own indifference; but when I see a professed Christian just as indifferent about the salvation of men as I am, why, then I say, it is all a farce, nonsense! they don't mean it, the minister does not care a bit about whether souls are saved or not, and as for the church, they make a great, deaf of noise every now and then at Exeter Hall, about saving some poor blacks far away, but they don't care about saving us." And so a worldling wraps himself up, and goes on his way in his sin and his iniquity, and perseveres, even to the last declaring all the while that religion is but a sham, because he sees us careless in solemn matters, and cold concerning everlasting realities.

Thus I have, mournfully in my own soul, set forth the plan whereby Satan

comforts sinners in their sins, even by means of those who ought most sternly to rebuke them.

II. And now for the second point - THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS EVIL. And here I wish to speak very pointedly and personally to all of you who are professors of religion, and I do hope that you will take every point to yourself, in which you must feel that you have been and are guilty.

Friends, how often have you and I, in the first place, helped to keep sinners easy in their sin, by our inconsistency! Had we been true Christians, the wicked man would often have been pricked to the heart, and his conscience would have convicted him; but having been unfaithful and untrue, he has been able to sleep on quietly, without any disturbance from us. Do you not think, my dear brothers and sisters, that you have each been guilty here? - that you have often helped to pacify the wicked in their rebellion against God? I must confess myself that I am guilty. I have labored to escape from the sin, but I am not clean delivered from it. I pray each one of you, make a full confession before God, if by your silence, when sin has been committed before your eyes, or by a smile, when a lascivious joke has been told in your hearing, or if by a constant indifference to the cause of Christ you have led sinners to sleep more securely in the bed of their iniquities.

But to go further still. Do you not think that very often, when a sinner's conscience has been roused, you and I have helped to give it a soporific draught by our coldness of heart, "Hush! Master Conscience," says the sinner, but he will not be still, but cries aloud, "Repent, repent." And then you, a professing Christian pass try, and you administer the laudanum draught of your indifference and the sinner's conscience falls back again into its slumber, and the reproof that might have been useful is entirely lost upon him. I am sure that this is one of the great crying sins of the church, that we are not now the witnesses of God, as we should be, but often quiet the witness of conscience in the souls of men. Look now to your lives - I am speaking personally to each one - look at yesterday, and the days that went before, and I ask you, and I solemnly charge you to answer that question, Have you not often assisted, in the first place, to keep men's consciences quiet, and afterwards to send them to sleep when

they have been aroused?

Further; is it not possible that often sinners have been strengthened in their sin by you? They were but beginning in iniquity, and had you rebuked with honesty and sincerity, by your own holy life, they might have been led to see their folly and might have ceased from sin; but you have strengthened their hands. They have gone forward confidently, because they have said, "See, a church member leads the way." "So-and-so is not more scrupulous than I," says such an one; "I may do what he does" And so you have helped to strengthen sinners in their sins.

Nay, is it not possible that some of you Christians have helped to confirm men in their sins and to destroy their souls? It is a master-piece of thy devil, when he can use Christ's own soldiers against Christ. But this he has often done. I have known many a case. Let me tell a story of a minister - one which I believe to be true and which convicts myself, and therefore I tell it with the hope that it may also waken your consciences and convict you too. There was a young minister once preaching very earnestly in a certain chapel, and he had to walk some four or five miles to his home along a country road after service. A young man, who had been deeply impressed under the sermon, requested the privilege of walking with the minister, with an earnest hope that he might get an opportunity of telling out his feelings to him, and obtaining some word of guidance or comfort. Instead of that, the young minister all the way along told the most singular tales to those who were with him, causing loud roars of laughter, and even relating tales which bordered upon the indecorous. He stopped at a certain house, and this young man with him, and the whole evening was spent in frivolity and foolish talking. Some years after, when the minister had grown old, he was sent for to the bedside of a dying man. He hastened thither with a heart desirous to do good. He was requested to sit down at the bedside and the dying man, looking at him, and regarding him most closely, said to him, "Do you remember preaching in such-and-such a village on such an occasion?" "I do," said the minister. "I was one of your hearers," said the man, "and I was deeply impressed by the sermon." "Thank God for that," said the minister. "Stop!" said the man, "don't thank God till you have heard the whole story; you will have reason to alter your tone before I have done."

The minister changed countenance, but he little guessed what would be the full extent of that man's testimony. Said he, "Sir, do you remember, after you had finished that earnest sermon, I with some others walked home with you? I was sincerely desirous of being led in the right path that night; but I heard you speak in such a strain of levity, and with so much coarseness too, that I went outside the house, while you were sitting down to your evening meal; I stamped my foot upon the ground; I said that you were a liar, that Christianity was a falsehood, that it you could pretend to be so in earnest about it in the pulpit, and then come down and talk like that, the whole thing must be a sham; and I have been an infidel," said he, "a confirmed infidel, from that day to this. But I am not an infidel at this moment. I know better; I am dying, and I am about to be damned; and at the bar of God I will lay my damnation to your charge; my blood is one your head;" - and with a dreadful shriek, and one demoniacal glance at the trembling minister, he shut his eyes and died. Is it not possible that we may have been guilty thus? The bare idea would make the flesh creep on our bones; and yet I think there are few among us who must not say, "That has been my fault, after all." But are there not enough traps, in which to catch souls, without your being made Satan's fowlers to do mischief? Hath not Satan legions enough of devils to murder men, without employing you? Are there no hands that may be red with the blood of souls beside yours? O followers of Christ! O believers in Jesus! Will ye serve under the black prince? Will ye fight against your Master? Will ye drag sinners down to hell? Shall we - (I take myself in here, more truly than any of you) - shall we, who profess to preach the gospel of Christ, by our conversation injure and destroy men's souls?

III. Thus I think I have expounded the solemn consequences of this fearful evil. And now I come, in conclusion, and I pray God to help me, while I deal earnestly, and solemnly with you, **AND BRING OUT THIS GREAT BATTERING RAM, TO BEAR AGAINST THIS VAIN EXCCUSE OF THE WICKED.**

Among this great congregation, I have doubtless a very large number of persons who are not converted to God, and who have continually made this their excuse, "I see so much of the inconsistency of professors that I do not intend to think about religion myself." My hearer, I conjure thee

by the living God, give me thine ear a moment, while I pull this vain excuse of thine to pieces. What hast thou to do with the inconsistencies of another? "To his own master he shall stand or fall." What will it better thee, if one half of all the professors of religions be sent to hell? What comfort will that be to thee, when thou shalt come there thyself? Man, will God require the sins of other people at thine hands? Where is it said that God will punish thee for what another does? Or dost thou imagine that God will reward thee because another is guilty? Thou art surely not foolish enough for that. I ask thee, what canst thou have to do with another's servant? That man is a servant of God, or at least professes to be; if he be not so, what business can it possibly be of thine? If thou shouldst see twenty men drinking poison, would that be a reason why thou shouldst drink it? If, passing over London Bridge, thou shouldst see a dozen miserable creatures leaping off the parapet, there would be a good argument why thou thyself shouldst seek to stop them, but no argument why thou shouldst leap too. What if there be hundreds of suicides? will that excuse thee, if thou shalt shed thine own blood? Do men plead thus in courts of law? Does a man say, "O Judge, excuse me for having been a thief, there are so many hundreds of men that profess to be honest that are as big thieves as I?" Thou wilt be punished for thine own offenses, remember not for the offenses of another. Man! I conjure thee, look this in the face. How can this help to assuage thy misery? How can this help to make thee happier in hell, because thou sayest there are so many hypocrites in this world?

But, besides, thou knowest well enough that the church is not so bad as thou sayest it is. Thou seest some that are inconsistent; but are there not many that are holy? Dost thou dare to say there are none? I tell thee, man, thou art a fool. There are many bad coins in the world, many counterfeits; do you, therefore, say there are no good ones? If you say so, you are mad; for the very fact that there are counterfeits is a proof that there must be realities. Would any man think it worth his while to make bad sovereigns if there were no good ones? It is just the quantity of good ones that passes off the few false coins. And so no man would pretend to be a Christian unless there were some good Christians. There would be no hypocrites if there were not some true men. It is the quantity of true, men that helps to pass off the hypocrite in the crowd.

And then again, I say, when thou comest before the bar of God, dost thou think that this will serve thee as an excuse, to begin to find fault with God's own children? Suppose you were brought before a king, an absolute monarch, and you should begin to say, by way of appeal, "O king, I have been guilty, it is true, but your own sons and daughters I do not like; there are a great many faults in the princes of the blood." Would he not say, "Wretch! thou art adding insult to wickedness; thou art guilty thyself, and now thou dost malign mine own children, the princes of the blood?" The Lord will not have thee say that at last. He has pardoned his children; he is ready to pardon thee. He sends mercy to thee this day, but if thou reject it, imagine not that thou shalt escape by recounting the sins of the pardoned ones. The rather this shall be an addition to thy sin, and thou shalt perish the more fearfully.

But come, man, once again: I would entreat of thee with all my might. What! canst thou be so foolish as to imagine, that because another man is destroying his own soul by hypocrisy, that this is a reason why thou shouldst destroy thine by indifference? If there be thousands of untrue Christians, so much the more reason why I should be a true one: if there are hundreds of hypocrites, this should make me more earnest to search myself, and should not make me indifferent about the matter. O sinner! thou wilt soon be on thy dying bed, and will it comfort thee there to think, "I have rejected Christ, I have despised salvation, I am perishing in my sins," and to add, "But there are many Christians who are hypocrites!" No, death will tear away that excuse. That will not serve you. And when the heavens are in a blaze, when the pillars of the earth shall reel, when God shall come on flying clouds to judge the children of men, when the eternal eyes are fixed upon you, and like burning lamps are enlightning the secret parts of your belly, will you then be able to make this an excuse - "Good God! it is true, I have damned myself, it is true, I have wilfully transgressed; but there were many hypocrites?" Then shall the Judge say, "What hast thou to do with that? Thou hadst nought to do, to interfere with my kingdom and with my judgship; for thine own offenses thou art lost; for thine own rejection of Christ thou shalt perish everlastingly."

And now I conclude, by addressing the people of God with equal solemnity and earnestness.

My dear hearers, if I could weep tears of blood this morning, I could not show too much emotion concerning this most solemn point. I do not know that this text ever struck me before yesterday, but I no sooner noticed it than it came home to me as an accusation. I plead guilty to it, and I pray for forgiveness. I only wish that a like power may attend it to you, that you may feel that you have been guilty too. O friends, can you bear the thought that you may have helped to drag others down to hell? Christ has loved you and pardoned your sins; and will you push others downward? And yet if you are inconsistent, and especially if you are cold and lukewarm in your religion, you are doing it. "Well," says one, "I don't do much good, but I do no hurt." That is an impossibility. You must be either doing good or evil. There is no borderland between truth and sin; a man must be either on land or in the water; and you are either serving God or serving Satan; each day you are increasing your Master's kingdom, or else diminishing it. I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be employed in Satan's camp. Suppose there ever should be an invasion of this country by France. The tocsin rings from every church steeple, the drum is sounding in every street, and men are gathering at every market-cross. Peaceful men spring up to soldiers in an instant; and multitudes are marching away to the coast. When we come near it we behold a troop of soldiers who have climbed our white cliffs, and with bayonets fixed they are marching against us. We, with a tremendous cheer, rush on against them, to drive them back into the sea which girds our beloved country. Suddenly, as we rush forward, we detect scores of Englishmen marching in the same ranks with our foes, and seeking to ravage their own country. What should we say? Seize these traitors; let not one of them escape; put them all to death. Can Englishmen take the side of England's enemies? Can they march against our hearths and homes, betray their fatherland, and take the side of the tyrant Emperor? Can this be? Then let them die the death!" And yet this day I behold a more mournful spectacle yet. There is King Jesus marching at the head of his troops; and can it be that some of you, who profess to be his followers, are on the other side; that professing to be Christ's you are lighting in the ranks of the enemy - carrying the baggage of Satan and wearing the uniform of hell, when you profess to be soldiers of Christ? I know there are such here: God forgive them! God spare them; and may the deserters yet come back, even though they come back in the chains of conviction!



May they come back and be saved! O brethren and sisters, there are enough to destroy souls without us - enough to extend the kingdom of Satan without our helping him. "Come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing; be ye separate." Church of God! awake, awake, awake to the salvation of men! Sleep no longer, begin to pray, to wrestle, to travail in birth; be more holy, more consistent, more strict, more solemn in thy deportment! Begin, O soldiers of Christ, to be more true to your colors, and as surely as the time shall come when the church shall thus be reformed and revived, to surely shall the King come into our midst, and we shall march on to certain victory, trampling down our enemies, and getting to our King many crowns, through many victories achieved.

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## **How They Conquered The Dragon**

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. - Revelation 12:11

It is not my main object at this time to expound the chapter before us. I scarcely consider myself qualified to explain any part of the Book of Revelation, and none of the expositions I have ever seen entice me to attempt the task, for they are mostly occupied with a refutation of all the interpretations which have gone before, and each one seems to be very successful indeed in proving that all the rest know nothing at all about the matter. The sum total of substantial instruction in nearly all the comments upon the Revelation amounts to this, that our heavenly Father has said in his word some mysterious things which few of his children can yet comprehend. This is just what we might have expected when the infinite God speaks to finite men, and it is no doubt intended to humble us and draw forth our reverent adoration. Happily there is a blessing to

those who read and hear and keep the words of his prophecy, for had that blessing been confined to those who understand it, few would have obtained the benediction. The Revelation is a most blessed book, but its unfolding has yet to be accomplished. If you refer to the expositors you will find that they discover in this passage the dragon-ensign of pagan Rome, and its removal from its position by Constantine, who set up the cross in its stead. I do not believe the Lord took any more interest in Constantine than in any other sinner, and it seems to me little short of blasphemous to say that he was the man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and was caught up into God and to his throne. His adoption of Christianity as the state religion was not a thing for glorified spirits to rejoice in, but a dreadful calamity, fitted only to make sport for Pandemonium. No one ever did the church a worse turn than he who first joined her to the state. The act was a piece of state policy and kingcraft and no more, a business utterly unworthy of record by an inspired pen.

It would be unprofitable to follow great interpreters through the history of the Roman empire, all of which they find in the visions of John: such an exercise would be more suitable to another day, and would rather come under the head of history than theology. I can only give you what it occurs to me that you and I would have understood by the vision if it had been granted to us. It does not appear to me to be a portion of a consecutive revelation, but a sort of summary of the visions which follow it, and in some respects a preface to them. Remember that it is a vision, and is not to be interpreted in cold blood word by word, or read as if its coherence and connection would always be apparent. In this chapter we may see, as in a panorama, the entire conflict between the principles of good and evil, between God and Satan. We have before us the old original quarrel between the woman and the serpent with which the inspired volume commences, and a clear development of the first promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed."

Woman in her innocence was attacked by "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan," and she readily enough fell a prey to his deceptions, to the utter ruin of our race. At the end of that first crafty assault and speedy victory the dragon met with his rebuff in words like these: "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"; a

promise which declared that, though the woman's seed must suffer greatly at Satan's hand in consequence of sin, yet he would conquer in the end, and destroy the power of evil. In the Revelation the scene is changed from Eden to the heavens, and there before you stand again the woman and the serpent, in the same position of antagonism as before, the serpent still the assailant, only this time more openly so. Observe how both woman and serpent have developed; the one has become a queen bedecked with celestial splendor, and the other a python with tail so vast that he threatens to obliterate the stars with every sweep of it. The woman is no longer a simple, childlike personage, but a wonder; she walks not among the trees and the flowers, but amid the orbs of heaven. She is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and upon her head is a coronet of twelve stars. In her you see the great cause of truth and righteousness embodied—she is, in fact, the church of God in all ages, the woman whose seed blesses all the nations of the earth. The glorious cause of holiness and God, incarnated in the church, is clothed with the splendor of light, and truth, and majesty. We will not stay to explain the details of the gorgeous imagery, for in such a matter it is almost frivolity to go into detail. The church has her greater and her lesser lights: she is covered with the underived splendor of indwelling Deity, and her walk is bright with the reflected glory of holiness, while her crown of joy is found in her complete ministry as represented by the apostolic twelve. She is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Behold, then, the typical woman, and see how glorious is the cause of truth and holiness.

In the vision the queenly woman is about to bring forth the promised seed; she cries in her anguish, "travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." This, of course, may represent the church crying day and night unto God in times gone by for the coming of the promised deliverer—a cry which increased in intensity and agony of desire as the time drew on; but it may also depict the constant condition of a true church, always travailing in birth till Christ be formed in the hearts of men, till the man-child, namely Christ mystical, be born here below till the Christ be so brought forth among the sons of men that he and all those who by grace are enabled to overcome the wicked one, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. (Revelation 2:26-27.)

You see, then, in vision the woman, the church, and before her stands another wonder—the serpent mightily developed. He is called a great red dragon: huge in bulk and terrible in appearance is this emblem of evil, and he is clothed with the horrible splendor peculiar to himself—the splendor of deadly hate and imperious rebellion. Bright and burning, like flames of fire, the huge serpent is terrible to gaze upon. The python is red with wrath, and encrimsoned with persecuting malice. Red is the color of Edom, the adversary of the Lord, and of his Israel, and it is still the chosen color of the monstrous power of antichrist, which holds its court at Rome. What is the last of its evil gifts to our own country but a red hat for its arch-priest? This great red dragon is full of craft, for it has seven heads. One Satanic head were enough, but our great enemy possesses an almost perfect ingenuity of wickedness, he uses a wisdom all but infinite to effect the overthrow of the church of God and the destruction of Christ and the rest of the heavenborn seed among men! These seven heads are supplemented by ten horns, the emblems of power, for the prince of the power of the air is by no means weak; he has, in fact, more power than wisdom, having but seven heads to ten horns, and yet since according to the order of nature each head should have two horns, we may also say that he has not power enough to execute all that his wicked cunning enables him to invent. By the power wielded by the dragon, he leads men to rebel against the law of the Lord, and induces them to persecute the church. The power of evil is great in all lands, and as opposed to a defenseless woman in a sorrowful condition, it seems quite impossible that she should stand against it. The heads are also crowned, for Satan sways with more than regal power the minds of men; he is the god of this world, it lieth in the wicked one. He delights to display that power, and trusts much to outward pomp, therefore he wears seven crowns upon his seven heads, as if one diadem were not sufficient to denote his kingship. His enormous energy is also set forth by his lashing the skies in his fury and tearing down a third part of the stars—it is evermore his ambition to deepen darkness and destroy light, and terribly successful has he been in this his choicest pastime.

See, then, before you the woman in her brightness and loveliness and the dragon in his rage and power. The dragon is watching for the expected birth, he is eager to devour the man-child as soon as it is born,—the ideal

man, the offspring of the divine life he longs to destroy. It was so when our Lord Jesus was born; Satan stirred up Herod to seek the young child, and hence the massacre of the innocents. But the dragon was foiled, Jesus lived till his hour was come, and then he was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Thus also Satan strove to devour the new-born seed, when the converts to Christ were few, and mystical body upon earth was like unto that of a little child. He persecuted the man-child when first the gospel was preached; but the more his servants persecuted the saints, the more they multiplied. The method followed by Pharaoh in Egypt was a crafty one, but it did not and could not succeed. Persecution always fails.

To-day, brethren, the man-child, even our Lord Jesus, is caught up unto God and sits upon his throne; and in part also the mystical body of Christ is there also, far beyond the reach of the dragon. Jesus reigns with his saints in a region in which there is no more place for the dragon, a domain from which he is for ever cast out into the earth. All the power which Satan ever had in heavenly things is now ended by the finished work of our ascended Lord.

"Bruised is the serpent's head  
Hell is vanquish'd, death is dead  
And to Christ gone up on high  
Captive is captivity."

By reason of our sin and his own power over death, Satan shut heaven against us, but now the battle in the higher regions between the dragon and the woman's seed is over, and we are in the heavenly places, and Satan banished for ever. There is no condemnation unto us any more, nor a foot for the evil one to stand upon, now that we are in Christ. When we read here "heaven," do not understand by it the place of the blessed, where God dwelleth, but the spiritual region, the realm of spiritual things. The first fight between truth and error lies in purely spiritual matters, in those heavenly places into which Christ has lifted up his church, it is a wrestling between good and evil spirits and not a contention with flesh and blood. We find angels first entering into this strife. We know but little about it, but it would seem that the great dragon of evil has made war with angels as well as with men. Milton sang of those angelic conflicts in majestic verse, but Milton was not inspired to speak infallibly, and we

must take heed not to confound poets with prophets. It is clear that good and evil spirits are at necessary variance one with another, and it is also clear that in ages gone by Satan tempted the angelic band, and those angels which kept the first estate were victorious over him once for all; they rejected his sinful solicitations, and now he has no more power over them. Ever again can he tempt them, they shall stand fast for ever, confirmed in their blessed estate. Michael and his angels have defeated the devil and his angels in one decisive battle, and by remaining true to their allegiance have chased away from angelic realms the invading power of evil.

Dwelling in the spirit realms there are others besides angels, our brethren who have left the body, the saints of ancient times, and the faithful of the early church; these also dwell in a region out of which Satan is expelled, he cannot molest them any more. The text bids us hear the glorified chanting the song of victory over Satan, for ever cast down from the realms of the blessed never again to enter into the spiritual domain to vex them. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." To the singers of this song I want to call your attention, and mainly to one point concerning them. They have conquered Satan; I want you to observe this, and to note the weapons by which they overcame.

Leaving all the rest, we will pay our attention to the victors and the weapons by which they won the day. First, we shall notice that the blessed ones before the throne were all warriors and victors; secondly, they all fought with the same weapons; and thirdly, they all fought the same spirit.

I. First, ALL THE BLESSED ONES WHO ARE REJOICING IN HEAVEN WERE ONCE WARRIORS AND VICTORS HERE BELOW. It is a very simple truth to mention, but we need to be reminded of it.

"Once they there mourning liege below,  
And wet their couch with tears;  
They wrestled hard, as we do now,

With sins and doubts and fears."

We too often think of the saints that have gone before as if they were men of another race from ourselves, capable of nobler things, endowed with graces which we cannot reach, and adorned with holiness impossible to us. The medieval artists were wont to paint the saints with rings of glory about their heads, but indeed they had no such halos; their brows were furrowed with care even as ours, and their hair grew grey with grief. Their light was within, and we may have it; their glory was by grace, and the same grace is available for us. They were men of like passions with ourselves, "our brethren," though a little elder born. It is clear from our text that every one of the saints in heaven was assailed by Satan. How could there be a victory without a battle? They were all attacked by one or other of the dragon's heads and horns. When you suffer from a fearful temptation which almost stirs you, count it no strange thing; be not dismayed as though a new temptation had befallen you. That fiery dart had been aimed at other men's hearts before it was caught upon your shield. If the insinuation should happen to be profane and blasphemous to a very high degree, so that you condemn yourself and say, "No other human mind could ever have been defiled with so foul a suggestion as this," do not despond, for such suggestions have been injected into the minds of the purest, even as the worst of thieves may seek to enter the house of the most honest man in the city. Even to those who at this moment are without fault before the throne of God it happened while here below that horrible temptations assailed them. Satan always has been since his fall a tempter of the worst order, and ever since he first beguiled our mother Eve he has gone on to ensnare men's souls with the same craft, the same cruelty, the same falsehood, the same impiety against the Lord. It will help you if you reflect that you are not alone, and the pathway which you follow was trodden by the most honored of the elect of God. Paul, who won provinces for Christ, nevertheless had his messengers of Satan to buffet him, and had to stand against doubts and scars insinuated by the old serpent, even as you must stand. If you could have examined the celestial victors one by one as they entered within the pearly you would have found them all covered with scars: though now they bear neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, they had all of them in the day of their flesh to feel the cruel tooth and fang of that

infernal serpent; not one of them traversed a clear course and took his throne unchallenged; neither will you conquer without conflict. For you also if there be no cross there will be no crown; therefore, be not astonished if you are attacked in all ways.

The glorified, in addition to having been attacked, were led to resist the evil one, for nobody overcomes an antagonist without fighting with him. There must be, in order to a real battle, two sides of the question, but I fear sure there are some professors who know much about being tempted, but they do not know much about resisting. Now, brethren, however great our temptation, our resistance must be greater. To be tempted is common, even to the worst and most reprobate of men, but to resist temptation is the mark of the child of God. The verse I quoted just now says,

"They wrestled hard, as we do now  
With sins and doubts and fears."

It is not merely that they had "sins and doubts and fears," these all may have, but they "wrestled hard" with them, they would not be put down by them, they would not yield an inch, they stood upon their guard until they drove the sword of the Spirit through the very heart of the foe. "They resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Rest assured, dear friends, that sin will never be conquered without resistance, and if we fold our arms and suppose that we shall get the victory by believing that we have got it, we shall be mightily mistaken. We must watch, and pray, and strive and agonise, and press forward; "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Salvation is not by works, but conquest over sin involves fighting from day to day; victory will not come to us while we lie passive, but we must be stirred up with all the energy of the eternal Spirit to vanquish evil. These Canaanites must be driven out of the land by force of arms ere we can take full possession of our inheritance. Let this, then, be our piety to our great Joshua as we gird on our harness and unsheathe our swords.

"Almighty King of saints,  
These tyrant lusts subdue;  
Drive the old dragon from his throne,



And all his hellish crew."

We find that these warriors all overcame, for heaven is not for those who fight merely, but for those who overcome. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "I do fight against my sin," says one. Brother, do you overcome it? Did it seem a hard question just now when I said, do you resist? It is a harder question which I now put, "Do you overcome?" For if sin overcomes you; if as an habitual matter of fact sin is your master, then you have yet to know what true religion is, for of the saints it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." There is a groaning and a crying which is common to the saints. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is not an experience of an hour, never to be repeated; it runs more or less throughout the whole of life; but then remember that it is also attended with hopeful confidence in the power of divine grace, for the apostle goes on to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The believer feels the battle, but he also rejoices in the victory. He wrestles and conquers at the same time. I wish that some of lay brethren could see how possible this is. We are victorious, though not without a conflict. Our victory is gained, and we are noose shall conquerors, but still we march on to new conflicts, and never lay aside our swords. The Christian's position is very like that of Napoleon, who used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me;" and so with you, Christian; you have conquered through Jesus Christ, but you have to conquer still, and go on as he did, "conquering and to conquer." All this by the power of the Holy Ghost. What if to-day I have been enabled by grace to overcome some one besetting sin, before an hour is over I may find another sin stirring within my bosom, and I must not yield to it; I am bound to conquer each temptation as it assails me. If I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb I am a Christian, but not else, for if any sin permanently overcomes me I can't enter heaven. If I overcome one sin by the power of the Holy Ghost I must still be looking out to wrestle with others, for between here and heaven I may never accept a truce, or hope for a cessation of hostilities. Never may the Christian take off his harness, never say to himself, "The battle is fought, and the victory is won, and I have nothing more to do." You are enlisted, brother, in a lifelong fight: when you shall lie down in your grave then

may it be said, "The battle is over," but as long as you are here you will be within gunshot of the enemy, and it is just possible your sharpest conflict will be upon your dying bed, even as John Knox, after conquering the devil in all ways and shapes, waged as he lay a-dying the sternest struggle of his entire life. Even thus it may be with you, but you are bound to overcome. Attack, resistance, and victory must be yours.

So, then, in heaven they all rejoice because they have overcome, for the next verse to our text puts it, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is a theme for gladness in heaven that they did fight and resist and overcome. Those white robes mean victories, so do those palms; but there could not have been victories if there had never been conflicts. There is joy among the angels, for they had their conflict when they stood firm against temptation, and did not swerve when the dragon's tail swept away a third part of the stars of heaven: but ours will be a victory peculiarly sweet, a song especially melodious, because our battle has been peculiarly severe. We fell, we rose again, we were kept, upheld, sustained, and enabled to overcome at last, and therefore will we rejoice for ever before the throne of God.

I leave this point, but I would like you to make the personal application—Are you resisting? are you conquering? Does the life of God in you get the upper hand of sin? Do not let us deceive ourselves. If sin is our master we shall perish; grace must reign in us, or we are in a wretched condition. Do not let us look upon victory over sin as a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher-life—it is a condition into which we must all enter, or we are not saved. Holiness is not a luxury for the few, it is a necessity for all saints; and what is preached as an accomplishment which may be obtained by a second conversion is in truth a necessary part of the first conversion, if it be of the Lord. The slaves of sin are not the children of God. If sin reigns in your mortal bodies, you are dead in it. If Satan has dominion over you, you are not in Christ Jesus, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Wherever grace lives it either reigns or fights for the throne; it enters the soul on purpose to war with evil and overthrow it. Where the ark of the Lord is Dagon must fall upon his face and be broken. "He that sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him," says the apostle John, and he saith truly. "That which is born of God

overcometh the world," and if you let the world get the mastery you cannot be born of God. Thus I leave the point, hoeing that we may endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and receive a crown of life at the last.

II. Now, secondly, THE VICTORS ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME WEAPONS. They had two weapons, and these two were one, the blood and the word. "They overcame him through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." First, the blood of the Lamb: it was theirs. The blood of the Lamb will not help us until it becomes our own. They went to Jesus by faith and received the atonement, the cleansing blood was sprinkled on them, it spoke peace in their consciences, it took away their sin, they were washed in it, they were made white as the driven snow. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." They were afar off, and "They were made nigh by the blood of Christ"; this blood continued to give them access to God, for it gave them boldness to draw near unto the throne of grace. In fact, this blood was so theirs, that it was the life of their spirit; it was a generous wine to them, and became the highest joy of their souls. Brethren, if you and I are ever to be amongst these victors, the blood must be our own, appropriated by faith. How is it with you this morning? Has the blood cleansed thee, my brother? Does the blood dwell in thee as thy life? Has the blood of the Lamb given thee fellowship with God and brought thee near? If so, thou art on the way to overcoming by the blood.

The blood of the Lamb, according to the verse which precedes the text, had given them all they needed, for it gave them salvation. They were saved, completely saved. Jesus Christ, when they laid hold upon him and felt the power of his blood, redeemed them from all iniquity, and translated them from the kingdom of Satan. Then they received strength: note that word. They had been dead, but they obtained life; they had been weak, and they were made strong in the Lord, for he who knows the power of the blood of Jesus is made strong to do great exploits. Then they obtained the kingdom, for the kingdom comes to us by the way of the conquering blood of Jesus, and he hath made us kings and priests unto God because he was slain. We are told, also, that they had power, or authority. Our Lord, who has risen from the dead, clothed all his disciples

with authority when he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them." Beloved, if we have participated in the blood of Jesus Christ, I hope we feel it to be all these four things to us—salvation from sin, strength out of weakness, a kingdom in fellowship with Christ, and authority to speak in his name. It is the blood of the covenant, and it secures all the covenant gifts of God to us. It is the life of our life, the all in all of all that we possess. So, then, they had the blood of the Lamb, and they possessed the privileges which the blood brings with it.

But the gist of the text lies in the fact that they fought with the dragon by means of the blood of the Lamb, and overcame with it. How did they do that? It is easy to discover. They overcame Satan's terrors with the blood of atonement. Satan is the great red dragon, a hideous seven-headed python, horrible to look upon, horned, like the serpent called the Egyptian Cerastes. Man dreads the serpent race, and would dread most a monster so dire as this, so full of poison, so red with fury. The conflict appears to be unequal enough between this horrid monstrosity and the seed of a timid woman. Yet when we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus we are invulnerable, and fear not the dragon, for we remember the promise which saith, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder." When the atonement brings peace to our hearts, the great dragon dwindles down to a mere snake with a broken head, of which it is written, "Upon thy belly thou shalt go and dust shalt thou eat." We can see the heel mark of Christ upon his broken head, and what is more we expect to set our own heel there, for we are told that the Lord will bruise Satan under our foot shortly. I reckon upon the tune when the Lord will bruise him under my foot, it shall be as heavy a bruise as I can give him, I warrant you. He has tempted and tried us all so much, that the victory we shall gain will be one which will bring to Jesus much renown, and we will not fail to sing his praises as long as we have any being. Thus our fear of Satan ceases when we see that Christ has redeemed us from the curse, and put Satan as an enemy under our feet. Our hearts exult in thy presence, O destroyer of the devil and his works, and we triumph in thee.

"When we behold death, hell, and sin,  
Vanquish'd by that dear blood of thine,

And see the man that groaned and died  
Sit glorious by his Father's side."

By the blood of the Lamb we overcome Satan as the accuser of the brethren. The chapter expressly tells us that he accuses the brethren day and night; and there is an instructive tradition among the Jews that Satan accuses the elect of God all day and all night long, except on the day of atonement, and then he is quiet. Glory be to the dying Lamb, the atonement shuts the mouth of the lion continually, for the atonement lasts all the year round. Neither in the court of Heaven, nor in the court of conscience, can the enemy's accusations harm us, for the blood of our Substitute is a bar to all suits against us. If we by faith are assured that Jesus has put away our sin, what cause have we for alarm? If the punishment due to our sin, and the sin itself have both been carried away by our great Surety, so that sin is plunged into the depths of the sea, and cast behind God's back, then who is he that shall harm us? Brethren, do but grasp the doctrine of the atonement, and know your own interest in it, and the accuser of the brethren will be silenced by the voice of the blood.

We overcome Satan by the same means as to his craft. He has seven heads, but we tell him Jesus died, and that breaks all the seven heads, and destroys the sevenfold ingenuity of his snares. He would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, but the secret of the sprinkled blood is that which prevents the elect from ever being deluded by him. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Does not redemption by blood hold them fast to their Redeemer? You cannot be right anywhere if you are wrong upon the atonement, but if you are sound upon the substitutionary sacrifice there is little fear of your falling into any serious error. As the needle once magnetized continues to seek the pole, so they who are once touched with the love of their dying Surety are sure to remember it and cannot long be turned in any other direction. As for the dragon's horns of power; the power of the blood is far greater. Since we have been redeemed by Christ from under the power of Satan he cannot regain his hold of us. His power is broken. As to the crowns which he wears, what care we for them? We are delivered from under his power by being redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and Satan can never again

have the rule over us. As for the energetic influence which is figured by his tail, he may quench the very stars of heaven, and pull down the most brilliant professors and make them fall to the earth as apostates, but he cannot harm us, for because of the blood of Jesus we are latest by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Cling to the cross, dear brethren, for there you are out of the reach of the old serpent's venom; he may hiss, but he can do no more. No wave can ever wash a poor sinner off from the rock of ages, no storm can drive a penitent out of the clefts of the rock. Within the wounds of Jesus we are secure from all the rage of Satan. In our battles with Satan we need no other artillery but the atoning blood, it meets and conquers him at all points.

The other weapon is for use in spreading the gospel and defeating the devil in his power over our fellow-men. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. Now, brethren, what is the testimony of the saints? It is a testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb. If ever we are to conquer Satan in the world, we must preach the atoning blood. Whenever the doctrine of the atonement has been obscured in the church in any measure, to that extent the power of the church has declined, but you shall find that whether there is a clear declaration of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, then the church comes forth in her glory, and bruises the dragon's head. Dear brethren, if you want to deliver souls from the power of Satan, you must preach the sacrifice of Jesus and its power to remove sin. Does Satan cast about men the chains of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or self-righteousness, preach the blood of Jesus is the only way of salvation, let them see how sin was punished in him, and how ready the Lord is to forgive them, and they will arise and go unto their Father. Tell the sinner that God is able to put away his sin, because Jesus died, and, touched with repentance, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you will find the sinner break loose from the dominion of the devil. If you find that same sinner trembling with despair, accused in his conscience, alarmed as at a great red dragon, you may cheer him by the old, old story of redeeming grace and dying love. The blood of Jesus is the dentin of despair. There is no weapon like a testimony to the cleansing blood with which to kill despondency. Tell the sinner that there is no sin that man has done but what the blood can put it away; go to the very gates of hell with your testimony for remission by

blood, and you will find some to welcome you upon the borders of destruction. Tell the thieves in prison and the criminals condemned to die, and the reprobates upon their death-beds, that there is still life in a look at the Crucified One, and if you do this you will deliver them from the hardness of heart which saith, "there is no hope." If Satan deceives sinners with false hopes, and causes them to trust in priestcraft and sacramentarianism, there is no way to overcome Satan in them but by the porch of the blood of Jesus. I do believe, brethren, that if the atonement of Christ had been properly preached in the churches of England some years ago, we should not now be pestered with this revived popery; but there has been a great deal of mystification upon the doctrine of satisfaction for sin, a great deal of keeping back of the grand doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, and therefore as men want a Savior and a sacrifice, if you do not present them the true one they will go off to find a false one, and they do find such a false one in the priestcraft of the Roman and Anglican churches. Keep up the preaching of the one finished sacrifice and the dragon must fly. As St. Patrick is said to have driven out all the venomous creatures from Ireland, so let Jesus Christ come, and all the serpent's seed fly before him—they cannot bear the great truth of the atoning death of the Son of God. Lift up the cross, young man, when you stand in the corners of the streets; whatever you do not know, know the doctrine of the atonement; whatever you cannot tell the people, tell them about Jesus Christ, who hung upon the tree for sinners, and make him the main theme of all your conversation. If you write tracts, if you cannot explain the apocalypse, and few of us can, do explain Calvary, dwell much upon Golgotha and Gethsemane, "for I, if I be lifted up," saith Christ, "will draw all men unto me." Keep to the cross, this is the main attraction; this is the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations: this is the central sun of the gospel, and its light will scatter the darkness, but nothing else will do it. Israel never came out of Egypt until the blood of the Lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses: they overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The world of sinners redeemed will never be converted till we bring forth that grandest of all miracles, the Paschal Lamb and the blood by faith sprinkled on the door. Let us evermore proclaim salvation by the dying Lamb, and shake the power of Satan to its foundations.

III. I must close with this last remark, that while they all fought with the same weapons **THEY ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME SPIRIT**; for the text says, "they loved not their lives unto the death." My brethren, what does this mean? I wish we could reach to it and interpret it by our lives.

The expression indicates dauntless courage. They were never afraid of the doctrine of a bleeding Savior, nor ashamed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Let us never be ashamed of our hope. There is such a straining in these days after learned preaching, such love of word-spinning and theory-inventing; but let us be fools for Christ's sake, and stick to the old gospel, having no banner for our war but the brazen serpent, lifted high, even Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Let us never yield to sneers or ridicule. Some of us have been styled the echo of the Puritans: yes, the honorable title of "Ultimus Puritanorum," the last of the Puritans, has been assigned to us. It is well, we want no higher degree, for the old theology is very dear to us. We nail our colors to the mast. The atoning blood is the very life, soul, and core of our ministry, and shall be so long as we live.

These men in addition to dauntless courage had unswerving fidelity. They "loved not their lives unto the death." They thought it better to die than to deny the faith. They could not be tempted, or led aside, by bribes and offers of emoluments, and when life itself was put into the scale they did not hesitate, they stuck by the cross. Brethren, I want you all to do this, to have the courage to avow your convictions about Christ, and then the fidelity to stand forth in evil times.

More than that, they were perfect in their consecration. "They loved not their lives unto the death." They gave themselves up, body, soul, and spirit, to the cause of which the precious blood is the symbol, and that consecration led them to perfect self-sacrifice. No Christian of the true type counts anything to be his own. He who really knows the power of the blood of Jesus says, "I am not my own I am bought with a price"; and to him to live or die, to be poor or rich, to be sick or in health, to be in honor or in shame, is not a matter of choice—he is his master's own, and has given himself up unreservedly, loving not his life even to the death. I trow that this is the spirit in which to preach Christ's gospel. Brethren, we shall never see the gospel come to the front so as to conquer the dragon till we



bring it there in this spirit. When God shall raise up among us men and women who live only to prove the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, and live for nothing else; who tell out the Saviours name, and show in their lives what that blood has done for them, and are ready to die to glorify their Lord, then will come the times in which the song of victory shall be heard, then shall the travailing woman have her reward, and then shall the dragon be covered with everlasting shame! May God bless you this morning by giving you to know the power of the blood for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **How To Become Fishers Of Men**

And Jesus saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. - Matthew 4:19

When Christ calls us by his grace we ought not only to remember what we are, but we ought also to think of what he can make us. It is, "Follow me, and I will make you." We should repent of what we have been, but rejoice in what we may be. It is not "Follow me, because of what you are already." It is not "Follow me, because you may make something of yourselves;" but, "Follow me, because of what I will make you." Verily, I might say of each one of us as soon as we are converted, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into apostles; that men so handy with the net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and in instructing converts. One would have said, "How can these things be? You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee." That is exactly what Christ did; and when we are brought low in the sight of God by a sense of our own unworthiness, we may feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what he can make us. What said the woman of a sorrowful spirit when she lifted

up her song? "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." We cannot tell what God may make of us in the new creation, since it would have been quite impossible to have foretold what he made of chaos in the old creation. Who could have imagined all the beautiful things that came forth from darkness and disorder by that one fiat, "Let there be light?" And who can tell what lovely displays of everything that is divinely fair I lay yet appear in a man's formerly dark life, when God's grace has said to him, "Let there be light?" O you who see in yourselves at present nothing that is desirable, come you and follow Christ for the sake of what he can make out of you. Do you not hear his sweet voice calling to you, and saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"

Note, next, that we are not made all that we shall be, nor all that we ought to desire to be, when we are ourselves fished for and caught. This is what the grace of God does for us at first; but it is not all. We are like the fishes, making sin to be our element; and the good Lord comes, and with the gospel net he takes us, and he delivers us from the life and love of sin. But he has not wrought for us all that he can do, nor all that we should wish him to do, when he has done this; for it is another and a higher miracle to make us who were fish to become fishers—to make the saved ones saviours—to make the convert into a converter—the receiver of the gospel into an imparter of that same gospel to other people. I think I may say to every person whom I am addressing—If you are saved yourself, the work is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ. You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced in some feeble way to tell to others of the grace of God: and I trust that you will find no rest to the sole of your foot till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Savior who is your confidence and your hope. His word is—Follow me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified; but, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Be following Christ with that intent and aim; and fear that you are not perfectly following him unless in some degree he is making use of you to be fishers of men. The fact is, that every one of us must take to the business of a mancatcher. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others. If we have been apprehended of him, we must be his

constables, to apprehend rebels for him. Let us ask him to give us grace to go a-fishing, and so to cast our nets that we may take a great multitude of fishes. Oh that the Holy Ghost may raise up from among us some master-fishers, who shall sail their boats in many a sea, and surround great shoals of fish!

My teaching at this time will be very simple, but I hope it will be eminently practical; for my longing is that not one of you that love the Lord may be backward in his service. What says the Song of Solomon concerning certain sheep that come up from the washing? It says, "Every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them." May that be so with all the members of this church, and all the Christian people that hear or read this sermon! The fact is, the day is very dark. The heavens are lowering with heavy thunder-clouds. Men little dream of what tempests may soon shake this city, and the whole social fabric of this land, even to a general breaking up of society. So dark may the night become that the stars may seem to fall like blighted fruit from the tree. The times are evil. Now, if never before, every glow-worm must show its spark. You with the tiniest farthing candle must take it from under the bushel, and set it on a candlestick. There is need of you all. Lot was a poor creature. He was a very, very wretched kind of believer; but still, he might have been a great blessing to Sodom had he but pleaded for it as he should have done. And poor, poor Christians, as I fear many are, one begins to value every truly converted soul in these evil days, and to pray that each one may glorify the Lord. I pray that every righteous man, vexed as he is with the conversation of the wicked, may be more importunate in prayer than he has ever been, and return unto his God, and get more spiritual life, that he may be a blessing to the perishing people around him. I address you, therefore, at this time first of all upon this thought. Oh that the Spirit of God may make each one of you feel his personal responsibility!

Here is for believers in Christ, in order to their usefulness, something for them to do. "Follow me." But, secondly, here is something to be done by their great Lord and Master: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." You will not grow into fishers of yourselves, but this is what Jesus will do for you if you will but follow him. And then, lastly, here is a good illustration, used according to our great Master's wont; for scarcely

without a parable did he speak unto the people. He presents us with an illustration of what Christian men should be—fishers of men. We may get some useful hints out of it, and I pray the Holy Spirit to bless them to us.

I. First, then, I will take it for granted that every believer here wants to be useful. If he does not, I take leave to question whether he can be a true believer in Christ. Well, then, if you want to be really useful, here is **SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO TO THAT END**: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

What is the way to become an efficient preacher? "Young man," says one, "go to college." "Young man," says Christ, "follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men." How is a person to be useful? "Attend a training-class," says one. Quite right; but there is a surer answer than that—Follow Jesus, and he will make you fishers of men. The great training-school for Christian workers has Christ at its head; and he is at its head, not only as a tutor, but as a leader: we are not only to learn of him in study, but to follow him in action. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The direction is very distinct and plain, and I believe that it is exclusive, so that no man can become a fisherman by any other process. This process may appear to be very simple; but assuredly it is most efficient. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all about fishing for men, was himself the Dictator of the rule, "Follow me, if you want to be fishers of men. If you would be useful, keep in my track."

I understand this, first, in this sense: be separate unto Christ. These men were to leave their pursuits; they were to leave their companions; they were, in fact, to quit the world, that their one business might be, in their Master's name, to be fishers of men. We are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God's name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man; and, what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world. If you are of the world, no doubt the world will

love its own; but you cannot save the world. If you are dark, and belong to the kingdom of darkness, you cannot remove the darkness. If you march with the armies of the wicked one, you cannot defeat them. I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church. Nowadays we hear Nonconformists pleading that they may do this and they may do that—things which their Puritan forefathers would rather have died at the stake than have tolerated. They plead that they may live like worldlings, and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty, is, "Do it if you dare. It may not do you much hurt, for you are so bad already. Your cravings show how rotten your hearts are. If you have a hungering after such dog's meat, go, dogs, and eat the garbage. Worldly amusements are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God's children you would loathe the very thought of the world's evil joys, and your question would not be, 'How far may we be like the world?' but your one cry would be, 'How far can we get away from the world? How much can we come out from it?'" Your temptation would be rather to become sternly severe, and ultra-Puritanical in your separation from sin, in such a time as this, than to ask, "How can I make myself like other men, and act as they do?" Brethren, the use of the church in the world is that it should be like salt in the midst of putrefaction; but if the salt has lost its savor, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt itself to putrefy, it could but be an increase and a heightening of the general putridity. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood; for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, resolving like one of old that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

Come, ye children of God, you must stand out with your Lord outside the camp. Jesus calls to you to-day, and says, "Follow me." Was Jesus found at the theater? Did he frequent the sports of the racecourse? Was Jesus seen, think you, in any of the amusements of the Herodian court? Not he. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In one sense no one mixed with sinners so completely as he did when, like a

physician, he went among them healing his patients; but in another sense there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Savior which he never essayed to cross, and which they could not cross to defile him. The first lesson which the church has to learn is this: Follow Jesus into the separated state, and he will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.

A second meaning of our text is very obviously this: abide with Christ, and then you will be made fishers of men. These disciples whom Christ called were to come and live with him. They were every day to be associated with him. They were to hear him teach publicly the everlasting gospel, and in addition they were to receive choice explanations in private of the word which he had spoken. They were to be his body-servants and his familiar friends. They were to see his miracles and hear his prayers; and, better still, they were to be with himself, and become one with him in his holy labor. It was given to them to sit at the table with him, and even to have their feet washed by him. Many of them fulfilled that word, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell:" they were with him in his afflictions and persecutions. They witnessed his secret agonies; they saw his many tears; they marked the passion and the compassion of his soul, and thus, after their measure, they caught his spirit, and so they learned to be fishers of men.

At Jesus' feet we must learn the art and mystery of soul-winning to live with Christ is the best education for usefulness. It is a great boon to any man to be associated with a Christian minister whose heart is on fire. The best training for a young man is that which the Vaudois pastors were wont to give, when each old man had a young man with him who walked with him whenever he went up the mountainside to preach, and lived in the house with him, and marked his prayers and saw his daily piety. This was a fine instruction. Was it not? But it will not compare with that of the apostles who lived with Jesus himself, and were his daily companions. Matchless was the training of the twelve. No wonder that they became what they were with such a heavenly tutor to saturate them with his own spirit! And now to-day his bodily presence is not among us; but his spiritual power is perhaps more fully known to us than it was to those

apostles in those two or three years of the Lord's corporeal presence. There be some of us to whom he is intimately near. We know more about him than we do about our dearest earthly friend. We have never been able quite to read our friend's heart in all its twistings and windings, but we know the heart of the Well Beloved. We have leaned our head upon his bosom, and have enjoyed fellowship with him such as we could not have with any of our own kith and kin. This is the surest method of learning how to do good. Live with Jesus, follow Jesus, and he will make you fishers of men. See how he does the work, and so learn how to do it yourself. A Christian man should be bound apprentice to Jesus to learn the trade of a Savior. We can never save men by offering a redemption, for we have none to present; but we can learn how to save men by warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and setting before them the one great effectual remedy. See how Jesus saves, and you will learn how the thing is done: there is no learning it anyhow else. Live in fellowship with Christ, and there shall be about you an air and a manner as of one who has been made in heart and mind apt to teach, and wise to win souls.

A third meaning, however, must be given to this "Follow me," and it is this: "Obey me, and then you shall know what to do to save men." We must not talk about our fellowship with Christ, or our being separated from the world unto him, unless we make him our Master and Lord in everything. Some public teachers are not true at all points to their convictions, and how can they look for a blessing? A Christian man anxious to be useful, ought to be very particular as to every point of obedience to his Master. I have no doubt whatever that God blesses our churches even when they are very faulty, for his mercy endureth for ever. When there is a measure of error in the teaching, and a measure of mistake in the practice, he may still vouchsafe to use the ministry, for he is very gracious. But a large measure of blessing must necessarily be withheld from all teaching which is knowingly or glaringly faulty. God can set his seal upon the truth that is in it, but he cannot set his seal upon the error that is in it. Out of mistakes about Christian ordinances and other things, especially errors in heart and spirit, there may come evils which we never looked for. Such evils may even now be telling upon the present age, and may work worse mischief upon future generations. If we desire as fishers of men to be largely used of God we must copy our Lord Jesus

in everything, and obey him in every point. Failure in obedience may lead to failure in success. Each one of us, if he would wish to see his child saved, or his Sunday-school class blessed, or his congregation converted, must take care that, bearing the vessels of the Lord, he is himself clean. Anything we do that grieves the Spirit of God must take away from us some part of our power for good. The Lord is very gracious and pitiful; but yet he is a jealous God. He is sometimes sternly jealous towards his people who are living in neglects of known duty, or in associations which are not clean in his sight. He will wither their work, weaken their strength, and humble them until at last they say, "My Lord, I will take thy way after all. I will do what thou biddest me to do, for else thou wilt not accept me." The Lord said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and he promised them that signs should follow, and so they did follow them, and so they will. But we must get back to apostolic practice and to apostolic teaching: we must lay aside the commandments of men and the whimseys of our own brains, and we must do what Christ tells us, as Christ tells us, and because Christ tells us. Definitely and distinctly, we must take the place of servants; and if we will not do that, we cannot expect our Lord to work with us and by us. Let us be determined that, as true as the needle is to the pole, so true will we be, as far as our light goes, to the command of our Lord and Master. Jesus says—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." By this teaching he seems to say—"Go beyond me, or fall back behind me, and you may cast the net; but it shall be night with you, and that night you shall take nothing. When you shall do as I bid you, you shall cast your net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find."

Again, I think that there is a great lesson in my text to those who preach their own thoughts instead of preaching the thoughts of Christ. These disciples were to follow Christ that they might listen to him, hear what he had to say, drink in his teaching, and then go and teach what he had taught them. Their Lord says, "What I tell you in darkness, speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." If they will be faithful reporters of Christ's message, he will make them "fishers of men." But you know the boastful method nowadays is this: "I am not going to preach this old, old gospel, this musty Puritan doctrine. I



will sit down in my study, and burn the midnight oil, and invent a new theory; then I will come out with my brand-new thought, and blaze away with it." Many are not following Christ, but following themselves, and of them the Lord may well say, "Thou shalt see whose word shall stand, mine or theirs." Others are wickedly prudent, and judge that certain truths which are evidently God's word had better be kept back. You must not be rough, but must prophesy smooth things. To talk about the punishment of sin, to speak of eternal punishment, why, these are unfashionable doctrines. It may be that they are taught in the Word of God, but they do not suit the genius of the age. We must pare them down. Brothers in Christ, I will have no share in this. Will you? O my soul, come not thou into their secret! Certain things not taught in the Bible our enlightened age has discovered. Evolution may be clean contrary to the teaching of Genesis, but that does not matter. We are not going to be believers of Scripture, but original thinkers. This is the vain-glorious ambition of the period. Mark you, in proportion as the modern theology is preached the vice of this generation increases. To a great degree I attribute the looseness of the age to the laxity of the doctrine preached by its teachers. From the pulpit they have taught the people that sin is a trifle. From the pulpit these traitors to God and to his Christ have taught the people that there is no hell to be feared. A little, little hell, perhaps, there may be; but just punishment for sin is made nothing of. The precious atoning sacrifice of Christ has been derided and misrepresented by those who were pledged to preach it. They have given the people the name of the gospel, but the gospel itself has evaporated in their hands. From hundreds of pulpits the gospel is as clean gone as the dodo from its old haunts; and still the preachers take the position and name of Christ's ministers. Well, and what comes of it? Why, their congregations grow thinner and thinner; and so it must be. Jesus says, "Follow me, I will make you fishers of men;" but if you go in your own way, with your own net, you will make nothing of it, and the Lord promises you no help in it. The Lord's directions make himself our leader and example. It is, "Follow me, follow me. Preach my gospel. Preach what I preached. Teach what I taught, and keep to that." With that blessed servility which becomes one whose ambition it is to be a copyist, and never to be an original, copy Christ even in jots and tittles. Do this, and he will make you fishers of men; but if you do not do this, you shall fish in vain.

I close this head of discourse by saying that we shall not be fishers of men unless we follow Christ in one other respect; and that is, by endeavoring, in all points, to imitate his holiness. Holiness is the most real power that can be possessed by men or women. We may preach orthodoxy, but we must also live orthodoxy. God forbid that we should preach anything else; but it will be all in vain, unless there is a life at the back of the testimony. An unholy preacher may even render truth contemptible. In proportion as any of us draw back from a living and zealous sanctification we shall draw back from the place of power. Our power lies in this word, "Follow me." Be Jesus-like. In all things endeavor to think, and speak, and act as Jesus did, and he will make you fishers of men. This will require self-denial. We must daily take up the cross. This may require willingness to give up our reputation—readiness to be thought fools, idiots, and the like, as men are apt to call those who are keeping close to their Master. There must be the cheerful resigning of everything that looks like honor and personal glory, in order that we may be wholly Christ's, and glorify his name. We must live his life and be ready to die his death, if need be. O brothers, sisters, if we do this and follow Jesus, putting our feet into the footprints of his pierced feet, he will make us fishers of men. If it should so please him that we should even die without having gathered many souls to the cross, we shall speak from our graves. In some way or other the Lord will make a holy life to be an influential life. It is not possible that a life which can be described as a following of Christ should be an unsuccessful one in the sight of the Most High. "Follow me," and there is an "I will" such as God can never draw back from: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Thus much on the first point. There is something for us to do: we are graciously called to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, lead us to do it.

II. But secondly, and briefly, there is SOMETHING FOR THE LORD TO DO. When his dear servants are following him, he says, "I will make you fishers of men;" and be it never forgotten that it is he that makes us follow him; so that if the following of him be the step to being made a fisher of men, yet this he gives us. 'Tis all of his Spirit. I have talked about catching his spirit, and abiding in him, and obeying him, and hearkening

to him, and copying him; but none of these things are we capable of apart from his working them all in us. "From me is thy fruit found," is a text which we must not for a moment forget. So, then, if we do follow him, it is he that makes us follow him; and so he makes us fishers of men.

But, further, if we follow Christ he will make us fishers of men by all our experience. I am sure that the man who is really consecrated to bless others will be helped in this by all that he feels, especially by his afflictions. I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the borders of despair, and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone; but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to brethren and sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency. So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ. Keep close to your Lord and he will make every step a blessing to you. If God in providence should make you rich, he will fit you to speak to those ignorant and wicked rich who so much abound in this city, and so often are the cause of its worst sin. And if the Lord is pleased to let you be very poor you can go down and talk to those wicked and ignorant poor people who so often are the cause of sin in this city, and so greatly need the gospel. The winds of providence will waft you where you can fish for men. The wheels of providence are full of eyes, and all those eyes will look this way to help us to be winners of souls. You will often be surprised to find how God has been in a house that you visit: before you get there, his hand has been at work in its chambers. When you wish to speak to some particular individual, God's providence has been dealing with that individual to make him ready for just that word which you could say, but which nobody else but you could say. Oh, be you following Christ, and you will find that he will, by every experience through which you are passing, make you fishers of men.

Further than that, if you will follow him he will make you fishers of men by distinct monitions in your own heart. There are many monitions from God's Spirit which are not noticed by Christians when they are in a callous condition; but when the heart is right with God and living in

communion with God, we feel a sacred sensitiveness, so that we do not need the Lord to shout, but his faintest whisper is heard. Nay, he need not even whisper. "Thou shalt guide me with thine eye." Oh, how many mulish Christians there are who must be held in with kit and bridle, and receive a cut of the whip every now and then! But the Christian who follows his Lord shall be tenderly guided. I do not say that the Spirit of God will say to you, "Go and join yourself unto this chariot," or that you will hear a word in your ear; but yet in your soul, as distinctly as the Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," you shall hear the Lord's will. As soon as you see an individual, the thought shall cross your mind, "Go and speak to that person." Every opportunity of usefulness shall be a call to you. If you are ready, the door shall open before you, and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it." If you have the grace to run in the right way you shall never be long without an intimation as to what the right way is. That right way shall lead you to river or sea, where you can cast your net, and be a fisher of men.

Then, too, I believe that the Lord meant by this that he would give his followers the Holy Ghost. They were to follow him, and then, when they had seen him ascend into the holy place of the Most High, they were to tarry at Jerusalem for a little while, and the Spirit would come upon them and clothe them with a mysterious power. This word was spoken to Peter and Andrew; and you know how it was fulfilled to Peter. What a host of fish he brought to land the first time he cast the net in the power of the Holy Ghost! "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Brethren, we have no conception of what God could do by this company of believers gathered in the Tabernacle to-night. If now we were to be filled with the Holy Ghost there are enough of us to evangelize London. There are enough here to be the means of the salvation of the world. God saveth not by many nor by few. Let us seek a benediction; and if we seek it let us hear this directing voice, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." You men and women that sit before me, you are by the shore of a great sea of human life swarming with the souls of men. You live in the midst of millions; but if you will follow Jesus, and be faithful to him, and true to him, and do what he bids you, he will make you fishers of men. Do

not say, "Who shall save this city?" The weakest shall be strong enough. Gideon's barley cake shall smite the tent, and make it lay along. Samson, with the jawbone, taken up from the earth where it was lying bleaching in the sun, shall smite the Philistines. Fear not, neither be dismayed. Let your responsibilities drive you closer to your Master. Let horror of prevailing sin make you look into his dear face who long ago wept over Jerusalem, and now weeps over London. Clasp him, and never let go your hold. By the strong and mighty impulses of the divine life within you, quickened and brought to maturity by the Spirit of God, learn this lesson from your Lord's own mouth: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." You are not fit for it, but he will make you fit. You cannot do it of yourselves, but he will make you do it. You do not know how to spread nets and draw shoals of fish to shore, but he will teach you. Only follow him, and he will make you fishers of men.

I wish that I could somehow say this as with a voice of thunder, that the whole church of God might hear it. I wish I could write it in stars athwart the sky, "Jesus saith, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you forget the precept, the promise shall never be yours. If you follow some other track, or imitate some other leader, you shall fish in vain. God grant us to believe fully that Jesus can do great things in us, and then do great things by us for the good of our fellows!

III. The last point you might work out in full for yourselves in your private meditations with much profit. We have here A FIGURE FULL OF INSTRUCTION. I will give you but two or three thoughts which you can use. "I will make you fishers of men." You have been fishers of fish: if you follow me, I will make you fishers of men.

A fisher is a person who is very dependent, and needs to be trustful. He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and cast in the net, as it were, at a peradventure. Fishing is an act of faith. I have often seen in the Mediterranean men go with their boats and enclose acres of sea with vast nets; and yet, when they have drawn the net to shore, they have not had as much result as I could put in my hand. A few wretched silvery nothings have made up the whole take. Yet they have gone again and cast the great net several times a day, hopefully expecting something to come

of it. Nobody is so dependent upon God as the minister of God. Oh, this fishing from the Tabernacle pulpit! What a work of faith! I cannot tell that a soul will be brought to God by it. I cannot judge whether my sermon will be suitable to the persons who are here, except that I do believe that God will guide me in the casting of the net. I expect him to work salvation, and I depend upon him for it. I love this complete dependence, and if I could be offered a certain amount of preaching power, by which I could save sinners, which should be entirely at my own disposal, I would beg the Lord not to let me have it, for it is far more delightful to be entirely dependent upon him at all times. It is good to be a fool when Christ is made unto you wisdom. It is a blessed thing to be weak if Christ becomes more fully your strength. Go to work, you who would be fishers of men, and yet feel your insufficiency. You that have no strength, attempt this divine work. Your Master's strength will be seen when your own has all gone. A fisherman is a dependent person, he must look up for success every time he puts the net down; but still he is a trustful person, and therefore he casts in the net joyfully.

A fisherman who gets his living by it is a diligent and persevering man. The fishers are up at dawn. At day-break our fishermen off the Doggerbank are fishing, and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard-working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that."

The fisherman in his own craft is intelligent and watchful. It looks very easy, I dare say, to be a fisherman, but you would find that it was no child's play if you were to take a real part in it. There is an art in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman is to prevent the fish leaping out of the net! I heard a great noise one night in the sea, as if some huge drum were being beaten by a giant; and I looked out, and I saw that the fishermen of Mentone were beating the water to drive the fish into the net, or to keep them from leaping out when they had once encompassed them with it. Ah, yes! and you and I will often have to be watching the corners of the gospel net lest sinners who are almost caught should make their escape. They are very

crafty, these fish, and they use this craftiness in endeavoring to avoid salvation. We shall have to be always at our business, and to exercise all our wits, and more than our own wits, if we are to be successful fishers of men.

The fisherman is a very laborious person. It is not at all an easy calling. He does not sit in an armchair and catch fish. He has to go out in rough weathers. If he that regardeth the clouds will not sow, I am sure that he that regardeth the clouds will never fish. If we never do any work for Christ except when we feel up to the mark, we shall not do much. If we feel that we will not pray because we cannot pray, we shall never pray, and if we say, "I will not preach to-day because I do not feel that I could preach," we shall never preach any preaching that is worth the preaching. We must be always at it, until we wear ourselves out, throwing our whole soul into the work in all weathers, for Christ's sake.

The fisherman is a daring man. He tempts the boisterous sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him; he has been wet through a thousand times, it is nothing to him. He never expected when he became a deep-sea fisherman that he was going to sleep in the lap of ease. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular; and some Christian people may even judge his utterances to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him; but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, "If the sea roar and the fullness thereof, still at my Master's command I will let down the net."

Now, in the last place, the man whom Christ makes a fisher of men is successful. "But," says one, "I have always heard that Christ's ministers are to be faithful, but that they cannot be sure of being successful." Yes, I have heard that saying, and one way I know it is true, but another way I have my doubts about it. He that is faithful is, in God's way and in God's judgment, successful, more or less. For instance, here is a brother who says that he is faithful. Of course, I must believe him, yet I never heard of a sinner being saved under him. Indeed, I should think that the safest place for a person to be in if he did not want to be saved would be under

this gentleman's ministry, because he does not preach anything that is likely to arouse, impress, or convince anybody. This brother is "faithful:" so he says. Well, if any person in the world said to you, "I am a fisherman, but I have never caught anything," you would wonder how he could be called a fisherman. A farmer who never grew any wheat, or any other crop—is he a farmer? When Jesus Christ says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," he means that you shall really catch men—that you really shall save some; for he that never did get any fish is not a fisherman. He that never saved a sinner after years of work is not a minister of Christ. If the result of his life-work is nil, he made a mistake when he undertook it. Go thou with the fire of God in thy hand and fling it among the stubble, and the stubble will burn. Be thou sure of that. Go thou and scatter the good seed: it may not all fall in fruitful places, but some of it will. Be thou sure of that. Do but shine, and some eye or other will be lightened thereby. Thou must, thou shalt succeed. But remember this is the Lord's word—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Keep close to Jesus, and do as Jesus did, in his spirit, and he will make you fishers of men.

Perhaps I speak to an attentive hearer who is not converted at all. Friend, I have the same thing to say to you. You also may follow Christ, and then he can use you, even you. I do not know but that he has brought you to this place that you may be saved, and that in after years he may make you speak for his name and glory. Remember how he called Saul of Tarsus, and made him the apostle of the Gentiles. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers; and saved sinners make the ablest preachers. Oh, that you would run away from your old master to-night, without giving him a minute's notice; for if you give him any notice, he will hold you. Hasten to Jesus, and say, "Here is a poor runaway slave! My Lord, I bear the fetters still upon my wrists. Wilt thou set me free, and make me thine own?" Remember, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Never runaway slave came to Christ in the middle of the night without his taking him in; and he never gave one up to his old master. If Jesus make you free you shall be free indeed. Flee away to Jesus, then, on a sudden. May his good Spirit help you, and he will by-and-by make you a winner of others to his praise! God bless you. Amen.



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## **How To Keep The Heart**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:7

It is remarkable, that when we find an exhortation given to God's people in one part of the Holy Scripture, we almost invariably find the very thing which they are exhorted to do guaranteed to them, and provided for them, in some other part of the same blessed volume. This morning, my text was, "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Now, this evening we have the promise upon which we must rest, if we desire to fulfill the precept: - "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

This evening we shall use another figure, distinct from the one used in the morning, of the reservoir. We shall use the figure of a fortress, which is to be kept. And the promise saith that it shall be kept - kept by "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, through Christ Jesus."

Inasmuch as the heart is the most important part of man - for out of it are the issues of life - it would be natural to expect that Satan, when he intended to do mischief to manhood, would be sure to make his strongest and most perpetual attacks upon the heart. What we might have guessed in wisdom, is certainly true in experience; for although Satan will tempt and try us in every way, though every gate of the town of Mansoul may be battered, though, against every part of the walls thereof he will be sure to bring out his great guns, yet the place against which he levels his deadliest malice, and his most furious strength, is the heart. Into the heart, already of itself evil enough, he thrusts the seeds of every evil thing, and doth his utmost to make it a den of unclean birds, a garden of poisonous trees, a river flowing with destructive water. Hence, again, arises the second necessity that we should be doubly cautious in keeping

the heart with all diligence; for if, on the one hand, it be the most important, and, on the other hand, Satan, knowing this, makes his most furious and determined attacks against it, then, with double force the exhortation comes, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." And the promise also becomes doubly sweet, from the very fact of the double danger - the promise which says, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord."

We shall notice, first of all, that which keeps the heart and mind. Secondly, we shall note how to obtain it - for we are to understand this promise as connected with certain precepts which come before it. And then, when we have had this, we shall try to show how it is true that the peace of God does keep the mind free from the attacks of Satan, or delivers it from those attacks when they are made.

I. First, then, beloved, the preservation which God in this promise confers upon the saints, is "THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING," to keep us through Jesus Christ. It is called PEACE; and we are to understand this in a double sense. There is a peace of God which exists between the child of God, and God his Judge, a peace which may be truly said to pass all understanding. Jesus Christ has offered so all-sufficient a satisfaction for all the claims of injured justice, that now God hath no fault to find with his children. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, nor iniquity in Israel;" nor is he angry with them on account of their sins - a peace unbroken, and unspeakable being established by the atonement which Christ hath made on their behalf.

Hence flows a peace experienced in the conscience, which is the second part of this peace of God: for, when the conscience sees that God is satisfied, and is no longer at war with it, then it also becomes satisfied with man; and conscience, which was wont to be a great disturber of the peace of the heart, now gives its verdict of acquittal, and the heart sleeps in the arms of conscience, finds a quiet resting-place there. Against the child of God conscience brings no accusation, or if it brings the accusation, it is but a gentle one - a gentle chiding of a loving friend, who hints that we have done amiss; and that we had better change, but doth not afterward thunder in our ears the threat of a penalty. Conscience knows full well that peace is made betwixt the soul and God, and,

therefore, it does not hint that there is anything else but joy and peace to be looked forward to by the believer. Do we understand anything of this double peace? Let us pause here, and ask ourselves a question upon this doctrinal part of the matter - Let us make it an experimental question with our own hearts: - "Come, my soul, art thou at peace with God? Hast thou seen thy pardon signed and sealed with the Redeemer's blood? Come, answer this, my heart; hast thou cast thy sins upon the head of Christ, and hast thou seen them all washed away in the crimson streams of blood? Canst thou feel that now there is a lasting peace between thyself and God, so that, come what may, God shall not be angry with thee - shall not condemn thee shall not consume thee in his wrath, nor crush thee in his hot displeasure? If it be so, then, my heart, thou canst scarcely need to stop and ask the second question - Is my conscience at peace? For, if my heart condemn me not, God is greater than my heart, and doth know all things; if my conscience bears witness with me, that I am a partaker of the precious grace of salvation, then happy am I! I am one of those to whom God hath given the peace which passeth all understanding. Now, why is this called "the peace of God?" We suppose it is because it comes from God - because it was planned by God - because God gave his Son to make the peace - because God gives his Spirit to give the peace in the conscience - because, indeed, it is God himself in the soul, reconciled to man, whose is the peace. And while it is true that this man shall have the peace - even the Man-Christ, yet we know it is because he was the God-Christ that he was our peace. And hence we may clearly perceive how Godhead is mixed up with the peace which we enjoy with our Maker, and with our conscience.

Then we are told that it is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." What does he mean by this? He means such a peace, that the understanding can never understand it, can never attain to it. The understanding of mere carnal man can never comprehend this peace. He who tries with a philosophic look to discover the secret of the Christian's peace, finds himself in a maze. "I know not how it is, nor why it is," saith he; "I see these men hunted through the earth; I turn the pages of history, and I find them hunted to their graves. They wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; yet, I also see upon the Christian's brow a calm serenity. I can not understand this; I

do not know what it is. I know that I myself, even in my merriest moments, am disturbed; that when my enjoyments run the highest, still there are waves of doubt and fear across my mind. Then why is this? How is it that the Christian can attain a rest so calm, so peaceful, and so quiet?" Understanding can never get to that peace which the Christian hath attained. The philosopher may teach us much; he can never give us rules whereby to reach the peace that Christians have in their conscience. Diogenes may tell us to do without everything, and may live in his tub, and then think himself happier than Alexander, and that he enjoys peace; but we look upon the poor creature after all, and though we may be astonished at his courage, yet we are obliged to despise his folly. We do not believe that even when he had dispensed with everything, he possessed a quiet of mind, a total and entire peace, such as the true believer can enjoy. We find the greatest philosophers of old laying down maxims for life, which they thought would certainly promote happiness. We find that they were not always able to practise them themselves, and many of their disciples, when they labored hard to put them in execution, found themselves encumbered with impossible rules to accomplish impossible objects. But the Christian man does with faith what a man can never do himself. While the poor understanding is climbing up the craigs, faith stands on the summit; while the poor understanding is getting into a calm atmosphere, faith flies aloft and mounts higher than the storm, and then looks down on the valley, and smiles while the tempest blows beneath its feet. Faith goes further than understanding, and the peace which the Christian enjoys is one which the worldling can not comprehend, and can not himself attain. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

And this peace is said to "keep the mind through Christ Jesus." Without Christ Jesus this peace would not exist; without Christ Jesus this peace, even where it has existed, can not be maintained. Daily visits from the Saviour, continual lookings by the eye of faith to him who bled upon the cross, continual drawings from his ever-flowing fountain, make this peace broad, and long, and enduring. But take Jesus Christ, the channel of our peace away, and it fades and dies, and droops, and comes to naught. A Christian hath no peace with God except through the atonement of his Lord Jesus Christ.

I have thus gone over what some will call the dry doctrinal part of the subject - "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." I can not show you what that peace is, if you have never felt it; but yet I think I could tell you where to look for it, for I have sometimes seen it. I have seen the Christian man in the depths of poverty, when he lived from hand to mouth, and scarcely knew where he should find the next meal, still with his mind unruffled, calm, and quiet. If he had been as rich as an Indian prince, yet could he not have had less care; if he had been told that his bread should always come to his door, and the stream which ran hard by should never dry - if he had been quite sure that ravens would bring him bread and meat in the morning, and again in the evening, he would not have been one whit more calm. There is his neighbor on the other side of the street not half so poor, but wearied from morning to night, working his fingers to the bone, bringing himself to the grave with anxiety; but this poor good man, after having industriously labored, though he found he had gained little with all his toil, yet hath sanctified his little by prayer, and hath thanked his Father for what he had; and though he doth not know whether he will have more, still he trusted in God, and declared that his faith should not fail him, though providence should run to a lower ebb than he had ever seen. There is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." I have seen that peace, too, in the case of those who have lost their friends. There is a widow - her much-loved husband lies in the coffin; she is soon to part with him. Parted with him she has before: but now, of his poor clay-cold corpse - even of that she has to be bereaved. She looks upon it for the last time, and her heart is heavy. For herself and her children, she thinks how they shall be provided for. That broad tree that once sheltered them from the sunbeam has been cut down. Now, she thinks there is a broad heaven above her head, and her Maker is her husband; the fatherless children are left with God for their father, and the widow is trusting in him. With tears in her eyes she still looks up, and she says, "Lord, thou hast given and thou hast taken away, blessed be thy name." Her husband is carried to the tomb; she doth not smile, but though she weeps, there is a calm composure on her brow, and she tells you she would not have it otherwise, even if she could, for Jehovah's will is right. There, again, is "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Picture another man. There is Martin Luther standing

up in the midst of the Diet of Worms; there are the kings and the princes, and there are the bloodhounds of Rome with their tongues thirsting for his blood - there is Martin rising in the morning as comfortable as possible, and he goes to the Diet, and delivers himself of the truth, solemnly declares that the things which he has spoken are the things which he believes, and God helping him he will stand by them till the last. There is his life in his hands; they have him entirely in their power. The smell of John Huss's corpse has not yet passed away, and he recollects that princes before this have violated their words; but there he stands, calm and quiet; he fears no man, for he has naught to fear; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ. There is an other scene: there is John Bradford in Newgate. He is to be burned the next morning in Smithfield, and he swings himself on the bedpost in very glee, and delights, for to-morrow is his wedding-day; and he says to another, "Fine shining we shall make to-morrow, when the flame is kindled." And he smiles and laughs, and enjoys the very thought that he is about to wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom. Is Bradford mad? Ah, no; but he has got the peace of God that passeth all understanding. But perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most common illustration of this sweet peace, is the dying bed of the believer. Oh, brethren, you have seen this sometimes that calm, quiet serenity; you have said, Lord, let us die with him. It has been so good to be in that solitary chamber where all was quiet and so still, all the world shut out, and heaven shut in, and the poor heart nearing its God, and far away from all its past burdens and griefs - now nearing the portals of eternal bliss. And ye have said, "How is this? Is not death a black and grim thing? Are not the terrors of the grave things which make the strong man tremble?" Oh yes, they are; but, then, this one has the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." However, if you want to know about this, you must be a child of God, and possess it yourselves; and when you have once felt it, when you can stand calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory, when you can sing in the midst of the storm, when you can smile when surrounded by adversity, and can trust your God, be your way never so rough, ne'er so stormy; when you can always repose confidence in the wisdom and goodness of Jehovah, then it is you will have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

II. Thus we have discussed the first point, what is this peace? Now the second thing was, HOW IS THIS PEACE TO BE OBTAINED? You will note that although this is a promise, it hath precepts preceding, and it is only by the practice of the precepts that we can get the promise. Turn now to the fourth verse, and you will see the first rule and regulation for getting peace. Christian, would you enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding?"

The first thing you have to do is to "rejoice evermore." The man who never rejoices, but who is always sorrowing, and groaning, and crying, who forgets his God, who forgets the fullness of Jehovah, and is always murmuring concerning the trials of the road and the infirmities of the flesh, that man will lose the prospect of enjoying a peace that passeth all understanding. Cultivate, my friends, a cheerful disposition; endeavor, as much as lieth in you, always to bear a smile about with you; recollect that this is as much a command of God as that one which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." "Rejoice evermore," is one of Godly commands; and it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to try and practice it. Not to rejoice, remember, is a sin. To rejoice is a duty, and such a duty that the richest fruits and the best rewards are appended to it. Rejoice always, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. Many of us, by giving way to disastrous doubts, spoil our peace. It is as I once remember to have heard a woman say, when I was passing down a lane; a child stood crying at the door, and I heard her calling out, "Ah, you are crying for nothing; I will give you something to cry for." Brethren, it is often so with God's children. They get crying for nothing. They have a miserable disposition, or a turn of mind always making miseries for themselves, and thus they have something to cry for. Their peace is disturbed, some sad trouble comes, God hides his face, and then they lose their peace. But keep on singing even when the sun does not keep on shining; keep a song for all weathers; get a joy that will stand clouds and storms; and then, when you know how always to rejoice, you shall have this peace.

The next precept is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." If you would have peace of mind, be moderate. Merchant, you can not push that speculation too far, and then have peace of mind. Young man, you can

not be so fast in trying to rise in the world, and yet have the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You must be moderate, and when you have got a moderation in your desires, then you shall have peace. Sir, you with the red cheek, you must be moderate in your anger. You must not be quite so fast in flying into a passion with your fellows, and not quite so long in getting cool again; because the angry man can not have peace in his conscience. Be moderate in that; let your vengeance stay itself; for if you give way to wrath, if you are angry, "be ye angry and sin not." Be moderate in this; be moderate in all things which thou undertakes, Christian; moderate in your expectations. Blessed is he who expects little, for he shall have but little disappointment. Remember never to set thy desires very high. He that has aspirations to the moon, will be disappointed if he only reaches half as high; whereas, if he had aspired lower, he would be agreeably disappointed when he found himself mounting higher than he first expected. Keep moderation, whatsoever you do, in all things, but in your desires after God; and so shall you obey the second precept, and get the glimpse of this promise, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

The last precept that you have to obey is, "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God." You can not have peace unless you turn your troubles up. You have no place in which to pour your troubles except the ear of God. If you tell them to your friends, you but put your troubles out a moment, and they will return again. If you tell them to God, you put your troubles into the grave; they will never rise again when you have committed them to him. If you roll your burden anywhere else it will roll back again, just like the stone of Sisyphus; but just roll your burden unto God, and you have rolled it into a great deep, out of which it will never by any possibility rise. Cast your troubles where you have cast your sins; you have cast your sins into the depth of the sea, there cast your troubles also. Never keep a trouble half an hour on your own mind before you tell it to God. As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your father. Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God, the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts, the more likely the ponds will be frozen. Your frost will last till you go to the sun; and when you go to God - the sun, then your frost will soon become a thaw, and



your troubles will melt away. But do not be long, because the longer you are in waiting, the longer will your trouble be in thawing afterwards. Wait a long time till your troubles gets frozen thick and firm, and it will take many a day of prayer to get your trouble thawed again. Away to the throne as quick as ever you can. Do as the child did, when he ran and told his mother as soon as his little trouble happened to him; run and tell your Father the first moment you are in affliction. Do this in every thing, in every little thing - "in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God." Take your husband's head-ache, take your children's sicknesses, take all things, little family troubles as well as great commercial trials - take them all to God; pour them all out at once. And so by an obedient practice of this command in every thing making known your wants unto God, you shall preserve that peace "which shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ."

These, then, are the precepts. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to obey them, and we shall then have the continual peace of God.

III. Now, the third thing, was to show HOW THE PEACE, which I attempted to describe in the first place, KEEPS THE HEART. You will clearly see how this peace will keep the heart full. That man who has continued peace with God, will not have an empty heart. He feels that God has done so much for him that he must love his God. The eternal basis of his peace lays in divine election - the solid pillars of his peace, the incarnation of Christ, his righteousness, his death - the climax of his peace, the heaven hereafter where his joy and his peace shall be consummated; all these are subjects for grateful reflection, and will, when meditated upon, cause more love. Now, where much love is, there is a large heart and a full one. Keep, then, this peace with God, and thou wilt keep thy heart full to the brim. And, remember, that in proportion to the fullness of thine heart will be the fullness of thy life. Be empty-hearted and thy life will be a meager, skeleton existence. Be full-hearted, and thy life will be full, fleshy, gigantic, strong, a thing that will tell upon the world. Keep, then, thy peace with God firm within thee. Keep thou close to this, that Jesus Christ hath made peace between thee and God. And keep thy conscience still; then shall thy heart be full and thy soul strong to do thy Master's work. Keep thy peace with God. This will keep thy

heart pure. Thou wilt say if temptation comes, "What dost thou offer me? Thou offerest me pleasure; lo! I have got it. Thou offerest me gold; lo! I have got it; all things are mine, the gift of God; I have a city that hands have not made, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' I will not barter this for your poor gold." "I will give you honor," saith Satan. "I have honor enough," says the peaceful heart; "God will honor me in the last great day of his account." "I will give thee everything that thou canst desire," saith Satan. "I have everything that I can desire," says the Christian.

"I nothing want on earth;  
Happy in my Saviour's love,  
I am at peace with God."

Avaunt, then, Satan! While I am at peace with God, I am a match for all thy temptations. Thou offerest me silver; I have gold. Thou bringest before me the riches of the earth; I have something more substantial than these. Avaunt, tempter of human kind! Avaunt, thou fiend! Your temptations and blandishments are lost on one who has peace with God. This peace, too, will keep the heart undivided. He who has peace with God will set his whole heart on God. "Oh!" says he, "why should I go to seek anything else on earth, now that I have found my rest in God? As the bird by wandering, so should I be if I went elsewhere. I have found a fountain; why should I go and drink at the broken cistern that will hold no water? I lean on the arm of my beloved; why should I rest on the arm of another? I know that religion is a thing worth my following; why should I leave the pure snows of Lebanon to follow something else? I know and feel that religion is rich when it brings forth to me a hundredfold the fruits of peace; why should I go and sow elsewhere? I will be like the maiden Ruth, I will stop in the fields of Boaz. Here will I ever stay and never wander."

Again, this peace keeps the heart rich. My hearers will notice that I am passing over the heads of the mornings discourse, and showing how this peace fulfills the requisites that we thought necessary in the morning. Peace with God keeps the heart rich. The man who doubts and is distressed has got a poor heart; it is a heart that has nothing in it. But when a man has peace with God, his heart is rich. If I am at peace with

God I am enabled to go where I can get riches. The throne is the place where God gives riches. If I am at peace with him, then I can have access with boldness. Meditation is a great and another field of enrichment. When my heart is at peace with God, then I can enjoy meditation; but if I have not peace with God, then I can not meditate profitably; for "the birds come down on the sacrifice," and I can not drive them away, except my soul is at peace with God. Hearing the word is another way of getting rich. If my mind is disturbed I can not hear the word with profit. If I have to bring my family into the chapel; if I have to bring my business, my ships, or my horses, I can not hear. When I have cows, and dogs, and horses in the pew, I can not hear the Gospel preached. When I have got a whole week's business, and a ledger on my heart, I can not hear then; but when I have peace, peace concerning all things, and rest in my Fathers will, then I can hear with pleasure, and every word of the gospel is profitable to me; for my mouth is empty, and I can fill it with the heavenly treasures of his Word. So you see the peace of God is a soul-enriching thing. And because it keeps the heart rich, thus it is it keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord. I need hardly say that the peace of God fulfills the only other requisite which I did not mention, because it was unnecessary to do so. It keeps the heart always peaceable. Of course, peace makes it full of peace - peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Now, then, brother and sister, it is of the first importance that you keep your heart aright. You can not keep your heart right but by one way. That one way is by getting, maintaining, and enjoying peace of God to your own conscience. I beseech you then, you that are professors of religion, do not let this night pass over your heads till you have a confident assurance that you are now the possessor of the peace of God. For let me tell you, if you go out to the world next Monday morning without first having peace with God in your own conscience, you will not be able to keep your heart during the week. If this night, ere you rest, you could say that with God as well as all the world you are at peace, you may go out tomorrow, and whatever your business, I am not afraid for you. You are more than a match for all the temptations to false doctrine, to false living, or to false speech that may meet you. For he that has peace with God is armed cap-a-pie; he is covered from head to foot in a panoply. The arrow

may fly against it, but it can not pierce it, for peace with God is a mail so strong that the broad sword of Satan itself may be broken in twain ere it can pierce the flesh. O! take care that you are at peace with God; for if you are not, you ride forth to to-morrow's fight unarmed, naked; and God help the man that is unarmed when he has to fight with hell and earth. O, be not foolish, but "put on the whole armor of God," and then be confident for you need not fear.

As for the rest of you, you can not have peace with God, because "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." How shall I address you. As I said this morning, I can not exhort you to keep your hearts. My best advice to you is, to get rid of your hearts, and as soon as you can, to get new ones. Your prayer should be, "Lord, take away my stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh." But though I can not address you from this text, I may address you from another. Though your heart is bad, there is another heart that is good; and the goodness of that heart is a ground of exhortation to you. You remember Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" and then his argument would come to this, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Your heart is proud, and high, and black, and lustful; but look at Christ's heart, it is meek and lowly. There is your encouragement. Do you feel to-night your sin? Christ is meek; if you come to him he will not spurn you. Do you feel your insignificance and worthlessness? Christ is lowly; he will not despise you. If Christ's heart were like your heart, you would be damned to a certainty. But Christ's heart is not as your heart, nor his ways like your ways. I can see no hope for you when I look into your hearts, but I can see plenty of hope when I look into Christ's heart.

O, think of his blessed heart; and if you go home to-night sad and sorrowful, under a sense of sin, when you go to your chamber, shut to your door - you need not be afraid - and talk to that heart so meek and lowly; and though your words be ungrammatical, and your sentences incoherent, he will hear and answer you from heaven, his dwelling place; and when he hears, he will forgive and accept, for his own name's sake.

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## How To Read The Bible

Have ye not read?...Have ye not read?...If ye had known what this meaneth. - Matthew 12:3-7

The scribes and pharisees were great readers of the law. They studied the sacred books continually, poring over each word and letter. They made notes of very little importance, but still very curious notes—as to which was the middle verse of the entire old Testament, which verse was halfway to the middle, and how many times such a word occurred, and even how many times a letter occurred, and the size of the letter, and its peculiar position. They have left us a mass of wonderful notes upon the mere words of Holy Scripture. They might have done the same thing upon another book for that matter, and the information would have been about as important as the facts which they have so industriously collected concerning the letter of the old Testament. They were, however, intense readers of the law. They picked a quarrel with the Saviour upon a matter touching this law, for they carried it at their fingers' ends, and were ready to use it as a bird of prey does its talons to tear and rend. Our Lord's disciples had plucked some ears of corn, and rubbed them between their hands. According to Pharisaic interpretation, to rub an ear of corn is a kind of threshing, and, as it is very wrong to thresh on the Sabbath day, therefore it must be very wrong to rub out an ear or two of wheat when you are hungry on the Sabbath morning. That was their argument, and they came to the Saviour with it, and with their version of the Sabbath law. The Saviour generally carried the war into the enemy's camp, and he did so on this occasion. He met them on their own ground, and he said to them, "Have ye not read?"—a cutting question to the scribes and Pharisees, though there is nothing apparently sharp about it. It was very a fair and proper question to put to them; but only think of putting it to them. "Have ye not read?" "Read!" they could have said, "Why, we have read the book through very many times. We are always reading it. No passage escapes our critical eyes." Yet our Lord proceeds to put the question a second time—"Have ye not read?" as if they had not read after all, though they were the greatest readers of the law then living. He insinuates that they have not read at all; and then he gives them,

incidentally, the reason why he had asked them whether they had read. He says, "If ye had known what this meaneth," as much as to say, "Ye have not read, because ye have not understood." Your eyes have gone over the words, and you have counted the letters, and you have marked the position of each verse and word, and you have said learned things about all the books, and yet you are not even readers of the sacred volume, for you have not acquired the true art of reading; you do not understand, and therefore you do not truly read it. You are mere skimmers and glancers at the Word: you have not read it, for you do not understand it.

I. That is the subject of our present discourse, or, at least the first point of it, that **IN ORDER TO THE TRUE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEM.**

I scarcely need to preface these remarks by saying that we must read the Scriptures. You know how necessary it is that we should be fed upon the truth of Holy Scripture. Need I suggest the question as to whether you do read your Bibles or not? I am afraid that this is a magazine reading age a newspaper reading age a periodical reading age, but not so much a Bible reading age as it ought to be. In the old Puritanic times men used to have a scant supply of other literature, but they found a library enough in the one Book, the Bible. And how they did read the Bible! How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritanic divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast side lights upon a text of Scripture; not only the one they are preaching about, but many others as well are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel thereunto, and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual. I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book. We should be instructive preachers if we did so, even if we were ignorant of "modern thought," and were not "abreast of the times." I warrant you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God. As for you, my brothers and sisters, who have not to preach, the best food for you is the Word of God itself. Sermons and books are well enough, but streams that run for a long distance above ground gradually

gather for themselves somewhat of the soil through which they flow, and they lose the cool freshness with which they started from the spring head. Truth is sweetest where it breaks from the smitten Rock, for at its first gush it has lost none of its heavenliness and vitality. It is always best to drink at the well and not from the tank. You shall find that reading the Word of God for yourselves, reading it rather than notes upon it, is the surest way of growing in grace. Drink of the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and not of the skim milk, or the milk and water of man's word.

But, now, beloved, our point is that much apparent Bible reading is not Bible reading at all. The verses pass under the eye, and the sentences glide over the mind, but there is no true reading. An old preacher used to say, the Word has mighty free course among many nowadays, for it goes in at one of their ears and out at the other; so it seems to be with some readers—they can read a very great deal, because they do not read anything. The eye glances but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest there, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot. Such reading is not reading. Understanding the metering is the essence of true reading. Reading has a kernel to it, and the mere shed is little worth. In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer—a praying that is in the bowels of the prayer. So in praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion which is the life of the hallelujah. It is so in fasting: there is a fasting which is not fasting, and there is an inward fasting, a fasting of the soul, which is the soul of fasting. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a kernel reading—a true and living reading of the Word. This is the soul of reading; and, if it be not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise, and profits nothing. Now, beloved, unless we understand what we read we have not read it; the heart of the reading is absent. We commonly condemn the Romanists for keeping the daily service in the Latin tongue; yet it might as well be in the Latin language as in any other tongue if it be not understood by the people. Some comfort themselves with the idea that they have done a good action when they have read a chapter, into the meaning of which they have not entered at all; but does not nature herself reject this as a mere superstition? If you

had turned the book upside down, and spent the same times in looking at the characters in that direction, you would have gained as much good from it as you will in reading it in the regular way without understanding it. If you had a New Testament in Greek it would be very Greek to some of you, but it would do you as much good to look at that as it does to look at the English New Testament unless you read with understanding heart. It is not the letter which saves the soul; the letter killeth in many senses, and never can it give life. If you harp on the letter alone you may be tempted to use it as a weapon against the truth, as the Pharisees did of old, and your knowledge of the letter may breed pride in you to your destruction. It is the spirit, the real inner meaning, that is sucked into the soul, by which we are blessed and sanctified. We become saturated with the Word of God, like Gideon's fleece, which was wet with the dew of heaven; and this can only come to pass by our receiving it into our minds and hearts, accepting it as God's truth, and so far understanding it as to delight in it. We must understand it, then, or else we have not read it aright.

Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. When the high priest went into the holy place he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the incense upon the brazen altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their divine object. There must be knowledge of God before there can be love to God: there must be a knowledge of divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them. We must try to make out, as far as our finite mind can grasp it, what God means by this and what he means by that; otherwise we may kiss the book and have no love to its contents, we may reverence the letter and yet really have no devotion towards the Lord who speaks to us in these words. Beloved, you will never get comfort to your soul out of what you do not understand, nor find guidance for your life out of what you do not comprehend; nor can any practical bearing upon your character come out of that which is not understood by you.

Now, if we are thus to understand what we read or otherwise we read in vain, this shows us that when we come to the study of Holy Scripture we should try to have our mind well awake to it. We are not always fit, it



seems to me, to read the Bible. At times it were well for us to stop before we open the volume. "Put off thy shoe from thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." You have just come in from careful thought and anxiety about your worldly business, and you cannot immediately take that book and enter into its heavenly mysteries. As you ask a blessing over your meat before you fall to, so it would be a good rule for you to ask a blessing on the word before you partake of its heavenly food. Pray the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of Scripture. As the priests washed their feet at the laver before they went to their holy work, so it were well to wash the soul's eyes with which you look upon God's word, to wash even the fingers, if I may so speak—the mental fingers with which you will turn from page to page—that with a holy book you may deal after a holy fashion. Say to your soul—"Come, soul, wake up: thou art not now about to read the newspaper; thou art not now perusing the pages of a human poet to be dazzled by his flashing poetry; thou art coming very near to God, who sits in the Word like a crowned monarch in his halls. Wake up, my glory; wake up, all that is within me. Though just now I may not be praising and glorifying God, I am about to consider that which should lead me so to do, and therefore it is an act of devotion. So be on the stir, my soul: be on the stir, and bow not sleepily before the awful throne of the Eternal." Scripture reading is our spiritual meal time. Sound the gong and call in every faculty to the Lord's own table to feast upon the precious meat which is now to be partaken of; or, rather, ring the church-bell as for worship, for the studying of the Holy Scripture ought to be as solemn a deed as when we lift the psalm upon the Sabbath day in the courts of the Lord's house.

If these things be so, you will see at once, dear friends, that, if you are to understand what you read, you will need to meditate upon it. Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade; but there are deeps in which our mind might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure, if she came there without caution. There are texts of Scripture which are made and constructed on purpose to make us think. By this means, among others, our heavenly Father would educate us for heaven—by making us think our way into divine mysteries. Hence he puts the word in a somewhat involved form to compel us to meditate upon it before we reach the sweetness of it. He

might, you know, have explained it to us so that we might catch the thought in a minute, but he does not please to do so in every case. Many of the veils which are cast over Scripture are not meant to hide the meaning from the diligent but to compel the mind to be active, for oftentimes the diligence of the heart in seeking to know the divine mind does the heart more good than the knowledge itself. Meditation and careful thought exercise us and strengthen the soul for the reception of the yet more lofty truths. I have heard that the mothers in the Balearic Isles, in the old times, who wanted to bring their boys up to be good slingers, would put their dinners up above them where they could not get at them until they threw a stone and fetched them down: our Lord wishes us to be good slingers, and he puts up some precious truth in a lofty place where we cannot get it down except by slinging at it; and, at last, we hit the mark and find food for our souls. Then have we the double benefit of learning the art of meditation and partaking of the sweet truth which it has brought within our reach. We must meditate, brothers. These grapes will yield no wine till we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel, and pressed again and again, that the oil may flow therefrom. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten, because there is a little hole which the insect has punctured through the shell—just a little hole, and then inside there is the living thing eating up the kernel. Well, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter, and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel. I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the word of God, having bored my way through the shell, and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed gospel. The word of God is always most precious to the man who most lives upon it. As I sat last year under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees, which seems to have an intelligence about it which other trees have not. I wondered and admired the beech, but I thought to myself, I do not think half as much of this beech tree as yonder squirrel does. I see him leap from bough to bough, and I feel sure that he dearly values the old beech tree, because he has his home somewhere inside it in a hollow place, these branches are his shelter, and those beech-nuts are his food. He lives upon the tree. It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home; indeed, it is everything to him, and it is not so to me, for I find my rest and food elsewhere. With God's word it is well for us to

be like squirrels, living in it and living on it. Let us exercise our minds by leaping from bough to bough of it, find our rest and food in it, and make it our all in all. We shall be the people that get the profit out of it if we make it to be our food, our medicine, our treasury, our armoury, our rest, our delight. May the Holy Ghost lead us to do this and make the Word thus precious to our souls.

Beloved, I would next remind you that for this end we shall be compelled to pray. It is a grand thing to be driven to think, it is a grander thing to be driven to pray through having been made to think. Am I not addressing some of you who do not read the word of God, and am I not speaking to many more who do read it, but do not read it with the strong resolve that they will understand it? I know it must be so. Do you wish to begin to be true readers? Will you henceforth labour to understand? Then you must get to your knees. You must cry to God for direction. Who understands a book best? The author of it. If I want to ascertain the real meaning of a rather twisted sentence, and the author lives near me, and I can call upon him, I shall ring at his door and say, "Would you kindly tell me what you mean by that sentence? I have no doubt whatever that it is very dear, but I am such a simpleton, that I cannot make it out. I have not the knowledge and grasp of the subject which you possess, and therefore your allusions and descriptions are beyond my range of knowledge. It is quite within your range, and commonplace to you, but it is very difficult to me. Would you kindly explain your meaning to me?" A good man would be glad to be thus treated, and would think it no trouble to unravel his meaning to a candid enquirer. Thus I should be sure to get the correct meaning, for I should be going to the fountain head when I consulted the author himself. So, beloved, the Holy Spirit is with us, and when we take his book and begin to read, and want to know what it means, we must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning. He will not work a miracle, but he will elevate our minds, and he will suggest to us thoughts which will lead us on by their natural relation, the one to the other, till at last we come to the pith and marrow of his divine instruction. Seek then very earnestly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for if the very soul of reading be the understanding of what we read, then we must in prayer call upon the Holy Ghost to unlock the secret mysteries of the inspired word.

If we thus ask the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, it will follow, dear friends, that we shall be ready to use all means and helps towards the understanding of the Scriptures. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch whether he understood the prophecy of Isaiah he replied, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" Then Philip went up and opened to him the word of the Lord. Some, under the pretense of being taught of the Spirit of God refuse to be instructed by books or by living men. This is no honouring of the Spirit of God; it is a disrespect to him, for if he gives to some of his servants more light than to others—and it is clear he does—then they are bound to give that light to others, and to use it for the good of the church. But if the other part of the church refuse to receive that light, to what end did the Spirit of God give it? This would imply that there is a mistake somewhere in the economy of gifts and graces, which is managed by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be so. The Lord Jesus Christ pleases to give more knowledge of his word and more insight into it to some of his servants than to others, and it is ours joyfully to accept the knowledge which he gives in such ways as he chooses to give it. It would be most wicked of us to say, "We will not have the heavenly treasure which exists in earthen vessels. If God will give us the heavenly treasure out of his own hand, but not through the earthen vessel, we will have it; but we think we are too wise, too heavenly minded, too spiritual altogether to care for jewels when they are placed in earthen pots. We will not hear anybody, and we will not read anything except the book itself, neither will we accept any light, except that which comes in through a crack in our own roof. We will not see by another man's candle, we would sooner remain in the dark." Brethren, do not let us fall into such folly. Let the light come from God, and though a child shall bring it, we will joyfully accept it. If any one of his servants, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, shall have received light from him, behold, "all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," and therefore accept of the light which God has kindled, and ask for grace that you may turn that light upon the word so that when you read it you may understand it.

I do not wish to say much more about this, but I should like to push it home upon some of you. You have Bibles at home, I know; you would not like to be without Bibles, you would think you were heathens if you had no Bibles. You have them very neatly bound, and they are very fine

looking volumes: not much thumbed, not much worn, and not likely to be so, for they only come out on Sundays for an airing, and they lie in lavender with the clean pocket handkerchiefs all the rest of the week. You do not read the word, you do not search it, and how can you expect to get the divine blessing? If the heavenly gold is not worth digging for you are not likely to discover it. often and often have I told you that the searching of the Scriptures is not the way of salvation. The Lord hath said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But, still, the reading of the word often leads, like the hearing of it, to faith, and faith bringeth salvation; for faith cometh by hearing, and reading is a sort of hearing. While you are seeking to know what the gospel is, it may please God to bless your souls. But what poor reading some of you give to your Bibles. I do not want to say anything which is too severe because it is not strictly true—let your own consciences speak, but still, I make bold to enquire,—Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way—just a little bit, and off you go? Do you not soon forget what you have read, and lose what little effect it seemed to have? How few of you are resolved to get at its soul, its juice, its life, its essence, and to drink in its meaning. Well, if you do not do that, I tell you again your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading; it is not reading at all, the name would be misapplied. May the blessed Spirit give you repentance touching this thing.

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, let us notice that IN READING WE OUGHT TO SEEK OUT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD. I think that is in my text, because our Lord says, "Have ye not read?" Then, again, "Have ye not read?" and then he says, "If ye had known what this meaneth"—and the meaning is something very spiritual. The text he quoted was, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—a text out of the prophet Hosea. Now, the scribes and Pharisees were all for the letter—the sacrifice, the killing of the bullock, and so on. They overlooked the spiritual meaning of the passage, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—namely, that God prefers that we should care for our fellow-creatures rather than that we should observe any ceremonial of his law, so as to cause hunger or thirst and thereby death, to any of the creatures that his hands have made. They ought to have passed beyond the outward into the spiritual, and all our readings ought to do the same.

Notice, that this should be the case when we read the historical passages. "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" This was a piece of history, and they ought so to have read it as to have found spiritual instruction in it. I have heard very stupid people say, "Well, I do not care to read the historical parts of Scripture." Beloved friends, you do not know what you are talking about when you say so. I say to you now by experience that I have sometimes found even a greater depth of spirituality in the histories than I have in the Psalms. You will say, "How is that?" I assert that when you reach the inner and spiritual meaning of a history you are often surprised at the wondrous clearness—the realistic force—with which the teaching comes home to your soul. Some of the most marvelous mysteries of revelation are better understood by being set before our eyes in the histories than they are by the verbal declaration of them. When we have the statement to explain the illustration, the illustration expands and vivifies the statement. For instance, when our Lord himself would explain to us what faith was, he sent us to the history of the brazen serpent; and who that has ever read the story of the brazen serpent has not felt that he has had a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying snake-bitten persons looking to the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given us, wondrously as he defines and describes. Never, I pray you, depreciate the historical portions of God's word, but when you cannot get good out of them, say, "That is my foolish head and my slow heart. o Lord, be pleased to clear my brain and cleanse my soul." When he answers that prayer you will feel that every portion of God's word is given by inspiration, and is and must be profitable to you. Cry, "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Just the same thing is true with regard to all the ceremonial precepts, because the Saviour goes on to say, "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" There is not a~single precept in the old law but has an inner sense and meaning; therefore do not turn away from Leviticus, or say, "I cannot read these chapters in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

They are all about the tribes and their standards, the stations in the wilderness and the halts of the march, the tabernacle and furniture, or about golden knobs and bowls, and boards, and sockets, and precious stones, and blue and scarlet and fine linen." No, but look for the inner meaning. Make thorough search; for as in a king's treasure that which is the most closely locked up and the hardest to come at is the choicest jewel of the treasure, so is it with the Holy Scriptures. Did you ever go to the British Museum Library? There are many books of reference there which the reader is allowed to take down when he pleases. There are other books for which he must write a ticket, and he cannot get them without the ticket; but they have certain choice books which you will not see without a special order, and then there is an unlocking of doors, and an opening of cases, and there is a watcher with you while you make your inspection. You are scarcely allowed to put your eye on the manuscript, for fear you should blot a letter out by glancing at it; it is such a precious treasure; there is not another copy of it in all the world, and so you cannot get at it easily. Just so, there are choice and precious doctrines of God's word which are locked up in such cases as Leviticus or Solomon's Song, and you cannot get at them without a deal of unlocking of doors and the Holy Spirit himself must be with you, or else you will never come at the priceless treasure. The higher truths are as choicely hidden away as the precious regalia of princes; therefore search as well as read. Do not be satisfied with a ceremonial precept till you reach its spiritual meaning, for that is true reading. You have not read till you understand the spirit of the matter.

It is just the same with the doctrinal statements of God's word. I have sorrowfully observed some persons who are very orthodox, and who can repeat their creed very glibly, and yet the principal use that they make of their orthodoxy is to sit and watch the preacher with the view of framing a charge against him. He has uttered a single sentence which is judged to be half a hair's breadth below the standard! "That man is not sound. He said some good things, but he is rotten at the core, I am certain. He used an expression which was not eighteen ounces to the pound." Sixteen ounces to the pound are not enough for these dear brethren of whom I speak, they must have something more and over and above the shekel of the sanctuary. Their knowledge is used as a microscope to magnify

trifling differences. I hesitate not to say that I have come across persons who

"Could a hair divide  
Betwixt the west and north-west side,"

in matters of divinity, but who know nothing about the things of God in their real meaning. They have never drunk them into their souls, but only sucked them up into their mouths to spit them out on others. The doctrine of election is one thing, but to know that God has predestinated you, and to have the fruit of it in the good works to which you are ordained, is quite another thing. To talk about the love of Christ, to talk about the heaven that is provided for his people, and such things—all this is very well; but this may be done without any personal acquaintance with them. Therefore, beloved, never be satisfied with a sound creed, but desire to have it graven on the tablets of your heart. The doctrines of grace are good, but the grace of the doctrines is better still. See that you have it, and be not content with the idea that you are instructed until you so understand the doctrine that you have felt its spiritual power.

This makes us feel that, in order to come to this, we shall need to feel Jesus present with us whenever we read the word. Mark that fifth verse, which I would now bring before you as part of my text which I have hitherto left out. "Have ye not read in the law, how on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple." Ay, they thought much about the letter of the Word, but they did not know that he was there who is the Sabbath's Master—man's Lord and the Sabbath's Lord, and Lord of everything. oh, when you have got hold of a creed, or of an ordinance, or anything that is outward in the letter, pray the Lord to make you feel that there is something greater than the printed book, and something better than the mere shell of the creed. There is one person greater than they all, and to him we should cry that he may be ever with us. o living Christ, make this a living word to me. Thy word is life, but not without the Holy Spirit. I may know this book of thine from beginning to end, and repeat it all from Genesis to Revelation, and yet it may be a dead book, and I may be a dead soul. But, Lord, be present here; then will I look up from the book to the Lord; from the precept to him who fulfilled



it; from the law to him who honoured it; from the threatening to him who has borne it for me, and from the promise to him in whom it is "Yea and amen." Ah, then we shall read the book so differently. He is here with me in this chamber of mine: I must not trifle. He leans over me, he puts his finger along the lines, I can see his pierced hand: I will read it as in his presence. I will read it, knowing that he is the substance of it,—that he is the proof of this book as well as the writer of it; the sum of this Scripture as well as the author of it. That is the way for true students to become wise! You will get at the soul of Scripture when you can keep Jesus with you while you are reading. Did you never hear a sermon as to which you felt that if Jesus had come into that pulpit while the man was making his oration, he would have said, "Go down, go down; what business have you here? I sent you to preach about me, and you preach about a dozen other things. Go home and learn of me, and then come and talk." That sermon which does not lead to Christ, or of which Jesus Christ is not the top and the bottom, is a sort of sermon that will make the devils in hell to laugh, but might make the angel of God to weep, if they were capable of such emotion. You remember the story I told you of the Welshman who heard a young man preach a very fine sermon—a grand sermon, a highfaluting, spread-eagle sermon; and when he had done, he asked the Welshman what he thought of it. The man replied that he did not think anything of it. "And why not?" "Because there was no Jesus Christ in it." "Well," said he, "but my text did not seem to run that way." "Never mind," said the Welshman, "your sermon ought to run that way." "I do not see that, however," said the young man. "No," said the other, "you do not see how to preach yet. This is the way to preach. From every little village in England—it does not matter where it is—there is sure to be a road to London. Though there may not be a road to certain other places, there is certain to be a road to London. Now, from every text in the Bible there is a road to Jesus Christ, and the way to preach is just to say, 'How can I get from this text to Jesus Christ?' and then go preaching all the way along it." "Well, but," said the young man, "suppose I find a text that has not got a road to Jesus Christ." "I have preached for forty years," said the old man, "and I have never found such a Scripture, but if I ever do find one I will go over hedge and ditch but what I will get to him, for I will never finish without bringing in my Master." Perhaps you will think that I have gone a little over hedge and ditch to-night, but I am persuaded that I have

not for the sixth verse comes in here, and brings our Lord in most sweetly, setting him in the very forefront of you Bible readers, so that you must not think of reading without feeling that he is there who is Lord and Master of everything that you are reading, and who shall make these things precious to you if you realize him in them. If you do not find Jesus in the Scriptures they will be of small service to you, for what did our Lord himself say? "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life"; and therefore your searching comes to nothing; you find no life, and remain dead in your sins. May it not be so with us?

III. Lastly, SUCH A READING OF SCRIPTURE, as implies the understanding of and the entrance into its spiritual meaning, and the discovery of the divine Person who is the spiritual meaning, IS PROFITABLE, for here our Lord says, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.~ It will save us from making a great many mistakes if we get to understand the word of God, and among other good things we shall not condemn the guiltless.

I have no time to enlarge upon these benefits, but I will just say, putting all together, that the diligent reading of the word of God with the strong resolve to get at its meaning often begets spiritual life. We are begotten by the word of God: it is the instrumental means of regeneration. Therefore love your Bibles. Keep close to your Bibles. You seeking sinners, you who are seeking the Lord, your first business is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; but while you are yet in darkness and in gloom, oh love your Bibles and search them! Take them to bed with you, and when you wake up in the morning, if it is too early to go downstairs and disturb the house, get half-an-hour of reading upstairs. Say, "Lord, guide me to that text which shall bless me. Help me to understand how I, a poor sinner, can be reconciled to thee." I recollect how, when I was seeking the Lord, I went to my Bible and to Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and to Alleine's "Alarm," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," for I said in myself, "I am afraid that I shall be lost but I will know the reason why. I am afraid I never shall find Christ but it shall not be for want of looking for him." That fear used to haunt me, but I said, "I will find him if he is to

be found. I will read. I will think." There was never a soul that did sincerely seek for Jesus in the word but by-and-by he stumbled on the precious truth that Christ was near at hand and did not want any looking for; that he was really there, only they, poor blind creatures, were in such a maze that they could not just then see him. Oh, cling you to Scripture. Scripture is not Christ, but it is the silken clue which will lead you to him. Follow its leadings faithfully.

When you have received regeneration and a new life, keep on reading, because it will comfort you. You will see more of what the Lord has done for you. You will learn that you are redeemed, adopted, saved, sanctified. Half the errors in the world spring from people not reading their Bibles. Would anybody think that the Lord would leave any one of his dear children to perish, if he read such a text as this,—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? When I read that, I am sure of the final perseverance of the saints. Read, then, the word and it will be much for your comfort.

It will be for your nourishment, too. It is your food as well as your life. Search it and you will grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

It will be for your guidance also. I am sure those go rightest who keep closest to the book. Oftentimes when you do not know what to do, you will see a text leaping up out of the book, and saying, "Follow me." I have seen a promise sometimes blaze out before my eyes, just as when an illuminated device flames forth upon a public building. One touch of flame and a sentence or a design flashes out in gas. I have seen a text of Scripture flame forth in that way to my soul; I have known that it was God's word to me, and I have gone on my way rejoicing.

And, oh, you will get a thousand helps out of that wondrous book if you do but read it; for, understanding the words more, you will prize it more, and, as you get older, the book will grow with your growth, and turn out to be a greybeard's manual of devotion just as it was aforetime a child's sweet story book. Yes, it will always be a new book—just as new a Bible as it was printed yesterday, and nobody had ever seen a word of it till now; and yet it will be a deal more precious for all the memories which cluster

round it. As we turn over its pages how sweetly do we recollect passages in our history which will never be forgotten to all eternity, but will stand for ever intertwined with gracious promises. Beloved, the Lord teach us to read his book of life which he has opened before us here below, so that we may read our titles clear in that other book of love which we have not seen as yet, but which will be opened at the last great day. The Lord be with you, and bless you.

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## **Human Inability**

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. - John 6:44

Coming to Christ is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of

heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings - what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be

true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the

will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

I. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it - "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;' and as long as that "ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing,

without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer - Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this - "I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man - that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as



that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere - there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more - conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not

destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you

have wished to believe. but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless - if such be his experience, - does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner - there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things

you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other, What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had

uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God - the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true

that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled - "draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

"Could my tears for ever flow,  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save and thou alone."

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to

Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the



Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, "Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little,"

Now, the comfortable reflection is this: - Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;  
I would be led in triumph, too,  
A willing captive of my Lord,  
To sing the triumph of his Word"?

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart - "Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ - sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

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## Human Responsibility

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. - John 15:22

The peculiar sin of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honors of a king, they shut their eyes against him, he was "a root out of a dry ground," he was "despised and they esteemed him not." Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet they knew not their king, God's everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, "for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his

claims, and give him no honor, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse; ye are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And there are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent when he shall come who shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messiah, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men: "If I had not spoken to them." We shall notice, secondly, the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message: "If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word: "Now they have no cloke for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him.

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly

too, that in THE PREACHING OF THIS GOSPEL, THERE IS TO MAN'S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOUR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us. he who rejecteth the message rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador. and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it, but if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that ye slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it, and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people, and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," and they hear behind them this awful threatening—"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the syren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside unto crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder; charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have knocked together, you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "Prepare to meet thy God—consider thy way—set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you everything that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that in all this you have despised God. I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How

solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man, will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavored to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. 'Twas he who said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" 'twas he who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden;" 'twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish; and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for 'tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL, AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit; you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda, you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the wilful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a

laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka, a wild savage who has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and Solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward. how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses law died



without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and the sin, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder and theft, and lying—all these are damning, and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ, but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Everything lies in the bowels of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you, him, who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven—to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree—that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, "Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;" that you should still turn away from him,—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogs of guilt but we

aggravate all the rest. You cannot sin so cheap as other people, you, who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but he after hearing it: and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pole of legal atonement, although blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe; and the coulter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him, and the longer you reject him. This is God's truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to you I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand. You have had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached coldly to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me;" for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but heart never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find

language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you, I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said damn, where God said damn—I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavored to veil or conceal the truth, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavored to commend the gospel, earnestly and with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest, and honest ministry. I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, **THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT.** "Now have they no cloke for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin, when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God's wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, and if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now ye have no cloke for your sin." The traveler is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now ye have no cloke for your sin,"—discovered, detected, and unmasked, ye are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, that you cannot say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law "thou shalt not commit adultery," forbade also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mahomedan commits lust, I doubt not his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon the very wall, before your eyes—you do wilfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse; for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?" Does he not himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, "Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved." Is

there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. "Believe and live," is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, "I did not know what the gospel was." From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother's milk and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. "Knowledge is power," men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is wrath, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be wrong.

Methinks I can hear another say, "Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me." Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, "They do not live as they ought;" and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early darklings of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; she did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room where she took you aside, and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly: recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with

sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was his business, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful! must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother; your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example—Christ, and that you have read of, though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth any where else, yet you can see it in Christ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this: "Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, "Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the day of judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched; did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now. No, you have not always been unmoved by the gospel you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impressing. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your

old heart has grown hard, still you are with out excuse; you did feel once, ay, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. "Nay," said he, "I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God's name I have said, " Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel?" And, now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood; at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have as it were to **PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION.** For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion—whom do you suppose with?—with unbelievers; as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the **A 1 sin**, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet-blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvellous. The

exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business-day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air: no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then—hark! the twofold clamor of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—"It is he! It is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet, I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart, when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine and when thou shalt reel to and fro, with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned: where is the flame? The flame comes out of his mouth, and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "Depart!" Do you seek a blessing? "Ye are cursed." I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek



to escape? It is everlasting fire. Do ye stop and plead? No, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not, therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh. "Depart, again, I say; depart for ever!" And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better but I did not do better."—As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself.

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for the Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned!" There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude;  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the draff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

"The Lord in anger dress'd  
Shall lift his hand and swear,  
'You that despis'd my promis'd rest,  
Shall have no portion there.'"

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## Hypocrisy

Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. - Luke 12:1

This age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There be few, I fear, who love the naked truth; we can scarce endure it in our houses; you would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble, and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds; and yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained, and painted, and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists. As it is in our streets, so is it everywhere; graining, painting, and gilding, are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it. The counterfeit so near approacheth to the genuine, that the eye of wisdom itself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference. Specially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance, and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him; but in this age of charity, and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current, and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," it is now. The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution: when the faggots are blazing, and when the rack is in full operation, few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostures; suffering, and pain, and death, for Christ's sake, are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious

is to be respectable, when to follow Christ is to be honored, and when godliness itself has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud, and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

I am sure that every true child of God will stand at times in doubt of himself, and his fear will probably take the shape of a suspicion concerning his own state.

He that never doubted of his state,  
He may - perhaps he may - too late.

The Christian, however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest, after all, his godliness should be but seeming, and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity. My dear Christian brethren, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the truths to utter will, perhaps, help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins, and sure I am you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe, but you will rather say, "Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul, tell me faithfully and tell me honestly what are the signs of a hypocrite, and I will sit down and try to read my own heart, to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me, and happy shall I be if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold."

We shall note, then, this morning, first, the character of a hypocrite; then we shall try to cast up his accounts for him, with regard to his loss or gain; and then we shall offer a cure for hypocrisy, which, if constantly carried about with us, will certainly prevent us from attempting to deceive. The cure is contained in these words which follow the text - "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

I. First, THE HYPOCRITE'S CHARACTER. We have an elaborate

description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twenty-third of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better pourtray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, "they say and they do not." The hypocrite can speak like an angel, he can quote texts with the greatest rapidity; he can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they be theological doctrines, metaphysical questions, or experimental difficulties. In his own esteem he knoweth much and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge. But see him when he comes to actions. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells to others that they must obey the law: doth he obey it? Ah! no. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other, and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself; but does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers. He will tell others what they should do; but will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house; trace him to the market, see him in the shop, and if you want to refute his preaching you may easily do it from his own life. My hearer! is this thy case? Thou art a member of a church, a deacon, a minister. Is this thy case? Is thy life a contradiction to thy words? Do thy hands witness against thy lips? How stands it with thee? With a blush, each one of us must confess that, to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this. But I hope there are some here who can say, "Notwithstanding many infirmities, with my whole heart have I striven to run in the ways of thy commandments, O my God, and I have not intentionally spoken that with my lip which I did not intend to carry out in my life." Ah! believe me, my hearers, talk is easy, but walk is hard: speech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy; but lip-piety needs no grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is, that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy, and bow your heads, and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is, that whenever he does right it is that he

may be seen of men. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before his alms, and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice, he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her, and then she is something indeed. The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night; but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well spoken of is the very elixir of his life; if he be praised, it is like sweet wine to him. The censure of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment; for his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatures, his law is the law of self-seeking, and of self-honoring: he is virtuous, because to be virtuous is to be praised; but if tomorrow vice were at a premium he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after. They eschew all secret religion, and only live where men may behold them. Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves; if we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God who heareth the cry of the secret ones, listeneth unto our supplication? Can we say, that if every man were struck stone blind and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience, and are not to be made do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure? Mark, the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised, gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite, but he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man, and simply because he believes it to be right, and sees the stamp of God's approval upon it, that man need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite; he would be a kind of hypocrite that one has never discovered as yet. Hypocrites do their good works for applause. Is it so with you? If so, be honest, and as you would convict another convict yourself.

Again; hypocrites love titles, and honors, and respect from men. The pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi, he never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the synagogue. Then he must be good indeed. But the true Christian cares not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christians - that they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations. There was a

time when the term methodist was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? "You call us methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title." The name "Puritan" was the lowest of all; it was the symbol which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer to express a godly man. "Well," says the godly man, "I will be called a puritan; if that is a name of reproach I will take it." It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name which his enemy has given him in malice. Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable; he wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect, and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title. How, can you say from your inmost soul, that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet, and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenter's son, as were the fishermen upon the lake? If so, methinks, you have but little hypocrisy in you; but if you only follow him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion, you are unmasked, and stand before the face of this congregation an acknowledged hypocrite.

There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashen hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge. Acts of necessity done by the Christian, are the objects of the sanctimonious horror of Pharisees, and labors of mercy and smiles of joy, are damning sins in the esteem of hypocrites, if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked hitherto, and Christ worked, and though works of kindness, and mercy, and charity, are the duty of the Sabbath: yet if the Christian be employed in these, he is thought to be offending against God's holy law. The slightest infringement of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite. But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect, straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating his goods, lying, puffing, and grinding the poor. I have always noticed that

those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the law, and while they are so particular about the tithe of mint, and annis, and cummin; whole loads of tithe-wheat are smuggled into their own barns. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong. The Thug, you know, thinks it a very proper thing to murder all he can; but if a little of the blood of his victims should stain his lips, then he goes off to the priest, and says he has committed a great sin; the blood has been on his lips - what must he do to get the sin forgiven? And there are many people of the same class in England. If they should do anything on a Good Friday, or on Christmas-day, poor souls, it is awfully wicked; but if they should be lazy all the six days of the week, it no sin at all. Rest ye assured, that the man who strains at a gnat but yet so allows the camel, is a deceiver. Mark you, my dear friends, I like you to strain at the gnats; I have no objection to that at all - only do not swallow the camel afterwards. Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right. Strain the gnats; they are not good things in your wines, strain them out; it is well to get rid of them; but then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards, for if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter, and you will find that these people neglected all the inward part of religion, and only observed the outward. As our Saviour said, they "made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess." There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them; and there are many persons that have a very one spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself you may discover one. Do you not know some who are precisely religious who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who

would not turn aside as much as a hair's breadth from any outward command? Before the world they stand as eminently pious, because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary; but yet they are careless of the inward matter. So long as they take the bread and wine they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ; so long as they have been baptized with water they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the house of God they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ, or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell, without looking for the kernel; the wheat may go where it pleases - the husk, and the chaff and the straw, are quite sufficient and enough for them. Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind; they take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out, they must be known by all men to be strictly religious; but within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness. But I have sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, "Ah! well, poor men, he is a sad drunkard, certainly, but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom." Now, as Rowland Hill used to say, that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When men take their fruit to market they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom. A man's outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window. Therefore, do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. "Make clean the outside of the cup and platter" - make it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask thyself such questions as these - "Have I been born again? Am I passed from darkness to light? Have I been brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart panteth after the Lord, even as the hart does alter the water-brooks? For if I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others, and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward



part is very wickedness. Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it. May the truth be the death of your delusions.

You may know a hypocrite by another sign. His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day. He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour; for he is, as the boy said, "saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer; but when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him. If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. You will find, too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by it; but he has a religion that is not too strict; business is business, he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material. Well, some time in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor church can see him, and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there was a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated, but he does not mind going when the eye of the church or of any of his friends is not upon him. Fine clothes make fine gentlemen, and fine places make fine hypocrites; but the man who is true to his God and to his conscience, is a Christian all day, and all night long, and a Christian everywhere. "Though you were to fill my house full of silver and gold," he says, "I would not do a dirty action; though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God, or disgrace my profession." Put the true Christian where he might sin, and be praised for it, and he will not do it. He does not hate sin for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" You shall find him a fallible man, but not a false man, you shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity. As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads; you

must walk with him in the rain as well as in the sunshine, you must go with him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian who cannot walk with Christ, come rags, come poverty, come contumely or shame. He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers and leave him when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot. The hypocrite's religion is like a chameleon, it takes its color from the light which falls upon it, but the Christian's religion is evermore the same. Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed, and let us own it before God, and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite, and now the lash will fall on my own back, and on most of us too. Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others, and very lenient with themselves. Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thus: - you are a mean, beggarly fellow. "No," says he, "I am not; I am economical." I say to him, "You are dishonest, you are a thief." "No," says he, "I am only cute and sharp for the times." "Well, but," I say to him, "you are proud and conceited." "Oh!" says he, "I have only a proper and manly respect." "Ay, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow." "No," says he, "I am all things to all men." Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others. Show him a Christian who is really humble, and he says, "I hate his fawning ways." Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ; "Oh! he is impudent," says he. Show him one who is liberal, doing what he can for his Master's service, spending, and being spent for him; "Rash and imprudent," says he, "extravagant; the man does not know what he is about." You may point out a virtue, and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice. Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of heaven from his soul, but nevertheless he is a very skillful oculist. He waits upon some poor brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarce reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend, he puts on a knowing look, and cries, "Allow me to extract this mote for you?" "Thou hypocrites first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." There are

people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices, and vices in themselves they transform into virtues. Now, if thou be a Christian, I will tell thee what will be thy spirit, it will be the very reverse; thou wilt be always making excuses for others, but thou wilt never be making excuses for thyself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it, and makes much ado concerning it. He says to another, "Oh! I feel so sinful;" and the other one cries "I cannot really see it; I can see no sin in you; I could wish I were holy as you." "No," says the other, "but I am full of infirmity." John Bunyan describes Mercy, and Christiana, and the children, after having been washed in the bath, and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water, and being all fair and lovely to look upon; and one began to say to the other, "You are fairer than I!" and "You are more comely than I!" said another. And then each began to bemoan their own spots, and to praise the beauty of the others. That is the spirit of a Christian; but the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse; he will judge, and condemn, and punish with lynch-law every other man; and as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law, and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others. This is a very prominent mark of the hypocrite, and I question whether all of us must not blame ourselves a little here.

II. And now we are going to CAST UP THE HYPOCRITE'S ACCOUNT FOR HIM. Now, sir, bring us your ledger, and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all credit and honor. If you were to say outright, "You are a thief, you are a private drunkard, you can curse God as well as any man;" or if the world should hear as much, you would have no honor; but as it is you have joined the church, and the minister is very fond of you, the deacons and elders think a great deal of you, and you are a very honorable, respectable man. You go walking up to your pew with your Bible and your hymn book, and everybody says, "There is an exemplary character;" and they pat their little boys on the head, and say, "May you grow up to be a very good man like Mr. So-and-so." The next advantage is the case which you enjoy. The minister often preaches a solemn, thundering sermon against sin. You get off all that; you are not a sinner, are you? not at all; who would suspect you? You are one of the brightest of the saints; it is almost a pity you were not one of the twelve; there was

one amongst them almost as good as yourself, and his end will probably be yours. You escape every thunder of the law; your conscience rests easy, and the very thing which makes the child of God tremble, puffs you up, and the very marks and evidences which cast him down, help to exalt you. The sun of the gospel which melts wax, hardens the poor clay of your hearts, and you get the more exalted in your self-conceit through everything you hear. And that is good too, is it not? very much in your favor, certainly. And then there is another thing. How nicely your shop has prospered through it; that, perhaps, is the part of the bargain which you like the best. Ever since you have made a profession of religion, have not those who go to your church and chapel traded with you? You would not have got on half so well if you had been suspected to be what you really are, but because of that fine cloak of yours, that fine garment of hypocrisy, how nicely you have prospered! What a nice little round sum you have been able to lay by, have you not? All that is the bright side again. And besides that, what honors have you not received in the church. Are not you made a deacon, or an elder; ay, perhaps a minister too: how pleasant that is! And you puff yourself up, and you feel satisfied. "Oh, what a good man am I, other people think I am, therefore I must be. It is true I devour the widow's house; it is true I am not very particular about what I do; nevertheless the minister, the elders, the deacons think me good, the whole church applauds me; they cannot all be mistaken; surely I must be a special saint." That is your profit side of the account, what about the other side? I think we shall be able to strike a balance that will not be much in your favor, sir.

In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you, as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here, is a fear that your hypoerisy will be discovered. It would take you only half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking truth, need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where; but a man who lies, should be very careful, and have a very good memory, and recollect all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself. So it is with you my friend, your religion is a Sunday religion, and you have to be very careful, so as to make Monday dealings hold their

tongues and Sunday doings vow as fond as they can. Hard work! I would not stand in your place to have all the trepidation and fear of discovery which so often comes upon you. No, I would sooner be a worldling, than I would have the fear that constantly haunts you, lest you should stand ashamed before the Church by your base iniquity being discovered. But I see something worse than this, here is constant disquietude of conscience; hypocrites may seem as if they were at ease but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God, and is really his child, can sometimes say, "I know that Jesus has taken away my sin." Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption to which the hypocrite can attain, brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, nay, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow, and fleeth when no man pursueth.

And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forget, it is this - that despite of your profession God abhors you, and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of Jehovah, it is such as thou art - thou miserable pretender. There shall be a special place reserved for thee amongst the damned. Think man what shall be thy misery when thy secret deeds of iniquity are read before an assembled universe, and men and angels utter one unanimous hiss against thee. What shall it be when the mask is torn off thee when the masquerade of thy hypocrisy is done and thou art stripped naked to thy shame, to be observed of all and to be despised of all? What sayest thou to this? Shalt thou go from thy deaconship, or from thy ministry, to be among the devils in hell? Shalt thou go from the sacramental table to drink the sulphurous cup of torment? Shalt thou descend from the song of the sanctuary and from the house of God to the abode of fiends and to the wailing of the damned? Yes, thou shalt as sure as this word is true, if thou goest on in thy hypocrisy, Death shall find thee out, and hell shall be thy doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spider's web, soon swept away; and where is he when God taketh away his hope?

This then is the casting up of the hypocrite's account, and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.

III. Now for the matter of the CURE OF THE HYPOCRITE. What shall we say to it? Oh! my friends, I feel that in thus speaking of the hypocrite, I have tried to speak severely, but I have not been able to reach the heart as I could wish, because it is a mark of human nature that this is the last sin of which we really suspect ourselves, and yet one into which it is most easy to fall. Often do I fall on my knees in an agony of doubt, and cry, "Lord, make me sincere; if I be deceived, undeceive me." I do not think that any Christian will live long without some such seasons of anguishing self-examination. Let me put it to you today, let no one exempt himself. You may have been professing Christians for many years, and yet you may have been hypocrites. Remember there was a hypocrite among the apostles, so may there be among the ministers of Christ. There have been deceivers among the apostolic churches, how much more may we expect them among us. Do not look around to find them out, it is God's business not yours, to find out hypocrites; but look at yourselves to see whether you are not one. Driving along the other day in the wind I observed a great branch fall just in front of me. I remarked that it was rotten, and wondered within myself how long that might have been upon the tree, and yet have been rotten after all. Then I thought, "Oh! if the wind of persecution were to sweep through the church, should I fall off like a rotten branch? Would not many of my hearers fall off? They have been united to Christ professedly for a long time, and have spoken for him, perhaps preached for him, but if the time of trial, which shall try the earth, should come upon us again, how many of us would stand? Oh! my hearers do not be content to take your religion at second-hand; let it not be a superficial work. Do not think that because you have seen me and have seen my elders, and we have admitted you into the church, you are therefore all right. We have been deceived many times; it is not hard work to deceive a kind heart. I have looked into the eyes of some, and have tried to read their very soul, and yet I have misjudged; I have seen tears in their eyes while they have made a profession of Christ, and yet they have been deceivers after all, and I have been very grossly taken in. In fact, the more kind-hearted a man is the more will human nature endeavor to impose upon him. I am certain I have used the utmost diligence to weed out of my church those whom I have suspected of hypocrisy, and greater diligence shall yet be used. But, oh, do deal with yourselves, I beseech you. I will not send you to hell blind-folded if I can

help it; I do not wish to be in error myself, and God forbid that I should suffer you to be deceived. Oh! if you be not true Christians, away with your profession altogether. If it be not sound work, down with it. Better see the house tumble now, than let it stand till the rain descends and the floods come, and the winds beat upon it in the dread eternity of the future. Oh, no, I would rather send every heart home uncomfortable than let the hypocrite sit down at ease; I would rather wound the child of God than allow the hypocrite to escape.

But now for the cure of the hypocrite. What shall we do to cure ourselves of any hypocrisy that may exist among us? Let us recollect that we cannot do anything in secret even if we try. The all-seeing God, apprehended in the conscience, must be the death of hypocrisy. I cannot try to deceive when I know that God is looking at me. It is impossible for me to play double and false when I believe that I am in the presence of the Most High, and that he is reading my thoughts and the secret purposes of my heart. The only way in which the hypocrite can play the hypocrite at all is by forgetting the existence of God. Let us, therefore, recollect it - wherever I am, upon my bed or in my secret chamber, God is there. There is not a secret word I speak in the ear of a friend but God hears it. Do I seek out the most private part of the city for the commission of sin - God is there. Do I choose the shadow of night to cover my iniquity? - He is there looking upon me. The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realized, would preserve us from sin; always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming, when all the sins that we have committed shall be read and published. Oh! what a blush shall crimson the cheek of the hypocrite when God shall read the secret diary of his iniquity! O my fellow-professors, let us always look upon our actions in the light of the great outreading of them in the day of judgment. Pause over everything you do, and say, "Can I bear to have this sounded with a trumpet in the ear of all men?" Nay, take a higher motive, and say, "Can I endure to do this and yet to repeat the words, "Thou God seest me." Ye may deceive men, and deceive yourselves, but God ye cannot, God ye shall not. Ye may die with the name of Christ upon your lips, and men may bury you in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but God shall not be deceived

neither by your profession nor by men's opinion. He shall put you in the scales, and if you be found wanting, he shall cry, "Away with him." He shall ring you, and if you have not the ring of the pure coin of grace, he shall nail you down for ever as a counterfeit. He shall strip the mask off you. Virtue is most adorned, when unadorned the most. To detect you, you shall be stripped naked, and every cloak shall be torn to tatters. How will you endure this? Will ye dig into the depths to hide yourselves? Will ye plunge into the sea to find a way of escape? Will ye cry for the rocks to hide you, and the mountains to fall upon you? In vain shall you cry. The all-seeing God shall read your soul, shall discover your secret, shall reveal your hidden things, and tell the world that, though you did eat and drink in his streets, though you preached his name, yet he never knew you, you were still a worker of iniquity, and must be driven away for ever.

Come let us just for one second reflect, that we shall soon lie upon our death bed. A few more months, and you and I shall face the cruel tyrant, death. It will be hard work to play the hypocrite then; when the pulse is faint and few, when the eye-strings break, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, it will be in vain to try hypocrisy then. O may God make you sincere; for if you die with an empty profession, you die indeed. Of all deaths, methinks the most awful is that of the hypocrite, and after death, for him to lift up his eyes and find himself lost - and for ever! O make sure work of it. May God give you true grace and true faith, and may we all meet in heaven. This is our earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **I Know That My Redeemer Liveth**

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body,



yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. - Job 19:25-27

The hand of God has been upon us heavily this week. An aged deacon, who has been for more than fifty years a member of this Church, has been removed from our midst; and a sister, the beloved wife of another of our Church-officers, a member for nearly the same term of years, has fallen asleep. It is not often that a Church is called to sorrow over the departure of two such venerable members—let not our ears be deaf to such a double admonition to prepare to meet our God. That they were preserved so long, and upheld so mercifully for so many years, was not only a reason for gratitude to them, but to us also. I am, however, so averse to the preaching of what are called funeral sermons, that I forbear, lest I appear to eulogize the creature, when my only aim should be to magnify the grace of God.

Our text deserves our profound attention; its preface would hardly have been written had not the matter been of the utmost importance in the judgment of the patriarch who uttered it. Listen to Job's remarkable desire: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" Perhaps, hardly aware of the full meaning of the words he was uttering, yet his holy soul was impressed with a sense of some weighty revelation concealed within his words; he therefore desired that it might be recorded in a book; he has had his desire: the Book of books embalms the words of Job. He wished to have them graven on a rock; cut deep into it with an iron pen, and then the lines inlaid with lead; or he would have them engraven, according to the custom of the ancients, upon a sheet of metal, so that time might not be able to eat out the inscription. He has not had his desire in that respect, save only that upon many and many a sepulchre those words of Job stand recorded, "I know that my redeemer liveth." It is the opinion of some commentators that Job, in speaking of the rock here, intended his own rock-hewn sepulchre, and desired that this might be his epitaph; that it might be cut deep, so that ages should not wear it out; that when any asked, "Where does Job sleep?" as soon as they saw the sepulchre of the patriarch of Uz, they might learn that he

died in hope of resurrection, resting upon a living Redeemer. Whether such a sentence adorned the portals of Job's last sleeping-place we know not; but certainly no words could have been more fitly chosen. Should not the man of patience, the mirror of endurance, the pattern of trust, bear as his memorial this golden line, which is as full of all the patience of hope, and hope of patience, as mortal language can be? Who among us could select a more glorious motto for his last escutcheon? I am sorry to say that a few of those who have written upon this passage cannot see Christ or the resurrection in it at all. Albert Barnes, among the rest, expresses his intense sorrow that he cannot find the resurrection here, and for my part I am sorry for him. If it had been Job's desire to foretell the advent of Christ and his own sure resurrection, I cannot see what better words he could have used; and if those truths are not here taught, then language must have lost its original object, and must have been employed to mystify and not to explain; to conceal and not to reveal. What I ask, does the patriarch mean, if not that he shall rise again when the Redeemer stands upon the earth? Brethren, no unsophisticated mind can fail to find here what almost all believers have here discovered. I feel safe in keeping to the old sense, and we shall this morning seek no new interpretation, but adhere to the common one, with or without the consent of our critics.

In discoursing upon them I shall speak upon three things. First, let us, with the patriarch, descend into the grave and behold the ravages of death. Then, with him, let us look up on high for present consolation. And, still in his admirable company, let us, in the third place, anticipate future delights.

I. First of all then, with the patriarch of Uz, LET US DESCEND INTO THE SEPULCHRE.

The body has just been divorced from the soul. Friends who loved most tenderly have said—"Bury my dead out of my sight." The body is borne upon the bier and consigned to the silent earth; it is surrounded by the earthworks of death. Death has a host of troops. If the locusts and the caterpillars be God's army, the worms are the army of death. These hungry warriors begin to attack the city of man. They commence with the outworks; they storm the munition, and overturn the walls. The skin, the city wall of manhood, is utterly broken down, and the towers of its glory

covered with confusion. How speedily the cruel invaders deface all beauty. The face gathers blackness; the countenance is defiled with corruption. Those cheeks once fair with youth, and ruddy with health, have fallen in, even as a bowing wall and a tottering fence; those eyes, the windows of the mind whence joy and sorrow looked forth by turns, are now filled up with the dust of death; those lips, the doors of the soul, the gates of Mansoul, are carried away, and the bars thereof are broken. Alas, ye windows of agates and gates of carbuncle, where are ye now? How shall I mourn for thee, O thou captive city, for the mighty men have utterly spoiled thee! Thy neck, once like a tower of ivory, has become as a fallen column; thy nose, so lately comparable to "the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus," is as a ruined hovel; and thy head, which towered like Carmel, lies low as the clods of the valley. Where is beauty now? The most lovely cannot be known from the most deformed. The vessel so daintily wrought upon the potter's wheel, is cast away upon the dunghill with the vilest potsherds. Cruel have ye been, ye warriors of death, for though ye wield no axes and bear no hammers, yet have ye broken down the carved work; and though ye speak not with tongues, yet have ye said in your hearts, "We have swallowed her up, certainly this is the day that we have looked for; we have found, we have seen it." The skin is gone. The troops have entered into the town of Mansoul. And now they pursue their work of devastation; the pitiless marauders fall upon the body itself. There are those noble aqueducts, the veins through which the streams of life were wont to flow, these, instead of being rivers of life, have become blocked up with the soil and wastes of death, and now they must be pulled to pieces; not a single relic of them shall be spared. Mark the muscles and sinews, like great highways that penetrating the metropolis, carry the strength and wealth of manhood along—their curious pavement must be pulled up, and they that do traffic thereon must be consumed; each tunnelled bone, and curious arch, and knotted bond must be snapped and broken. Fair fabrics, glorious storehouses, costly engines, wonderful machines—all, all must be pulled down, and not one stone left upon another. Those nerves, which like telegraphic wires connected all parts of the city together, to carry thought and feeling and intelligence—these are cut. No matter how artistic the work might be, —and certainly we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the anatomist stands still and marvels to see the skill which the eternal God has

manifested in the formation of the body—but these ruthless worms pull everything to pieces, till like a city sacked and spoiled that has been given up for days to pillage and to flame, everything lies in a heap of ruin—ashes to ashes, dust to dust. But these invaders stop not here. Job says that next they consume his reins. We are wont to speak of the heart as the great citadel of life, the inner keep and donjon, where the captain of the guard holdeth out to the last. The Hebrews do not regard the heart, but the lower viscera, the reins, as the seat of the passions and of mental power. The worms spare not; they enter the secret palaces of the tabernacle of life, and the standard is plucked from the tower. Having died, the heart cannot preserve itself, and falls like the rest of the frame—a prey to worms. It is gone, it is all gone! The skin, the body, the vitals, all, all has departed. There is nought left. In a few years ye shall turn up the sod and say, "Here slept so-and-so, and where is he now?", and ye may search and hunt and dig, but ye shall find no relic. Mother Earth has devoured her own offspring.

Dear friends, why should we wish to have it otherwise? Why should we desire to preserve the body when the soul has gone? What vain attempts men have made with coffins of lead, and wrappings of myrrh and frankincense. The embalming of the Egyptians, those master robbers of the worm, what has it done? It has served to keep some poor shrivelled lumps of mortality above ground to be sold for curiosities, to be dragged away to foreign climes, and stared upon by thoughtless eyes. No, let the dust go, the sooner it dissolves the better. And what matters it how it goes! If it be devoured of beasts, if it be swallowed up in the sea and become food for fishes! What, if plants with their roots suck up the particles! What, if the fabric passes into the animal, and from the animal into the earth, and from the plant into the animal again! What, if the winds blow it along the highway! What, if the rivers carry it to the waves of ocean! It is ordained that somehow or other it must be all separated—"dust to dust, ashes to ashes." It is part of the decree that it should all perish. The worms or some other agents of destruction must destroy this body. Do not seek to avoid what God has purposed; do not look upon it as a gloomy thing. Regard it as a necessity; nay more, view it as the platform of a miracle, the lofty stage of resurrection, since Jesus shall surely raise again from the dead the particles of this body, however divided from one

another. We have heard of miracles, but what a miracle is the resurrection! All the miracles of Scripture, yea even those wrought by Christ, are small compared with this. The philosopher says, "How is it possible that God shall hunt out every particle of the human frame?" He can do it: he has but to speak the word, and every single atom, though it may have traveled thousands of leagues, though it may have been blown as dust across the desert, and anon have fallen upon the bosom of the sea, and then have descended into the depths thereof to be cast up on a desolate shore, sucked up by plants, fed on again by beasts, or passed into the fabric of another man,—I say that individual atom shall find its fellows, and the whole company of particles at the trump of the archangel shall travel to their appointed place, and the body, the very body which was laid in the ground, shall rise again.

I am afraid I have been somewhat uninteresting while tarrying upon the exposition of the words of Job, but I think very much of the pith of Job's faith lay in this, that he had a clear view that the worms would after his skin destroy his body, and yet that in his flesh he should see God. You know we might regard it as a small miracle if we could preserve the bodies of the departed. If, by some process, with spices and gums we could preserve the particles, for the Lord to make those dry bones live, and to quicken that skin and flesh, were a miracle certainly, but not palpably and plainly so great a marvel as when the worms have destroyed the body. When the fabric has been absolutely broken up, the tenement all pulled down, ground to pieces, and flung in handfuls to the wind, so that no relic of it is left, and yet when Christ stands in the latter days upon the earth, all the structure shall be brought together, bone to his bone—then shall the might of Omnipotence be seen. This is the doctrine of the resurrection, and happy is he who finds no difficulty here, who looks at it as being an impossibility with man but a possibility with God, and lays hold upon the omnipotence of the Most High and says, "Thou sayest it, and it shall be done!" I comprehend thee not, great God; I marvel at thy purpose to raise my moldering bones: but I know that thou doest great wonders, and I am not surprised that thou shouldst conclude the great drama of thy creating works here on earth by re-creating the human frame by the same power by which thou didst bring from the dead the body of thy Son Jesus Christ, and by that same divine energy which

has regenerated human souls in thine own image.

II. Now, having thus descended into the grave, and seen nothing there but what is loathsome, **LET US LOOK UP WITH THE PATRIARCH AND BEHOLD A SUN SHINING WITH PRESENT COMFORT.**

"I know," said he, "that my Redeemer liveth." The word "Redeemer" here used, is in the original "goel"—kinsman. The duty of the kinsman, or goel, was this: suppose an Israelite had alienated his estate, as in the case of Naomi and Ruth; suppose a patrimony which had belonged to a family, had passed away through poverty, it was the goel's business, the redeemer's business to pay the price as the next of kin, and to buy back the heritage. Boaz stood in that relation to Ruth. Now, the body may be looked upon as the heritage of the soul—the soul's small farm, that little plot of earth in which the soul has been wont to walk and delight, as a man walketh in his garden or dwelleth in his house. Now, that becomes alienated. Death, like Ahab, takes away the vineyard from us who are as Naboth; we lose our patrimonial estate; Death sends his troops to take our vineyard and to spoil the vines thereof and ruin it. But we turn round to Death and say, "I know that my Goel liveth, and he will redeem this heritage; I have lost it; thou takest it from me lawfully, O Death, because my sin hath forfeited my right; I have lost my heritage through my own offence, and through that of my first parent Adam; but there lives one who will buy this back." Brethren, Job could say this of Christ long before he had descended upon earth, "I know that he liveth;" and now that he has ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, surely we may with double emphasis say, "I know that my Goel, my Kinsman liveth, and that he hath paid the price, that I should have back my patrimony, so that in my flesh I shall see God." Yes, my hands, ye are redeemed with blood; bought not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Yes, heaving lungs and palpitating heart, ye have been redeemed! He that redeemed the soul to be his altar has also redeemed the body, that it may be a temple for the Holy Ghost. Not even the bones of Joseph can remain in the house of bondage. No smell of the fire of death may pass upon the garments which his holy children have worn in the furnace.

Remember, too, that it was always considered to be the duty of the goel,

not merely to redeem by price, but where that failed, to re- deem by power. Hence, when Lot was carried away captive by the four kings, Abraham summoned his own hired servants, and the servants of all his friends, and went out against the kings of the East, and brought back Lot and the captives of Sodom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who once has played the kinsman's part by paying the price for us, liveth, and he will redeem us by power. O Death, thou tremblest at this name! Thou knowest the might of our Kinsman! Against his arm thou canst not stand! Thou didst once meet him foot to foot in stern battle, and O Death, thou didst indeed tread upon his heel. He voluntarily submitted to this, or else, O Death, thou hadst no power against him. But he slew thee, Death, he slew thee! He rifled all thy caskets, took from thee the key of thy castle, burst open the door of thy dungeon; and now, thou knowest, Death, thou hast no power to hold my body; thou mayst set thy slaves to devour it, but thou shalt give it up, and all their spoil must be restored. Insatiable Death, from thy greedy maw yet shall return the multitudes whom thou hast devoured. Thou shalt be compelled by the Saviour to restore thy captives to the light of day. I think I see Jesus coming with his Father's servants. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. Blow ye the trumpet! blow ye the trumpet! Immanuel rides to battle! The Most Mighty in majesty girds on his sword. He comes! He comes to snatch by power, his people's lands from those who have invaded their portion. Oh, how glorious the victory! No battle shall there be. He comes, he sees, he conquers. The sound of the trumpet shall be enough; Death shall fly affrighted; and at once from beds of dust and silent clay, to realms of everlasting day the righteous shall arise.

To linger here a moment, there was yet, very conspicuously in the Old Testament, we are informed, a third duty of the goel, which was to avenge the death of his friend. If a person had been slain, the Goel was the avenger of blood; snatching up his sword, he at once pursued the person who had been guilty of bloodshed. So now, let us picture ourselves as being smitten by Death. His arrow has just pierced us to the heart, but in the act of expiring, our lips are able to boast of vengeance, and in the face of the monster we cry, "I know that my Goel liveth." Thou mayst fly, O Death, as rapidly as thou wilt, but no city of refuge can hide thee from him; he will overtake thee; he will lay hold upon thee, O thou skeleton

monarch, and he will avenge my blood on thee. I would that I had powers of eloquence to work out this magnificent thought. Chrysostom, or Christmas Evans could picture the flight of the King of Terrors, the pursuit by the Redeemer, the overtaking of the foe, and the slaying of the destroyer. Christ shall certainly avenge himself on Death for all the injury which Death hath done to his beloved kinsmen. Comfort thyself then, O Christian; thou hast ever living, even when thou diest, one who avenges thee, one who has paid the price for thee, and one whose strong arms shall yet set thee free.

Passing on in our text to notice the next word, it seems that Job found consolation not only in the fact that he had a Goel, a Redeemer, but that this Redeemer liveth. He does not say, "I know that my Goel shall live, but that he lives,"—having a clear view of the self-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. And you and I looking back do not say, "I know that he did live, but he lives today." This very day you that mourn and sorrow for venerated friends, your prop and pillar in years gone by, you may go to Christ with confidence, because he not only lives, but he is the source of life; and you therefore believe that he can give forth out of himself life to those whom you have committed to the tomb. He is the Lord and giver of life originally, and he shall be specially declared to be the resurrection and the life, when the legions of his redeemed shall be glorified with him. If I saw no fountain from which life could stream to the dead, I would yet believe the promise when God said that the dead shall live; but when I see the fountain provided, and know that it is full to the brim and that it runneth over, I can rejoice without trembling. Since there is one who can say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," it is a blessed thing to see the means already before us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look up to our Goel then who liveth at this very time.

Still the marrow of Job's comfort it seems to me lay in that little word "My." "I know that MY Redeemer liveth." Oh, to get hold of Christ! I know that in his offices he is precious. But, dear friends, we must get a property in him before we can really enjoy him. What is honey in the wood to me, if like the fainting Israelites, I dare not eat. It is honey in my hand, honey on my lip, which enlightens mine eyes like those of



Jonathan. What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, purchasing the bread I need. So, what is a kinsman if he be not a kinsman to me? A Redeemer that does not redeem me, an avenger who will never stand up for my blood, of what avail were such? But Job's faith was strong and firm in the conviction that the Redeemer was his. Dear friends, dear friends, can all of you say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The question is simple and simply put; but oh, what solemn things hang upon your answer, "Is it MY Redeemer?" I charge you rest not, be not content until by faith you can say, "Yes, I cast myself upon him; I am his, and therefore he is mine." I know that full many of you, while you look upon all else that you have as not being yours, yet can say, "My Redeemer is mine." He is the only piece of property which is really ours. We borrow all else, the house, the children, nay, our very body we must return to the Great Lender. But Jesus, we can never leave, for even when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord, and I know that even death cannot separate us from him, so that body and soul are with Jesus truly even in the dark hours of death, in the long night of the sepulchre, and in the separate state of spiritual existence. Beloved, have you Christ? It may be you hold him with a feeble hand, you half think it is presumption to say, "He is my Redeemer;" yet remember, if you have but faith as a grain of mustard seed, that little faith entitles you to say, and say now, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

There is another word in this consoling sentence which no doubt served to give a zest to the comfort of Job. It was that he could say, "I KNOW"—"I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth." To say, "I hope so, I trust so," is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much further. But to reach the marrow of consolation you must say, "I KNOW." Ifs, buts, and perhapses, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! If I have any suspicion that Christ is not mine, then there is vinegar mingled with the gall of death. But if I know that Jesus is mine, then darkness is not dark; even the night is light about me. Out of the lion cometh honey; out of the eater cometh forth sweetness. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This is a brightly-burning lamp cheering the damp of the sepulchral vault, but a feeble hope is like a flickering

smoking flax, just making darkness visible, but nothing more. I would not like to die with a mere hope mingled with suspicion. I might be safe with this but hardly happy; but oh, to go down into the river knowing that all is well, confident that as a guilty, weak, and helpless worm I have - fallen into the arms of Jesus, and believing that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him. I would have you, dear Christian friends, never look upon the full assurance of faith as a thing impossible to you. Say not, "It is too high; I cannot attain unto it." I have known one or two saints of God who have rarely doubted their interest at all. There are many of us who do not often enjoy any ravishing ecstasies, but on the other hand we generally maintain the even tenor of our way, simply hanging upon Christ, feeling that his promise is true, that his merits are sufficient, and that we are safe. Assurance is a jewel for worth but not for rarity. It is the common privilege of all the saints if they have but the grace to attain unto it, and this grace the Holy Spirit gives freely. Surely if Job in Arabia, in those dark misty ages when there was only the morning star and not the sun, when they saw but little when life and immortality had not been brought to light,—if Job before the coming and advent still could say, "I know," you and I should not speak less positively. God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. Let us try ourselves, and see that our marks and evidences are right, lest we form an ungrounded hope; for nothing can be more destructive than to say, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." But oh, let us build for eternity, and build solidly. Let us not be satisfied with the mere foundation, for it is from the upper rooms that we get the widest prospect. Let us pray the Lord to help us to pile stone on stone, until we are able to say as we look at it, "Yes, I know, I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth." This, then, for present comfort today in the prospect of departure.

III. And now, in the third and last place, as THE ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE DELIGHT, let me call to your remembrance the other part of the text. Job not only knew that the Redeemer lived, but he anticipated the time when he should stand in the latter day upon the earth. No doubt Job referred here to our Saviour's first advent, to the time when Jesus Christ, "the goel," the kinsman, should stand upon the earth to pay in the blood of his veins the ransom price, which had, indeed, in bond and stipulation been paid before the foundation of the world in promise. But I

cannot think that Job's vision stayed there; he was looking forward to the second advent of Christ as being the period of the resurrection. We cannot endorse the theory that Job arose from the dead when our Lord died, although certain Jewish believers held this idea very firmly at one time. We are persuaded that "the latter day" refers to the advent of glory rather than to that of shame. Our hope is that the Lord shall come to reign in glory where he once died in agony. The bright and hallowed doctrine of the second advent has been greatly revived in our churches in these latter days, and I look for the best results in consequence. There is always a danger lest it be perverted and turned by fanatical minds, by prophetic speculations, into an abuse; but the doctrine in itself is one of the most consoling, and, at the same time, one of the most practical, tending to keep the Christian awake, because the bridegroom cometh at such an hour as we think not. Beloved, we believe that the same Jesus who ascended from Olivet shall so come in like manner as he ascended up into heaven. We believe in his personal advent and reign. We believe and expect that when both wise and foolish virgins shall slumber; in the night when sleep is heavy upon the saints; when men shall be eating and drinking as in the days of Noah, that suddenly as the lightning flasheth from heaven, so Christ shall descend with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise and reign with him. We are looking forward to the literal, personal and actual standing of Christ upon earth as the time when creation's groans shall be silenced forever, and the earnest expectation of the creature shall be fulfilled.

Mark, that Job describes Christ as standing. Some interpreters have read the passage, "he shall stand in the latter days against the earth;" that as the earth has covered up the slain, as the earth has become the charnel-house of the dead, Jesus shall arise to the contest and say, "Earth, I am against thee; give up thy dead! Ye clods of the valley cease to be custodians of my people's bodies! Silent deeps, and you, ye caverns of the earth, deliver, once for all, those whom ye have imprisoned!" Macphelah shall give up its precious treasure, cemeteries and graveyards shall release their captives, and all the deep places of the earth shall resign the bodies of the faithful. Well, whether that be so or no, the posture of Christ, in standing upon the earth, is significant. It shows his triumph. He has triumphed over sin, which once like a serpent in its coils had bound

the earth. He has defeated Satan. On the very spot where Satan gained his power Christ has gained the victory. Earth, which was a scene of defeated goodness, whence mercy once was all but driven, where virtue died, where everything heavenly and pure, like flowers blasted by pestilential winds, hung down their heads, withered and blighted—on this very earth everything that is glorious shall blow and blossom in perfection; and Christ himself, once despised and rejected of men, fairest of all the sons of men, shall come in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, while kings and princes shall do him homage, and all the nations shall call him blessed. "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth."

Then, at that auspicious hour, says Job, "In my flesh I shall see God." Oh, blessed anticipation—"I shall see God." He does not say, "I shall see the saints"—doubtless we shall see them all in heaven—but, "I shall see God." Note he does not say, "I shall see the pearly gates, I shall see the walls of jasper, I shall see the crowns of gold and the harps of harmony," but "I shall see God;" as if that were the sum and substance of heaven. "In my flesh shall I see God." The pure in heart shall see God. It was their delight to see him in the ordinances by faith. They delighted to behold him in communion and in prayer. There in heaven they shall have a vision of another sort. We shall see God in heaven, and be made completely like him; the divine character shall be stamped upon us; and being made like to him we shall be perfectly satisfied and content. Likeness to God, what can we wish for more? And a sight of God, what can we desire better? We shall see God and so there shall be perfect contentment to the soul and a satisfaction of all the faculties. Some read the passage, "Yet, I shall see God in my flesh," and hence think that there is here an allusion to Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the word made flesh. Well, be it so, or be it not so, it is certain that we shall see Christ, and He, as the divine Redeemer, shall be the subject of our eternal vision. Nor shall we ever want any joy beyond simply that of seeing him. Think not, dear friend, that this will be a narrow sphere for our mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, "I shall see God," but that source is infinite. His wisdom, his love, his power, all his attributes shall be subjects for your eternal contemplation, and as he is infinite under each aspect there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, his purposes, his gifts, his love to you, and his glory in all his purposes, and in all his deeds of love—why, these shall make a theme that never can

be exhausted. You may with divine delight anticipate the time when in your flesh you shall see God.

But I must have you observe how Job has expressly made us note that it is in the same body. "Yet, in my flesh shall I see God;" and then he says again, "whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold and not another." Yes, it is true that I, the very man standing here, though I must go down to die, yet I shall as the same man most certainly arise and shall behold my God. Not part of myself, though the soul alone shall have some view of God, but the whole of myself, my flesh, my soul, my body, my spirit shall gaze on God. We shall not enter heaven, dear friends, as a dismasted vessel is tugged into harbor; we shall not get to glory some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, but the whole ship shall be floated safely into the haven, body and soul both being safe. Christ shall be able to say, "All that the father giveth to me shall come to me," not only all the persons, but all of the persons—each man in his perfection. There shall not be found in heaven one imperfect saint. There shall not be a saint without an eye, much less a saint without a body. No member of the body shall have perished; nor shall the body have lost any of its natural beauty. All the saints shall be all there, and all of all; the same persons precisely, only that they shall have risen from a state of grace to a state of glory. They shall be ripened; they shall be no more the green blades, but the full corn in the ear; no more buds but flowers; not babes but men.

Please to notice, and then I shall conclude, how the patriarch puts it as being a real personal enjoyment. "Whom mine eye shall behold, and not another." They shall not bring me a report as they did the Queen of Sheba, but I shall see Solomon the King for myself. I shall be able to say, as they did who spake to the woman of Samaria, "Now I believe, not because of thy word who did bring me a report, but I have seen him for myself." There shall be personal intercourse with God; not through the Book, which is but as a glass; not through the ordinances; but directly, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be able to commune with the Deity as a man talketh with his friend. "Not another." If I could be a changeling and could be altered, that would mar my comfort. Or if my heaven must be enjoyed by proxy, if draughts of bliss must be drunk for

me, where were the hope? Oh, no; for myself, and not through another, shall I see God. Have we not told you a hundred times that nothing but personal religion will do, and is not this another argument for it, because resurrection and glory are personal things? "Not another." If you could have sponsors to repent for you, then, depend upon it, you would have sponsors to be glorified for you. But as there is not another to see God for you, so you must yourself see and yourself find an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In closing let me observe how foolish have you and I been when we have looked forward to death with shudders, with doubts, with loathings. After all, what is it? Worms! Do ye tremble at those base crawling things? Scattered particles! Shall we be alarmed at these? To meet the worms we have the angels; and to gather the scattered particles we have the voice of God. I am sure the gloom of death is altogether gone now that the lamp of resurrection burns. Disrobing is nothing now that better garments await us. We may long for evening to undress, that we may rise with God. I am sure my venerable friends now present, in coming so near as they do now to the time of the departure, must have some visions of the glory on the other side the stream. Bunyan was not wrong, my dear brethren, when he put the land Beulah at the close of the pilgrimage. Is not my text a telescope which will enable you to see across the Jordan; may it not be as hands of angels to bring you bundles of myrrh and frankincense? You can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." You cannot want more; you were not satisfied with less in your youth, you will not be content with less now. Those of us who are young, are comforted by the thought that we may soon depart. I say comforted, not alarmed by it; and we almost envy those whose race is nearly run, because we fear—and yet we must not speak thus, for the Lord's will be done—I was about to say, we fear that our battle may last long, and that mayhap our feet may slip; only he that keepeth Israel does not slumber nor sleep. So since we know that our Redeemer liveth, this shall be our comfort in life, that though we fall we shall not be utterly cast down; and since our Redeemer liveth, this shall be our comfort in death, that though worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God.

May the Lord add his blessing on the feeble words of this morning, and to

him be glory forever. Amen.

Grave, the guardian of our dust!  
Grave, the treasury of the skies!  
Every atom of thy trust  
Rests in hope again to rise.  
Hark! the judgment trumpet calls;  
Soul, rebuild thy house of clay,  
Immortality thy walls,  
And Eternity thy day.

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## **Immeasurable Love**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. -  
John 3:16

I was very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular, because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, "Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love, and Christ as the atonement for sin." I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are about to meet around the communion table, and I cannot preach from this text anything but a simple gospel sermon. Can you desire a better preparation for communion? We have fellowship with God and with one another upon the basis of the infinite love which is displayed in Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel is the fair white linen cloth which covers the table on which the Communion Feast is set. The higher truths, those truths which belong to a more enlightened experience, those richer truths which tell of the fellowship of the higher life—all these are helpful to holy fellowship; but I am sure not more so than those elementary and foundation truths which were the means of our first entrance into the kingdom of God. Babes in Christ and men in Christ here feed upon one common food. Come, ye aged saints, be children again; and you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling-book, and go over your A B C again, by learning that God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to die, that man might live through him. I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory, and a blessed thing to feel young again. What the old folks used to call the Christ-cross Row contained nothing but the letters; and yet all the books in the language are made out of that line: therefore do I call you back to the cross, and to him who bled thereon. It is a good thing for us all to return at times to our starting place, and make sure that we are in the way everlasting. The love of our espousals is most likely to continue if we again and again begin where God began with us, and where we first began with God. It is wise to come to him afresh, as we came in that first day when, helpless, needy, heavy-laden, we stood weeping at the cross, and left our burden at the pierced feet. There we learned to look, and live, and love; and there would we repeat the lesson till we rehearse it perfectly in glory.

To-night, we have to talk about the love of God: "God so loved the world." That love of God is a very wonderful thing, especially when we see it set upon a lost, ruined, guilty world. What was there in the world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to him, hatred to his truth, disregard of his law, rebellion against his commandments; those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land; but no desirable thing blossomed there. Yet, "God loved the world," says the text; "so" loved it, that even the



writer of the book of John could not tell us how much; but so greatly, so divinely, did he love it that he gave his Son, his only Son, to redeem the world from perishing, and to gather out of it a people to his praise.

Whence came that love? Not from anything outside of God himself. God's love springs from himself. He loves because it is his nature to do so. "God is love." As I have said already, nothing upon the face of the earth could have merited his love, though there was much to merit his displeasure. This stream of love flows from its own secret source in the eternal Deity, and it owes nothing to any earth-born rain or rivulet; it springs from beneath the everlasting throne, and fills itself full from the springs of the infinite. God loved because he would love. When we enquire why the Lord loved this man or that, we have to come back to our Saviour's answer to the question, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." God has such love in his nature that he must needs let it flow forth to a world perishing by its own wilful sin; and when it flowed forth it was so deep, so wide, so strong, that even inspiration could not compute its measure, and therefore the Holy Spirit gave us that great little word SO, and left us to attempt the measurement, according as we perceive more and more of love divine.

Now, there happened to be an occasion upon which the great God could display his immeasurable love. The world had sadly gone astray; the world had lost itself; the world was tried and condemned; the world was given over to perish, because of its offenses; and there was need for help. The fall of Adam and the destruction of mankind made ample room and verge enough for love almighty. Amid the ruins of humanity there was space for showing how much Jehovah loved the sons of men; for the compass of his love was no less than the world, the object of it no less than to deliver men from going down to the pit, and the result of it no less than the finding of a ransom for them. The far-reaching purpose of that love was both negative and positive; that, believing in Jesus, men might not perish, but have eternal life. The desperate disease of man gave occasion for the introduction of that divine remedy which God alone could have devised and supplied. By the plan of mercy, and the great gift which was needed for carrying it out, the Lord found means to display his boundless love to guilty men. Had there been no fall, and no perishing,

God might have shown his love to us as he does to the pure and perfect spirits that surround his throne; but he never could have commended his love to us to such an extent as he now does. In the gift of his only-begotten Son, God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The black background of sin makes the bright line of love shine out the more clearly. When the lightning writes the name of the Lord with flaming finger across the black brow of the tempest, we are compelled to see it; so when love inscribes the cross upon the jet tablet of our sin, even blind eyes must see that "herein is love."

I might handle my text in a thousand different ways to-night; but for simplicity's sake, and to keep to the one point of setting forth the love of God, I want to make you see how great that love is by five different particulars.

I. The first is the GIFT: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

Consider, then, what this gift was that God gave. I should have to labour for expression if I were to attempt to set forth to the full this priceless boon; and I will not court a failure by attempting the impossible. I will only invite you to think of the sacred Person whom the Great Father gave in order that he might prove his love to men. It was his only-begotten Son—his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. None of us had ever such a son to give. Ours are the sons of men; his was the Son of God. The Father gave his other self, one with himself. When the great God gave his Son he gave God himself, for Jesus is not in his eternal nature less than God. When God gave God for us he gave himself. What more could he give? God gave his all: he gave himself. Who can measure this love?

Judge, ye fathers, how ye love your sons: could ye give them to die for your enemy? Judge, ye that have an only son, how your hearts are entwined about your first-born, your only-begotten. There was no higher proof of Abraham's love to God than when he did not withhold from God his son, his only son, his Isaac whom he loved; and there can certainly be no greater display of love than for the Eternal Father to give his only-begotten Son to die for us. No living thing will readily lose its offspring;

man has peculiar grief when his son is taken; has not God yet more? A story has often been told of the fondness of parents for their children how in a famine in the East a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation, and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery. So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable, and their children pleading for bread tugged so painfully at their heart-strings, that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of the rest. They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the first: how could they spare their first-born? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him, and the mother said that she would never part with him. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage; and as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling, and they could not part with him. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly to part with any one of their children. Do you not sympathize with them? I see you do. Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, he seemed to love us better than his only Son, and did not spare him that he might spare us. He permitted his Son to perish from among men "that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you desire to see the love of God in this great procedure you must consider how he gave his Son. He did not give his Son, as you might do, to some profession in the pursuit of which you might still enjoy his company; but he gave his Son to exile among men. He sent him down to yonder manger, united with a perfect manhood, which at the first was in an infant's form. There he slept, where horned oxen fed! The Lord God sent the heir of all things to toil in a carpenter's shop: to drive the nail, and push the plane, and use the saw. He sent him down amongst scribes and Pharisees, whose cunning eyes watched him, and whose cruel tongues scourged him with base slanders. He sent him down to hunger, and thirst, amid poverty so dire that he had not where to lay his head. He sent him down to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, to the giving of his back to the smiters and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair. At length he gave him up to death—a felon's death, the death of the crucified. Behold that cross and see the anguish of him that dies upon

it, and mark how the Father has so given him, that he hides his face from him, and seems as if he would not own him! "Lama sabachthani" tells us how fully God gave his Son to ransom the souls of the sinful. He gave him to be made a curse for us; gave him that he might die "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Dear sirs, I can understand your giving up your children to go to India on her Majesty's service, or to go out to the Cameroons or the Congo upon the errands of our Lord Jesus. I can well comprehend your yielding them up even with the fear of a pestilential climate before you, for if they die they will die honourably in a glorious cause; but could you think of parting with them to die a felon's death, upon a gibbet, execrated by those whom they sought to bless, stripped naked in body and deserted in mind? Would not that be too much? Would you not cry, "I cannot part with my son for such wretches as these. Why should he be put to a cruel death for such abominable beings, who even wash their hands in the blood of their best friend"? Remember that our Lord Jesus died what his countrymen considered to be an accursed death. To the Romans it was the death of a condemned slave, a death which had all the elements of pain, disgrace, and scorn mingled in it to the uttermost. "But God commendeth his love to- ward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Oh, wondrous stretch of love, that Jesus Christ should die!

Yet, I cannot leave this point till I have you notice when God gave his Son, for there is love in the time. "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son." But when did he do that? In his eternal purpose he did this from before the foundation of the world. The words here used, "He gave his Only Begotten Son," cannot relate exclusively to the death of Christ, for Christ was not dead at the time of the utterance of this third chapter of John. Our Lord had just been speaking with Nicodemus, and that conversation took place at the beginning of his ministry. The fact is that Jesus was always the gift of God. The promise of Jesus was made in the garden of Eden almost as soon as Adam fell. On the spot where our ruin was accomplished, a Deliverer was bestowed whose heel should be bruised, but who should break the serpent's head beneath his foot.

Throughout the ages the great Father stood to his gift. He looked upon his Only Begotten as man's hope, the inheritance of the chosen seed, who

in him would possess all things. Every sacrifice was God's renewal of his gift of grace, a reassurance that he had bestowed the gift, and would never draw back therefrom. The whole system of types under the law betokened that in the fulness of time the Lord would in very deed give up his Son, to be born of a woman, to bear the iniquities of his people, and to die the death in their behalf. I greatly admire this pertinacity of love; for many a man in a moment of generous excitement can perform a supreme act of benevolence, and yet could not bear to look at it calmly, and consider it from year to year; the slow fire of anticipation would have been unbearable. If the Lord should take away yonder dear boy from his mother, she would bear the blow with some measure of patience, heavy as it would be to her tender heart; but suppose that she were credibly informed that on such a day her boy must die, and thus had from year to year to look upon him as one dead, would it not cast a cloud over every hour of her future life? Suppose also that she knew that he would be hanged upon a tree to die, as one condemned; would it not embitter her existence? If she could withdraw from such a trial, would she not? Assuredly she would. Yet the Lord God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, doing it in his heart from age, to age. Herein is love: love which many waters could not quench: love eternal, inconceivable, infinite!

Now, as this gift refers not only to our Lord's death, but to the ages before it, so it includes also all the ages afterwards. God "so loved the world that he gave"—and still gives—"his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The Lord is giving Christ away to-night. Oh, that thousands of you may gladly accept the gift unspeakable! Will anyone refuse? This good gift, this perfect gift, —can you decline it? Oh, that you may have faith to lay hold on Jesus, for thus he will be yours. He is God's free gift to all free receivers; a full Christ for empty sinners. If you can but hold out your empty willing hand, the Lord will give Christ to you at this moment. Nothing is freer than a gift. Nothing is more worth having than a gift which comes fresh from the hand of God, as full of effectual power as ever it was. The fountain is eternal, but the stream from it is as fresh as when first the fountain was opened. There is no exhausting this gift.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood  
Shall never lose it power  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."

See, then, what is the love of God, that he gave his Son from of old, and has never revoked the gift. He stands to his gift, and continues still to give his dear Son to all who are willing to accept him. Out of the riches of his grace he has given, is giving, and will give the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the priceless gifts which are contained in him, to all needy sinners who will simply trust him.

I call upon you from this first point to admire the love of God, because of the transcendent greatness of his gift to the world, even the gift of his only begotten Son.

II. Now notice secondly, and, I think I may say, with equal admiration, the love of God in THE PLAN OF SALVATION. He has put it thus: "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The way of salvation is extremely simple to understand, and exceedingly easy to practise, when once the heart is made willing and obedient. The method of the covenant of grace differs as much from that of the covenant of works as light from darkness. It is not said that God has given his Son to all who will keep his law, for that we could not do, and therefore the gift would have been available to none of us. Nor is it said that he has given his Son to all that experience terrible despair and bitter remorse, for that is not felt by many who nevertheless are the Lord's own people. But the great God has given his own Son, that "whosoever believeth in him" should not perish. Faith, however slender, saves the soul. Trust in Christ is the certain way of eternal happiness.

Now, what is it to believe in Jesus? It is just this: it is to trust yourself with him. If your hearts are ready, though you have never believed in Jesus before, I trust you will believe in him now. O Holy Spirit graciously make it so.

What is it to believe in Jesus?

It is, first, to give your firm and cordial assent to the truth, that God did send his Son, born of a woman, to stand in the room and stead of guilty men, and that God did cause to meet on him the iniquities of us all, so that he bore the punishment due to our transgressions, being made a curse for us. We must heartily believe the Scripture which saith,—"the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes ye are healed." I ask for your assent to the grand doctrine of substitution, which is the marrow of the gospel. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to give a cordial assent to it at once; for wonderful as it is, it is a fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Oh that you may rejoice that this is true, and be thankful that such a blessed fact is revealed by God himself. Believe that the substitution of the Son of God is certain; cavil not at the plan, nor question its validity, or efficacy, as many do. Alas! they kick at God's great sacrifice, and count it a sorry invention. As for me, since God has ordained to save man by a substitutionary sacrifice, I joyfully agree to his method, and see no reason to do anything else but admire it and adore the Author of it. I joy and rejoice that such a plan should have been thought of, whereby the justice of God is vindicated, and his mercy is set free to do all that he desires. Sin is punished in the person of the Christ, yet mercy is extended to the guilty. In Christ mercy is sustained by justice, and justice satisfied by an act of mercy. The worldly wise say hard things about this device of infinite wisdom; but as for me, I love the very name of the cross, and count it to be the centre of wisdom, the focus of love, the heart of righteousness. This is a main point of faith—to give a hearty assent to the giving of Jesus to suffer in our place and stead, to agree with all our soul and mind to this way of salvation.

The second thing is that you do accept this for yourself. In Adam's sin, you did not sin personally, for you were not then in existence; yet you fell; neither can you now complain thereof, for you have willingly endorsed and adopted Adam's sin by committing personal transgressions. You have laid your hand, as it were, upon Adam's sin, and made it your own, by committing personal and actual sin. Thus you perished by the sin of another, which you adopted and endorsed; and in like manner must you be saved by the righteousness of another, which you are to accept and appropriate. Jesus has offered an atonement, and that atonement

becomes yours when you accept it by putting your trust in him. I want you now to say,

"My faith doth lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While, like a penitent, I stand,  
And here confess my sin."

Surely this is no very difficult matter. To say that Christ who hung upon the cross shall be my Christ, my surety, needs neither stretch of intellect, nor splendor of character; and yet it is the act which brings salvation to the soul.

One thing more is needful; and that is personal trust. First comes assent to the truth, then acceptance of that truth for yourself, and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ, as a substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence. Fling away every other confidence of every sort, save confidence in Jesus. Do not allow a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a confidence in anything that you can do, or in anything that you can be; but look alone to him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. This I do at this very moment; will you not do the same? Oh, may the sweet Spirit of God lead you now to trust in Jesus!

See, then, the love of God in putting it in so plain, so easy a way. Oh, thou broken, crushed and despairing sinner, thou canst not work, but canst thou not believe that which is true? Thou canst not sigh; thou canst not cry; thou canst not melt thy stony heart; but canst thou not believe that Jesus died for thee, and that he can change that heart of thine and make thee a new creature? If thou canst believe this, then trust in Jesus to do so, and thou art saved; for he that believes in him is justified. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." He is a saved man. His sins are forgiven him. Let him go his way in peace, and sin no more.

I admire, first, the love of God in the great gift, and then in the great plan by which that gift becomes available to guilty men.

III. Thirdly, the love of God shines forth with transcendent brightness in a third point, namely, in THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PLAN IS



AVAILABLE, and for whom this gift is given. They are described in these words—"Whosoever believeth in him." There is in the text a word which has no limit—"God so loved the world"; but then comes in the descriptive limit, which I beg you to notice with care: "He gave his Only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish." God did not so love the world that any man who does not believe in Christ shall be saved; neither did God so give his Son that any man shall be saved who refuses to believe in him. See how it is put—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Here is the compass of the love: while every unbeliever is excluded, every believer is included. "Whosoever believeth in him." Suppose there be a man who has been guilty of all the lusts of the flesh to an infamous degree, suppose that he is so detestable that he is only fit to be treated like a moral leper, and shut up in a separate house for fear he should contaminate those who hear or see him; yet if that man shall believe in Jesus Christ, he shall at once be made clean from his defilement, and shall not perish because of his sin. And suppose there be another man who, in the pursuit of his selfish motives, has ground down the poor, has robbed his fellow-traders, and has even gone so far as to commit actual crime of which the law has taken cognisance, yet if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he shall be led to make restitution, and his sins shall be forgiven him. I once heard of a preacher addressing a company of men in chains, condemned to die for murder and other crimes. They were such a drove of beasts to all outward appearances that it seemed hopeless to preach to them; yet were I set to be chaplain to such a wretched company I should not hesitate to tell them that "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O man, if thou wilt believe in Jesus as the Christ, however horrible thy past sins have been they shall be blotted out; thou shalt be saved from the power of thine evil habits; and thou shalt begin again like a child newborn, with a new and true life, which God shall give thee. "Whosoever believeth in him,"—that takes you in, my aged friend, now lingering within a few tottering steps of the grave. O grey-headed sinner, if you believe in him, you shall not perish. The text also includes you, dear boy, who have scarcely entered your teens as yet: if you believe in him, you shall not perish. That takes you in, fair maiden, and gives you hope and joy while yet young. That

comprehends all of us, provided we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can all the devils in hell find out any reason why the man that believes in Christ shall be lost, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Do they say, "Lord, he has been so long in coming"? The Lord replies,— "Has he come? Then I will not cast him out for all his delays." But, Lord, he went back after making a profession. "Has he at length come? Then I will not cast him out for all his backsliding." But, Lord, he was a foul-mouthed blasphemer. "Has he come to me? Then I will not cast him out for all his blasphemies." But, says one, "I take exception to the salvation of this wicked wretch. He has behaved so abominably that in all justice he ought to be sent to hell." Just so. But if he repents of his sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever he may be, he shall not be sent there. He shall be changed in character, so that he shall never perish, but have eternal life.

Now, observe, that this "whosoever" makes a grand sweep; for it encircles all degrees of faith. "Whosoever believeth in him." It may be that he has no full assurance; it may be that he has no assurance at all; but if he has faith, true and childlike, by it he shall be saved. Though his faith be so little that I must needs put on my spectacles to see it, yet Christ will see it and reward it. His faith is such a tiny grain of mustard seed that I look and look again but hardly discern it, and yet it brings him eternal life, and it is itself a living thing. The Lord can see within that mustard seed a tree among whose branches the birds of the air shall make their nests.

"My faith is feeble, I confess,  
I faintly trust thy word;  
But wilt thou pity me the less?  
Be that far from thee, Lord!"

O Lord Jesus, if I cannot take thee up in my arms as Simeon did, I will at least touch thy garment's hem as the poor diseased woman did to whom thy healing virtue flowed. It is written, "God so loveth the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That means me. I cannot preach at length to you to-night; but I would preach with strength. Oh that this truth may soak into your souls. Oh you that feel yourselves guilty; and you that feel guilty because you do not feel guilty; you that are broken in

heart because your heart will not break; you that feel that you cannot feel; it is to you that I would preach salvation in Christ by faith. You groan because you cannot groan; but whoever you may be, you are still within the range of this mighty word, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Thus have I commended God's love to you in those three points—the divine gift, the divine method of saving, and the divine choice of the persons to whom salvation comes.

IV. Now fourthly, another beam of divine love is to be seen in the negative blessing here stated, namely, in THE DELIVERANCE implied in the words, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish."

I understand that word to mean that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, though he is ready to perish. His sins would cause him to perish, but he shall never perish. At first he has a little hope in Christ, but its existence is feeble. It will soon die out, will it not? No, his faith shall not perish, for this promise covers it—"Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish." The penitent has believed in Jesus, and therefore he has begun to be a Christian; "Oh," cries an enemy, "let him alone: he will soon be back among us; he will soon be as careless as ever." Listen. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish," and therefore he will not return to his former state. This proves the final perseverance of the saints; for if the believer ceased to be a believer he would perish; and as he cannot perish, it is clear that he will continue a believer. If thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt never leave off believing in him; for that would be to perish. If thou believest in him, thou shalt never delight in thine old sins; for that would be to perish. If thou believest in him, thou shalt never lose spiritual life. How canst thou lose that which is everlasting? If thou wert to lose it, it would prove that it was not everlasting, and thou wouldst perish; and thus thou wouldst make this word to be of no effect. Whosoever with his heart believeth in Christ is a saved man, not for to-night only, but for all the nights that ever shall be, and for that dread night of death, and for that solemn eternity which draws so near. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish;" but he shall have a life that cannot die, a justification that cannot be disputed, an acceptance which shall never cease.

What is it to perish? It is to lose all hope in Christ, all trust in God, all light in life, all peace in death, all joy, all bliss, all union with God. This shall never happen to thee if thou believest in Christ. If thou believest, thou shalt be chastened when thou dost wrong, for every child of God comes under discipline; and what son is there whom the Father chasteneth not? If thou believest, thou mayest doubt and fear as to thy state, as a man on board a ship may be tossed about; but thou hast gotten on board a ship that never can be wrecked. He that hath union with Christ has union with perfection, omnipotence and glory. He that believeth is a member of Christ: will Christ lose his members? How should Christ be perfect if he lost even his little finger? Are Christ's members to rot off, or to be cut off? Impossible. If thou hast faith in Christ thou are a partaker of Christ's life, and thou canst not perish. If men were trying to drown me, they could not drown my foot as long as I had my head above water; and as long as our Head is above water, up yonder in the eternal sunshine, the least limb of his body can never be destroyed. He that believeth in Jesus is united to him, and he must live because Jesus lives. Oh what a word is this, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them to me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I feel that I have a grand gospel to preach to you when I read that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish. I would not give two pins for that trumpety, temporary salvation which some proclaim, which floats the soul for a time and then ebbs away to apostasy. I do not believe that the man who is once in Christ may live in sin and delight in it, and yet be saved. That is abominable teaching, and none of mine. But I believe that the man who is in Christ will not live in sin, for he is saved from it; nor will he return to his old sins and abide in them, for the grace of God will continue to save him from his sins. Such a change is wrought by regeneration that the newborn man cannot abide in sin, nor find comfort in it, but he loves holiness and makes progress in it. The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, but only grace divine can work the change; and when divine grace has done the deed the blackamore will remain white, and the leopard's spots will never return.

It would be as great a miracle to undo the work of God as to do it; and to destroy the new creation would require as great a power as to make it. As only God can create, so only God can destroy; and he will never destroy the work of his own hands. Will God begin to build and not finish? Will he commence a warfare and end it before he has won the victory? What would the devil say if Christ were to begin to save a soul and fail in the attempt? If there should come to be souls in hell that were believers in Christ, and yet did perish, it would cast a cloud upon the diadem of our exalted Lord. It cannot, shall not, be. Such is the love of God, that whosoever believeth in his dear Son shall not perish: in this assurance we greatly rejoice.

V. The last commendation of his love lies in the positive—IN THE POSSESSION. I shall have to go in a measure over the same ground again, let me therefore be the shorter. God gives to every man that believes in Christ everlasting life. The moment thou believest there trembles into thy bosom a vital spark of heavenly flame which never shall be quenched. In that same moment when thou dost cast thyself on Christ, Christ comes to thee in the living and incorruptible word which liveth and abideth for ever. Though there should drop into thy heart but one drop of the heavenly water of life, remember this,—he hath said it who cannot lie,—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I first received everlasting life I had no idea what a treasure had come to me. I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel, and I received eternal life. I looked to Jesus, and he looked on me; and we were one for ever. That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had aforetime driven me to an extreme of grief. I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with him, and my heart was glad; but I did not know that this grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures, and to know more fully the value of the jewel which God had given me. The next Sunday I sent to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went afterwards, for this reason, that during my first week the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence, and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of grace in my soul; but in that

same chapel I heard a sermon upon "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience. Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement. What but divine grace could produce such a sighing and crying after deliverance from indwelling sin? I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true believer. I said to myself, "What! am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever. When I was not a Christian I never groaned to be set free from sin. This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth, and yet this man cannot see it; he may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed believers." I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed therein. I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense; each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies, and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness.

I cannot advance an inch without praying my way, nor keep the inch I gain without watching and standing fast. Grace alone can preserve and perfect me. The old nature will kill the new nature if it can; and to this moment the only reason why my new nature is not dead is this—because it cannot die. If it could have died, it would have been slain long ago; but Jesus said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life"; "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life"; and therefore the believer cannot die. The only religion which will save you is one that you cannot leave, because it possesses you, and will not leave you. If you hold a doctrine which you can give up, give it up; but if the doctrines are burnt into you so that as long as you live you must hold them, and so that if you were burnt every ash would hold that same truth in it, because you are impregnated with it, then you have found the right thing.

You are not a saved man unless Christ has saved you for ever. But that which has such a grip of you that its grasp is felt in the core of your being is the power of God. To have Christ living in you, and the truth ingrained in your very nature—O sirs, this is the thing that saves the soul, and nothing short of it. It is written in the text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should

not perish, but have everlasting life." What is this but a life that shall last through your three-score years and ten; a life that shall last you should you outlive a century; a life that will still flourish when you lie at the grave's mouth; a life that will abide when you have quitted the body, and left it rotting in the tomb; a life that will continue when your body is raised again, and you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; a life that will outshine those stars and yon sun and moon; a life that shall be co-eval with the life of the Eternal Father? As long as there is a God, the believer shall not only exist, but live. As long as there is a heaven, you shall enjoy it; as long as there is a Christ, you shall live in his love; and as long as there is an eternity, you shall continue to fill it with delight.

God bless you and help you to believe in Jesus. Amen.

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## **The Immutability Of Christ**

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. - Hebrews 13:8

It is well that there is one person who is the same. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the changing billows of this sea of life; for how many and how grievous have been the changes of this year? How many of you who commenced in affluence, have by the panic, which has shaken nations, been reduced almost to poverty? How many of you, who in strong health marched into this place on the first Sabbath of last year, have had to come tottering here, feeling that the breath of man is in his nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of? Many of you came to this hall with a numerous family, leaning upon the arm of a choice and much loved friend. Alas! for love, if thou wert all and naught beside, O earth! For ye have buried those ye loved the best. Some of you have come here

childless, or widows, or fatherless, still weeping your recent affliction. Changes have taken place in your estate that have made your heart full of misery. Your cups of sweetness have been dashed with draughts of gall; your golden harvests have had tares cast into the midst of them, and you have had to reap the noxious weed along with the precious grain. Your much fine gold has become dim, and your glory has departed; the sweet frames at the commencement of last year became bitter ones at the end. Your raptures and your ecstasies were turned into depression and forebodings. Alas! for our changes, and hallelujah to him that hath no change.

But greater things have changed than we; for kingdoms have trembled in the balances. We have seen a peninsula deluged with blood, and mutiny raising its bloody war whoop. Nay, the whole world hath changed; earth hath doffed its green, and put on its somber garment of Autumn, and soon expects to wear its ermine robe of snow. All things have changed. We believe that not only in appearance but in reality, the world is growing old. The sun itself must soon grow dim with age; the folding up of the worn-out vesture has commenced; the changing of the heavens and the earth has certainly begun. They shall perish; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; but for ever blessed be him who is the same, and of whose years there is no end. The satisfaction that the mariner feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he puts his foot upon the solid shore, is just the satisfaction of a Christian when, amidst all the changes of this troublous life, he plants the foot of his faith upon such a text as this—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The same stability that the anchor gives the ship, when it hath at last got the grip of some immovable rock, that same stability doth our hope give to our spirits, when, like an anchor, it fixes itself in a truth so glorious as this—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

I shall first try this morning to open the text by a little explanation; then I shall try to answer a few objections, which our wicked unbelief will be quite sure to raise against it; and afterward I shall try to draw a few useful, consoling, and practical lessons from the great truth of the immutability of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, we open the text by a little EXPLANATION—"Jesus Christ



the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is the same in his person. We change perpetually; the bloom of youth gives place to the strength of manhood, and the maturity of manhood fades away into the weakness of old age. But "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Christ Jesus, whom we adore, thou art as young as ever! We came into this world with the ignorance of infancy; we grow up searching, studying, and learning with the diligence of youth; we attain to some little knowledge in our riper years; and then in our old age we totter back to the imbecility of our childhood. But O, our Master! thou didst perfectly foreknow all mortal or eternal things from before the foundations of the world, and thou knowest all things now, and for ever thou shalt be the same in thine omniscience. We are one day strong, and the next day weak—one day resolved, and the next day wavering—one hour constant, and the next hour unstable as water. We are one moment holy, kept by the power of God; we are the next moment sinning, led astray by our own lusts; but our Master is for ever the same; pure and never spotted; firm, and never changing—everlastingly Omnipotent, unchangeably Omniscient. From him no attribute doth pass away; to him no parallax, no tropic, ever comes; without variableness or shadow of a turning, he abideth fast and firm. Did Solomon sing concerning his best beloved, "His head is as the most fine gold: his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedar?" Surely we can even now conclude the description from our own experience of him; and while we endorse every word which went before, we can end the description by saying, "His mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely. His matchless beauty is unimpaired; he is still 'the chief among ten thousand'—fairest of the sons of men." Did the divine John talk of him when he said—"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." He is the same;

upon his brow there is ne'er a furrow; his locks are gray with reverence, but not with age; his feet stand as firm as when they trod the everlasting mountains in the years before the world was made—his eyes as piercing when, for the first time he looked upon a new-born world. Christ's person never changes. Should he come on earth to visit us again, as sure he will, we should find him the same Jesus; as loving, as approachable, as generous, as kind, and though arrayed in nobler garments than he wore when first he visited earth, though no more the Man of Sorrows and griefs acquaintance, yet he would be the same person, unchanged by all his glories, his triumphs, and his joys. We bless Christ that amid his heavenly splendors his person is just the same, and his nature unaffected.. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Again: Jesus Christ is the same with regard to his Father as ever. He was his Father's well-beloved Son before all worlds; he was his well-beloved in the stream of baptism; he was his well-beloved on the cross; he was his well-beloved when he led captivity captive, and he is not less the object of his Father's infinite affection now than he was then. Yesterday he lay in Jehovah's bosom, God, having all power with his Father—to-day he stands on earth, man, with us, but still the same, for ever—he ascends on high, and still he is his Father's son—still by inheritance, having a more excellent name than angels—still sitting far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. O Christian, give him thy cause to plead; the Father will answer him as well now as he did aforetime. Doubt not the Father's grace. Go to thine Advocate. He is as near to Jehovah's heart as ever—as prevalent in his intercession. Trust him, then, and in trusting him thou mayest be sure of the Father's love to thee.

But now there is a yet sweeter thought. Jesus Christ is the same to his people as ever. We have delighted, in our happier moments, in days that have rolled away, to think of him that loved us when we had no being; we have often sung with rapture of him that loved us when we loved not him.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He to save my soul from danger  
Interposed his precious blood."

We have looked back, too, upon the years of our troubles and our trials; and we can bear our solemn though humble witness that he has been true to us in all our exigencies, and has never failed us once. Come, then, let us comfort ourselves with this thought—that though to-day he may distress us with a sense of sin, yet his heart is just the same to us as ever. Christ may wear masks that look black to his people, but his face is always the same; Christ may sometimes take a rod in his hand instead of a golden scepter, but the name of his saint is as much engraved upon the hand that grasps the rod as upon the palm that clasps the scepter. And oh, sweet thought that now bursts upon our mind! Beloved, can you concede how much Christ will love you when you are in heaven? Have you ever tried to fathom that bottomless sea of affection in which you shall swim, when you shall bathe yourself in seas of heavenly rest? Did you ever think of the love which Christ will manifest to you, when he shall present you without spot, or blemish, or any such thing before his Father's throne? Well, pause and remember that he loves you at this hour a. much as he will love you then; for he will be the same for ever as he is to-day, and he is the same to-day as he will be for ever. This one thing I know: if Jesus' heart is set on me he will not love me one atom better when this head wears a crown, and when this hand shall, with joyous fingers, touch the strings of golden harps, than he does now, amid all my sin and care and woe. I believe that saying which is written—"As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you;" and a higher degree of love we can not imagine. The Father loves his Son infinitely, and even so to-day, believer, doth the Son of God love thee. All his heart flows out to thee. All his life is thine; all his person is thine. He can not love thee more; he will not love thee less. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But let us here recollect that Jesus Christ is the same to sinners to-day as he was yesterday. It is now eight years ago since I first went to Jesus Christ. Come the sixth of this month, I shall then be eight years old in the gospel of the grace of Jesus; a child, a little child therein as yet. I recall that hour when I heard that exhortation—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." And I remember, how with much trembling and with a little faith I ventured to approach the Saviour's feet. I thought he would spurn me from him. "Sure," said my heart, "if thou shouldst presume to put thy

trust in him as thy Saviour, it would be a presumption more damnable than all thy sins put together. Go not to him; he will spurn thee." However, I put the rope about my neck, feeling that if God destroyed me for ever, he would be just. I cast the ashes on my head, and with many a sigh I did confess my sin; and then, when I ventured to draw nigh to him, when I expected that he would frown, he stretched out his hand and said, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." I came like the prodigal, because I was forced to come. I was starved out of that foreign country where, in riotous living I had spent my substance, and I saw my Father's house a great way off; little did I know that my Father's heart was beating high with love to me. O rapturous hour, when Jesus whispered I was his, and when my soul could say, "Jesus Christ is my salvation." And now I would refresh my own memory by reminding myself that what my Master was to me yesterday that he is to-day; and if I know that as a sinner I went to him then and he received me, if I have never so many doubts about my saintship I can not doubt but what I am a sinner; so to thy cross, O Jesus, I go again, and if thou didst receive me then, thou wilt receive me now; and believing that to be true, I turn round to my fellow-immortals, and I say, "He that received me, he that received Manasseh, he that received the thief upon the cross, is the same to-day as he was then. Oh! come and try him! Come and try him! Oh! ye that know your need of him, come ye to him; ye that have sold for nought your heritage above may have it back unbought, the gift of Jesus' love. Ye that are empty, Christ is as full today as ever. Come! fill yourselves here. Ye that are thirsty, the stream is flowing; ye that are black, the fountain still can purify; ye that are naked, the wardrobe is not empty.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,  
To Christ, and heal your wounds;  
Still 'tis the gospel's gracious day,  
And now free grace abounds"

I can not pretend to enter into the fullness of my text as I could desire, but one more thought. Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday in the teachings of his Word. They tell us in these times that the improvements of the age require improvements in theology. Why, I have

heard it said that the way Luther preached would not suit this age. We are too polite! The style of preaching, they say, that did in John Bunyan's day, is not the style now. True, they honor these men; they are like the Pharisees; they build the sepulchers of the prophets that their fathers slew, and so they do confess that they are their father's own sons, and like their parents. And men that stand up to preach as those men did, with honest tongues, and know not how to use polished courtly phrases, are as much condemned now as those men were in their time; because, say they, the world is marching on, and the gospel must march on too. No, sirs, the old gospel is the same; not one of her stakes must be removed, not one of her cords must be loosened. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Theology hath nothing new in it except that which is false. The preaching of Paul must be the preaching of the minister to-day. There is no advancement here. We may advance in our knowledge of it; but it stands the same, for this good reason, that it is perfect, and perfection can not be any better. The old truth that Calvin preached, that Chrysostom preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be a liar to my conscience and my God. I can not shape the truth. I know of no such thing as the paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again. The great mass of our ministers are sound enough in the faith, but not sound enough in the way they preach it. Election is not mentioned once in the year in many a pulpit; final perseverance is kept back; the great things of God's law are forgotten, and a kind of mongrel mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism is the delight of the present age. And hence the Lord hath forsaken many of his tabernacles and left the house of his covenant; and he will leave it till again the trumpet gives a certain sound. For wherever there is not the old gospel we shall find "Ichabod" written upon the church walls ere long. The old truth of the Covenanters, the old truth of the Puritans, the old truth of the Apostles, is the only truth that will stand the test of time, and never need to be altered to suit a wicked and ungodly generation. Christ Jesus preaches to-day the same as when he preached upon the mount; he hath not changed his doctrines; men may ridicule and laugh, but still they stand the same—semper idem written upon every one of them. They shall not be removed or altered.

Let the Christian remember that this is equally true of the promises. Let the sinner remember this is just as true of the threatenings. Let us each recollect that not one word can be added to this Sacred Book, nor one letter taken away from it; for as Christ Jesus is yet the same, so is his Gospel, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

I have thus briefly opened the text, not in its fullest meanings, but still enough to enable the Christian at his own leisure to see into that depth without a bottom—the immutability of Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. And now comes in one of crooked gait, with hideous aspect—one that hath as many lives as a cat, and that can not be killed any how, though many a great gun hath been shot against him. His name is old Mr. Incredulity—unbelief; and he begins his miserable oration by declaring, "How can that be true? 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Why, yesterday Christ was all sunshine to me—to-day I am in distress!" Stop, Mr. Unbelief, I beg you to remember that Christ is not changed. You have changed yourself; for you have said in your very accusation that yesterday you rejoiced, but to-day you are in distress. All that may happen, and yet there may be no change in Christ. The sun may be the same always, though one hour may be cloudy and the next bright with golden light; yet there is no proof that the sun has changed. 'Tis even so with Christ.

"If today he deigns to bless us  
With a sense of pardoned sin,  
He to-morrow may distress us,  
Make us feel the plague within.  
All to make us,  
Sick of self and fond of him."

There is no change in him.

"Immutable his will,  
Though dark may be my frame,  
His loving heart is still  
Unchangeably the same.  
My soul through many changes goes,

His love no variation knows"

Your frames are no proof that Christ changes: they are only proof that you change.

But saith old Unbelief again—"Surely God has changed if you look at the old saints of ancient times. What happy men they were! How highly favored of their God! How well God provided for them! But now, sir, when I am hungry, no ravens come and bring me bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. When I am thirsty, no water leaps out of the rock to supply my thirst. It is said of the children of Israel that their clothes waxed not old; but I have a hole in my coat today, and where I shall get another garment I know not. When they marched through the desert he suffered no man to hurt them; but, sir, I am continually beset by enemies. It is true of me as it says in the Scriptures, 'And the Ammonites distressed Israel at the coming in of the year;' for they are distressing me. Why, sir, I see my friends die in clouds; there are no fiery chariots to carry God's Elijahs to heaven now. I lost my son; no prophet lay upon him and gave him life again; no Jesus met me at the city gates, to give me back my son from the gloomy grave. No sir, these are evil times; the light of Jesus Christ has become dim; if he walks among the golden candlesticks, yet, still it is not as he used to do. And worse than that, sir, I have heard my father talk of the great men that were in the age gone by: I have heard the names of Romaine, and Toplady, and Scott; I have heard of Whitfields and of Bunyans; and even but a few years ago I heard talk of such men as Joseph Irons—solemn and earnest preachers of a full gospel. But where are those men now? Sir, we have fallen upon an age of drivellings; men have died out, and we have only a few dwarfs left us; there are none that walk with the giant tramp and the colossal tread of the mighty fathers, like Owen, and Howe, and Baxter, and Charnock. We are all little men. Jesus Christ is not dealing with us as he did with our fathers. Stop, Unbelief, a minute: let me remind thee that the ancient people of God had their trials too. Know ye not what the apostle Paul says? "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Now, if there be any change it is a change for the better; for you have not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

But remember that does not affect Christ; for neither nakedness, nor

famine, nor sword, has separated us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is true that you have no fiery chariot; but then the angels carry you to Jesus' bosom, and that is as well. It is true no ravens bring you food; it is quite as true you get your food somehow or other. It is quite certain that no rock gushes out with water; but still your water has been sure. It is true your child has not been raised from the dead; but you remember that David had a child that was not raised any more than yours. You have the same consolation that he had: "I shall go to him; he shall not return to me." You say that you have more heart-rendings than the saints had of old. It is your ignorance that makes you say so. Holy men of old said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?" Even prophets had to say—"Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and broken my teeth with gravel stones." O, you are mistaken: your days are not more full of trouble than the days of Job; you are not more vexed by the wicked than was Lot of old, you have not more temptations to make you angry than had Moses; and certainly your way is not half so rough as the way of your blessed Lord. The very fact that you have troubles is a proof of his faithfulness; for you have got one half of his legacy, and you will have the other half. You know that Christ's last will and testament has two portions in it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" you have got that. The next clause is—"In me ye shall have peace." You have that too. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That is yours also.

And then you say that you have fallen upon a bad age with regard to ministers. It may be so; but remember, the promise is true still. "Though I take away from thee bread and water, yet will I never take away thy pastors." You have still such as you have—still some that are faithful to God and to his covenant, and who do not forsake the truth, and though the day may be dark, yet it is not so dark as days have been; and besides remember, what you say to-day is just what your forefathers said. Men in the days of Toplady looked back to the days of Whitfield; men in the days of Whitfield looked back to the days of Bunyan; men in the days of Bunyan wept because of the days of Wycliffe, and Calvin, and Luther; and men then wept for the days of Augustine and Chrysostom. Men in those days wept for the days of the Apostles; and doubtless men in the days of the Apostles wept for the days of Jesus Christ; and no doubt some in the



days of Jesus Christ were so blind as to wish to return to the days of prophesy, and thought more of the days of Elijah than they did of the most glorious day of Christ. Some men look more to the past than the present. Rest assured, that Jesus Christ is the same to-day as he was yesterday, and he will be the same for ever.

Mourner, be glad! I have heard of a little girl who, when her father died, saw her mother weeping immoderately. Day after day, and week after week, her mother refused to be comforted; and the little girl stepped up to her mother, and putting her little hand inside her mothers hand, looked up in her face, and said. "Mamma is God dead? Is God dead, mamma?" And her mother thought, "Surely, no." The child seemed to say, "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name. So you may dry your tears, I have a father in heaven, and you have a husband still." O! ye saints that have lost your gold and your silver; ye have got treasure in heaven, where no moth nor rust doth corrupt, where no thieves break through and steal! Ye that are sick to-day, ye that have lost health, remember the day is coming when all that shall be made up to you, and when ye shall find that the flame has not hurt you, it has but consumed your dross and refined your gold. Remember, Jesus Christ is "the same today, yesterday, and for ever."

III. And now I must be brief in drawing one or two sweet conclusions from that part of the text.

First, then, if he be the same to-day as yesterday, my soul, set not thine affections upon these changing things, but set thine heart upon him. O my heart, build not thine house upon the sandy pillars of a world that soon must pass away, but build thy hopes upon this rock, which, when the rain descends, and floods shall come, shall stand immovably secure. O my soul, I charge thee, lay up thy treasure in this secure granary. O my heart, I bid thee now put thy treasure where thou canst never lose it. Put it in Christ; put all thine affections in his person, all thy hope in his glory, all thy trust in his efficacious blood, all thy joy in his presence, and then thou wilt have put thyself and put thine all where thou canst never lose anything, because it is secure. Remember, O my heart, that the time is coming when all things must fade, and when thou must part with all. Death's gloomy night must soon put out thy sunshine; the dark flood

must soon roll between thee and all thou hast. Then put thine heart with him who will never leave thee; trust thyself with him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will walk with thee up the steep hills of heaven and make thee sit together with him in heavenly places for ever. Go, tell thy secrets to that friend that sticketh closer than a brother. My heart, I charge thee, trust all thy concerns with him who never can be taken from thee, who will never leave thee, and who will never let thee leave him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." That is one lesson.

Well, then, the next. If Jesus Christ be always the same, then, my soul, endeavor to imitate him. Be thou the same, too. Remember that if thou hadst more faith, thou wouldst be as happy in the furnace, as on the mountain of enjoyment. Thou wouldst be as glad in famine, as in plenty; thou wouldst rejoice in the Lord when the olive yielded no oil, as well as when the vat was bursting and overflowing its brim. If thou hadst more confidence in thy God, thou wouldst have far less of tossings up and down; and if thou hadst greater nearness to Christ thou wouldst have less vacillation. Yesterday thou couldst pray with all the power of prayer; perhaps if thou didst always live near thy Master, thou mightest always have the same power on thy knees. One time thou canst bid defiance to the rage of Satan, and thou canst face a frowning world; to-morrow thou wilt run away like a craven. But if thou didst always remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, thou mightest always be firm and stedfast in thy mind. Beware of being like a weathercock. Seek of God, that his law may be written on your hearts as if it were written on stone, and not as if it were written in sand. Seek, that his grace may come to you like a river, and not like a brook that fails. Seek, that you may keep your conversation always holy; that your course may be like the shining light that tarries not, but that burneth brighter and brighter, until the fullness of the day. Be ye like Christ—ever the same.

Again: if Christ be always the same, Christian, rejoice! Come what may, thou art secure.

"Let mountains from their seats be hurled  
Down to the deeps, and buried there;

Convulsions shake the solid world;  
Our faith shall never need to fear."

If kingdoms should go to rack, the Christian need not tremble! Just for a minute imagine a scene like this. Suppose for the next three days the sun should not rise; suppose the moon should be turned into a clot of blood, and shine no more upon the world; imagine that a darkness that might be felt, brooded over all men; imagine, next, that all the world did tremble in an earthquake, till every tower, and house, and hut fell down: imagine, next, that the sea forgot its place, and leaped upon the earth; and that the mountains ceased to stand, and began to tremble from their pedestals; conceive after that, that a blazing comet streamed across the sky—that the thunder bellowed incessantly—that the lightnings, without a moment's pause, followed one the other; conceive, then, that thou didst behold divers terrible sights, fiendish ghosts, and grim spirits; imagine, next, that a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud, did blow; that there were heard the shrieks of men dying and perishing; imagine, that in the midst of all this confusion, there were to be found a saint. My friend, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for every, would keep him as secure amidst all these horrors, as we are to-day. Oh! rejoice! I have pictured the worst that can come. Then you would be secure. Come what may then, you are safe, while Jesus Christ is the same.

And now, last of all, if Jesus Christ be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," what sad work this is for the ungodly! Ah! sinner, when he was on earth, he said, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." When he stood upon the mount, he said, "It were better to enter life halt or maimed, than having two hands, and two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." As a man on earth, he said that the goats should be on the left, and that he would say to them, "Depart, ye cursed." Sinner, he will be as good as his word. He has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." He will damn you if you believe not, depend upon it. He has never broken a promise yet; he will never break a threatening. That same truth which makes us confident to-day that the righteous shall go away into everlasting life, should make you quite as confident that unbelievers shall go into eternal misery. If he had broken his promise, he might break his threatening; but as he has kept one, he will keep the other. Do not hope

that he will change, for change he will not. Think not that the fire which he said was unquenchable, will, after all, be extinguished. No, within a few more years, my hearer, if thou dost not repent, thou wilt find that every jot and every letter of the threatenings of Jesus will be fulfilled; and, mark thee, fulfilled in thee. Liar, he said, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." He will not deceive you. Drunkard, he has said, "Ye know that no drunkard hath eternal life." He will not belie his word. You shall not have eternal life. He has said, "The nations that forget God shall be cast into hell." All ye that forget religion, moral people you may be, he will keep his word to you; he will cast you into hell. O "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are an they that put their trust in him. Come, sinner, bow thy knee; confess thy sin and leave it; and then come to him; ask him to have mercy upon thee. He will not forget his promise—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Come and try him. With all your sins about you, come to him now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved;" for this is my Master's gospel, and I now declare it—"He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. God grant you grace to believe, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **The Immutability Of God**

I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.  
- Malachi 3:6

It has been said by some one that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest

philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel -

"Great God, how infinite art thou,  
What worthless worms are we!"

But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well nigh unutterable names; he may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus, and all kinds of extinct animals; he may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I

know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it, - that is the immutability of the glorious Jehovah. "I am," says my text, "Jehovah," (for so it should be translated) "I am Jehovah, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There are three things this morning. First of all, an unchanging God; secondly, the persons who derive benefit from this glorious attribute, "the sons of Jacob;" and thirdly, the benefit they so derive, they "are not consumed.' We address ourselves to these points.

I. First of all, we have set before us the doctrine of THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD. "I am God, I change not." Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought, and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text, by first saying, that God is Jehovah, and he changes not in his essence. We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a being; but what that is, we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it his essence, and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow-white crowns, doff their old diadems in summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation; the ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water when the sunbeams kiss the waves, and snatch them in mists to heaven; even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the Infinite Almighty, to replenish his ever burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the mean time constantly accrued to my body, and so it has been replenished; but its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away; like a stream of water, drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full, but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the

same. He is not composed of any substance or material, but is spirit - pure, essential, and ethereal spirit - and therefore he is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on his eternal brow. No age hath palsied him; no years have marked him with the mementoes of their flight; he sees ages pass, but with him it is ever now. He is the great I AM - the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, his essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay, the essence of his divinity was not changed; flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature; the two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when he was a babe in the manger, as it was when he stretched the curtains of heaven; it was the same God that hung upon the cross, and whose blood flowed down in a purple river, the self-same God that holds the world upon his everlasting shoulders, and bears in his hands the keys of death and hell. He never has been changed in his essence, not even by his incarnation; he remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

2. He changes not in his attributes. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, that they are now; and of each of them we may sing "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." Was he powerful? Was he the mighty God when he spake the world out of the womb of nonexistence? Was he the Omnipotent when he piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, he was powerful then, and his arm is unpalsied now, he is the same giant in his might; the sap of his nourishment is undried, and the strength of his soul stands the same for ever. Was he wise when he constituted this mighty globe, when he laid the foundations of the universe? Had he wisdom when he planned the way of our salvation, and when from all eternity he marked out his awful plans? Yes, and he is wise now; he is not less skillful, he has not less knowledge; his eye which seeth all things is undimmed; his ear which heareth all the cries, sighs, sobs, and groans of his people, is not rendered heavy by the years which he hath heard their prayers. He is unchanged in his wisdom, he knows as much now as ever, neither more nor less; he has the same consummate skill, and the same

infinite forecastings. He is unchanged, blessed be his name, in his justice. just and holy was he in the past; just and holy is he now. He is unchanged in his truth; he has promised, and he brings it to pass; he hath saith it, and it shall be done. He varies not in the goodness, and generosity, and benevolence of his nature. He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas he was once an Almighty Father; but his strong love stands like a granite rock, unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be his dear name, he is unchanged in his love. When he first wrote the covenant, how full his heart was with affection to his people. He knew that his Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that he must rend his best beloved from his bowels, and send him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign that mighty covenant; nor did he shun its fulfillment. He loves as much now as he did then, and when suns shall cease to shine, and moons to show their feeble light, he still shall love on for ever and for ever. Take any one attribute of God, and I will write *semper idem* on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future it shall always remain the same: "I am Jehovah, I change not."

3. Then again, God changes not in his plans. That man began to build, but was not able to finish, and therefore he changed his plan, as every wise man would do in such a case; he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? Nay. When he hath boundless stores at his command, and when his own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall he ever stay because he has not power? and reverse, or alter, or disarrange his plan, because he cannot carry it out? "But," say some, "perhaps God never had a plan." Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, sir? Do you go to work without a plan? "No," say you, "I have always a scheme." So has God. Every man has his plan, and God has a plan too. God is a master-mind; he arranged everything in his gigantic intellect long before he did it; and once having settled it, mark you, he never alters it. "This shall be done," saith he, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is my purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is my decree," saith he, promulgate it angels; rend it down from the



gate of heaven ye devils; but ye cannot alter the decree; it shall be done. God altereth not his plans; why should he? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform his pleasure. Why should he? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should he? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before his plan is accomplished. Why should he change? Ye worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! Ye creeping insects upon this bayleaf of existence! ye may change your plans, but he shall never, never change his. Then has he told me that his plan is to save me? If so, I am safe.

"My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impress'd on his heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible grace."

4. Yet again, God is unchanging in his promises. Ah! we love to speak about the sweet promises of God; but if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed, we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the bank of England could not be cashed next week, I should decline to take them; and if I thought that God's promises would never be fulfilled - if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in his promises - farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things: and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bible: for, "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie," he hath signed, confirmed, and sealed every promise of his. The gospel is not "yea and nay," it is not promising today, and denying tomorrow; but the gospel is "yea, yea," to the glory of God. Believer! there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday; and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no! You changed; that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom, and your mouth was thereby put out of taste, and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it, the same preciousness. "Oh!" says one child of God, "I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises; there came a wind, and I said, O Lord, I am cast down and I shall be lost." Oh! the promises were not cast down; the foundations were not removed; it was your little

"wood, hay, stubble" hut, that you had been building. It was that which fell down. You have been shaken on the rock, not the rock under you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a Negro, "I can't think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord and I am often downcast." "Why Massa," said he, "I throw myself flat down on the promise - there I lie; you stand on the promise - you have a little to do with it, and down you go when the wind comes, and then you cry, 'Oh! I am down;' whereas I go flat on the promise at once, and that is why I fear no fall." Then let us always say, "Lord there is the promise; it is thy business to fulfill it." Down I go on the promise flat! no standing up for me. That is where you should go - prostrate on the promise; and remember, every promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at his feet cast yourself, and rest there forever.

5. But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in his threatenings. If every promise stands fast, and every oath of the covenant is fulfilled, hark thee, sinner! - mark the word - hear the death-knell of thy carnal hopes; see the funeral of thy fleshly trustings. Every threatening of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree: "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is a decree, and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may, - there stands the unchangeable threatening: "He that believeth not shall be damned." What sayest thou to that, moralist? Oh, thou wishest thou couldst alter it, and say, "He that does not live a holy life shall be damned." That will be true; but it does not say so. It says, "He that believeth not." Here is the stone of stumbling, and the rock of offence; but you cannot alter it. You must believe or be damned, saith the Bible; and mark, that threat of God is an unchangeable as God himself. And when a thousand years of hell's torments shall have passed away, you shall look on high, and see written in burning letters of fire, "He that believeth not shall be damned." "But, Lord, I am damned." Nevertheless it says "shall be" still. And when a million ages have rolled away, and you are exhausted by your pains and agonies, you shall turn up your eye and still read "SHALL BE DAMNED," unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last

thread - that every particle of that which we call eternity, must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, "SHALL BE DAMNED." O terrific thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. Ye must be warned, sirs, "lest ye also come into this place of torment." Ye must be told rough things; for if God's gospel is not a rough thing & the law is a rough thing; Mount Sinai is a rough thing. Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in his threatenings. Beware, O sinner, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

6. We must just hint at one thought before we pass away and that is - God is unchanging in the objects of his love - not only in his love, but in the objects of it.

"If ever it should come to pass,  
That sheep of Christ might fall away.  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day."

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be, and then there is no gospel promise true; but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then he will love me for ever.

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom God hath called, he will justify; whom he has justified, he will sanctify; and whom he sanctifies, he will glorify.

1. Thus having taken a great deal too much time, perhaps, in simply expanding the thought of an unchanging God, I will now try to prove that He is unchangeable. I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this: the very existence, and being of a God, seem to me to imply immutability. Let me think a moment. There is a God; this God rules and governs all things; this God fashioned the world: he upholds and maintains it. What kind of being must he be? It

does strike me that you cannot think of a changeable God. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense, that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words seem to clash, and you are obliged to say, "Then he must be a kind of man," and get a Mormonite idea of God. I imagine it is impossible to conceive of a changing God; it is so to me. Others may be capable of such an idea, but I could not entertain it. I could no more think of a changing God, than I could of a round square, or any other absurdity. The thing seems so contrary, that I am obliged, when once I say God, to include the idea of an unchanging being.

2. Well, I think that one argument will be enough, but another good argument may be found in the fact of God's perfection. I believe God to be a perfect being. Now, if he is a perfect being, he cannot change. Do you not see this? Suppose I am perfect today, if it were possible for me to change, should I be perfect tomorrow after the alteration? If I changed, I must either change from a good state to a better - and then if I could get better, I could not be perfect now - or else from a better state to a worse - and if I were worse, I should not be perfect then. If I am perfect, I cannot be altered without being imperfect. If I am perfect today, I must keep the same tomorrow if I am to be perfect then. So, if God is perfect, he must be the same; for change would imply imperfection now, or imperfection then.

3. Again, there is the fact of God's infinity, which puts change out of the question. God is an infinite being. What do you mean by that? There is no man who can tell you what he means by an infinite being. But there cannot be two infinities. If one thing is infinite, there is no room for anything else; for infinite means all. It means not bounded, not finite, having no end. Well, there cannot be two infinities. If God is infinite today, and then should change and be infinite tomorrow, there would be two infinities. But that cannot be. Suppose he is infinite and then changes, he must become finite, and could not be God; either he is finite today and finite tomorrow, or infinite today and finite tomorrow, or finite today and infinite tomorrow - all of which suppositions are equally absurd. The fact of his being an infinite being at once quashes the thought of his being a changeable being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word "immutability."

4. But then, dear friends, let us look at the past: and there we shall gather some proofs of God's immutable nature. "Hath he spoken, and hath he not done it? Hath he sworn, and hath it not come to pass?" Can it not be said of Jehovah, "He hath done all his will, and he hath accomplished all his purpose?" Turn ye to Philistia; ask where she is. God said, "Howl Ashdod, and ye gates of Gaza, for ye shall fall;" and where are they? Where is Edom? Ask Petra and its ruined walls. Will they not echo back the truth that God hath said, "Edom shall be a prey, and shall be destroyed?" Where is Babel, and where Nineveh? Where Moab and where Ammon? Where are the nations God hath said he would destroy? Hath he not uprooted them and cast out the remembrance of them from the earth? And hath God cast off his people? Hath he once been unmindful of his promise? Hath he once broken his oath and covenant, or once departed from his plan? Ah! no. Point to one instance in history where God has changed! Ye cannot, sirs; for throughout all history there stands the fact that God has been immutable in his purposes. Methinks I hear some one say, "I can remember one passage in Scripture where God changed!" And so did I think once. The case I mean, is that of the death of Hezekiah. Isaiah came in and said, 'Hezekiah, you must die, your disease is incurable, set your house in order.' He turned his face to the wall and began to pray; and before Isaiah was in the outer court, he was told to go back and say, "Thou shalt live fifteen years more." You may think that proves that God changes; but really I cannot see in it the slightest proof in the world. How do you know that God did not know that? Oh! but God did know it; he knew that Hezekiah would live. Then he did not change, for if he knew that, how could he change? That is what I want to know. But do you know one little thing? - that Hezekiah's son Manasseh, was not born at that time, and that had Hezekiah died, there would have been no Manasseh, and no Josiah and no Christ, because Christ came from that very line. You will find that Manasseh was twelve years old when his father died; so that he must have been born three years after this. And do you not believe that God decreed the birth of Manasseh, and foreknew it? Certainly. Then he decreed that Isaiah should go and tell Hezekiah that his disease was incurable, and then say also in the same breath, "But I will cure it, and thou shalt live." He said that to stir up Hezekiah to prayer. He spoke, in the first place as a man. "According to all human probability your disease is incurable, and you must die." Then he waited

till Hezekiah prayed; then came a little "but" at the end of the sentence. Isaiah had not finished the sentence. He said, "You must put your house in order for there is no human cure; but" (and then he walked out. Hezekiah prayed a little, and then he came in again, and said) "But I will heal thee." Where is there any contradiction there, except in the brain of those who fight against the Lord, and wish to make him a changeable being.

II. Now secondly, let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Now, who are "the sons of Jacob," who can rejoice in an immutable God?

1. First, they are the sons of God's election; for it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born neither having done good nor evil." It was written, "The elder shall serve the younger." "The sons of Jacob" -

"Are the sons of God's election,  
Who through sovereign grace believe;  
Be eternal destination  
Grace and glory they receive."

God's elect are here meant by "the sons of Jacob," - those whom he foreknew and fore-ordained to everlasting salvation.

2. By "the sons of Jacob" are meant, in the second place, persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles. Jacob, you know, had no rights by birth; but he soon acquired them. He changed a mess of pottage with his brother Esau, and thus gained the birthright. I do not justify the means; but he did also obtain the blessing, and so acquired peculiar rights. By "the sons of Jacob" here, are meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them that believe, he hath given the right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ; they have a right to "enter in through the gates into the city;" they have a title to eternal honors; they have a promise to everlasting glory; they have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh! there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the "sons of Jacob."

3. But, then next, these "sons of Jacob" were men of peculiar manifestations. Jacob had peculiar manifestations from his God, and thus he was highly honored. Once at night-time he lay down and slept; he had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for his canopy, a stone for his pillow, and the earth for his bed. Oh! then he had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder, and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus, as the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him; and again at Peniel, when he wrestled with God, and saw him face to face. Those were peculiar manifestations; and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

Now then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? "Oh!" you say "that is enthusiasm; that is fanaticism." Well, it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talketh with his friend; they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah; Christ hath been with them to sup with them, and they with Christ; and the Holy Spirit hath shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance, that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The "sons of Jacob" are the men, who enjoy these manifestations.

4. Then again, they are men of peculiar trials. Ah! poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob's lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob's blessing; for a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father's house to Laban's; and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there - cheated him of his wife, cheated him in his wages, cheated him in his flocks, and cheated him all through the story. By-and-bye he had to run away from Laban, who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer, and afterwards he wrestled, and had to go all his life with his thigh out of joint. But a little further on, Rachael, his dear beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray, and the sons murder the Shechemites. Anon there is dear Joseph sold into Egypt, and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it; Judah commits

incest with his own daughter-in-law; and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away; and the old man, almost broken-hearted, cries, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." Never was man more tried than Jacob, all through the one sin of cheating his brother. All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They have had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers! God says, "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Poor tried souls! ye are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get fretting, and say, with the self-conceit of misery, "I am the man who hath seen affliction." Why "the Man of Sorrows" was afflicted more than you; Jesus was indeed a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like his. You do not understand what troubles means; you have hardly sipped the cup of trouble; you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not saith God, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob," men of peculiar trials, "are not consumed."

5. Then one more thought about who are the "sons of Jacob," for I should like you to find out whether you are "sons of Jacob," yourselves. They are men of peculiar character; for though there were some things about Jacob's character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob's faith, by which Jacob had his name written amongst the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth, but shall obtain them in heaven. Are you men of faith, beloved? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna - all by faith? Is faith the rule of your life? if so, you are the "sons of Jacob."

Then Jacob was a man of prayer - a man who wrestled, and groaned, and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the house of God. Ah! you poor heathen, don't you pray? No! he says, "I never thought of such a thing; for years I have not prayed." Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer, and you will pray long enough when you get to hell. There is a woman: she did not pray this morning; she was so busy sending her children to the Sunday School, she had no time to pray. No time to pray? Had you time to dress?



There is a time for every purpose under heaven, and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs. They are men in whom the Holy Ghost so works, they they can no more live without prayer than I can live without breathing. They must pray. Sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer, you are living without Christ; and dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burneth with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are "the sons of Jacob," take comfort, for God is immutable.

III. Thirdly, I can say only a word about the other point - THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE "SONS OF JACOB" RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD. "Therefore ye sons Jacob are not consumed." "Consumed?" How? how can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. We might have been consumed in hell. If God had been a changing God, the "sons of Jacob" here this morning, might have been consumed in hell; but for God's unchanging love I should have been a faggot in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this world; there is such a things as being condemned before you die - "condemned already;" there is such a thing as being alive, and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices, and then where should we have been now? Revelling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God. Oh? had he left you, dearly beloved, had he been a changing God, ye had been amongst the filthiest of the filthy, and the vilest of the vile. Cannot you remember in your life, seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the edge of sin; some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms, so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed alone, dragged as by an awful satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down, and seen my portion; I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit, the horrible pit into which I was about to fall. A strong arm hath saved me. I have started back and cried, O God! could I have gone so near sin, and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar's strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh! is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of the sins I have committed, and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination?

Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes not. Oh! if he had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways; if the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves; for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We should have proved suicides to our own souls; we should have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God, and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it. Then we should have been consumed by God himself if he had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father; but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them, if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with his family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world - unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring, and stiffnecked. Well it is that he is longsuffering, or else he would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago. But there was nothing in us to love at first, so, there cannot be less now. John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election, "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else he would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case, and true in respect most of God's people; for there is little to love in them after they are born, that if he had not loved them before then, he would have seen no reason to choose them after; but since he loved them without works, he loves them without works still; since their good works did not win his affection, bad works cannot sever that affection; since their righteousness did not bind his love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure sovereign grace, and he will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil, and by our enemies - consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials, and in a hundred other ways, if God had ever changed.

Well, now, time fails us, and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you "sons of Jacob" to take home this portion of meat; digest it well, and feed upon it. May the Holy Ghost sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have "a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined!" Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be

disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, every thing may change, but God does not. Your brethren may change and cast out your name as vile: but God will love you still. Let your station in life change, and your property be gone; let your whole life be shaken, and you become weak and sickly; let everything flee away - there is one place where change cannot put his finger; there is one name on which mutability can never be written; there is one heart which never can alter; that heart is God's - that name Love.

"Trust him, he will ne'er deceive you.  
Though you hardly of him deem;  
He will never, never leave you,  
Nor will let you quite leave him."

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## **Importance Of Small Things In Religion**

The Lord our God made a breach upon us for that we sought him not after the due order. - 1 Chronicles 15:13

Let me explain the events of which a summary is to be found in 2 Samuel 6., and 1 Chronicles 13:and 15:The ark of the covenant was a kind of chest made of shittim wood, and lined within and without with gold. Within this ark were preserved the tables of stone, which were received from heaven by Moses when he was upon the mount. There also lay the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. Upon the lid of it were represented cherubic figures of angels; and between the wings of the cherubim, when the ark was at rest, there was seen that miraculously bright light, called the Shekinah, which was the token of the presence of the Most High God. The lid of the ark, as you will remember was called the mercy-seat. The whole ark was one of the most sacred things in the

symbolic worship of the Jews because if they understood aright, it was to them the expression of God's dwelling with them, for where that ark was, God specially rested. Its lid being called the mercy seat, was the representation of Jesus Christ who is our ark - the ark of the covenant in which God dwelt among men, and he is our mercy-seat by whom we have access to our Father, God. You will remember that after this ark was made in the wilderness, it was carefully kept in the secret place of the tabernacle, into which no man ever entered, except the high priest once in the year; and, then, not without blood. With his censor smoking, he made a thick cloud of incense, and then sprinkling the blood upon the mercy-seat, he ventured near to it - but not without blood. That ark when it was removed was covered over, so that no human eye should ever see it; and it was carried by golden staves upon the shoulders of the Levites. It was by the presence of this ark that Jordan was driven back, and an easy passage was made for the children of Israel, when they entered into Canaan. The ark was in an evil day captured by the Philistines. But when they took it away into their country, wherever the ark went, it smote the Philistines with pestilence, until they were compelled to bring it back, for they cried, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city, the hand of God was very heavy there." Placing the terrible captive upon a new cart, they left the oxen to bear it as they pleased, and by divine providence the ark was carried to Beth-shemesh. The men of Beth-shemesh struck with an evil curiosity, lifted up the lid and looked therein, and there fell many thousands of them dead for the impious presumption. The ark was then removed to Kirjath-jearim, and taken into the house of Abinadab, where it was preserved till the days of David, who desired to bring it up to the tabernacle which he had erected for it on the top of Mount Zion. The messengers hastened through all the land carrying the royal message, "Come up, ye tribes of Israel, and ye sons of Judah, gather yourselves together, and bring up the ark of the covenant of your God with music and with joy." They came from every city, from the remotest ends of Judea, and from the borders of Egypt. But forgetful of the divine law, they took up the ark and put it on a new car or chariot which they had made for it. They thought, doubtless, it was too heavy for the priests to carry so many miles; or else, forgetful altogether of the divine law, they imitated

the example of the Philistines. It is an evil hour for the people of God, when they set up their own judgment, and fail to yield implicit obedience to divine law. The ark is dragged by the oxen; but as there are no roads in the East, but only here and there a cart rut, the cart shakes, and the ark totters. Just when they come to the threshing floor of Chidon, there is a peculiarly boggy place in the road, and the car is almost upset; the ark is about to fall in the mire, so Uzzah thinks, and he puts out his hand, touches the ark to stop it, is rent in pieces, and falls a mangled corpse. The procession stops. They begin to weep; they cast dust into the air; the king himself is angry, angry with his God. He thinks he is dealing hardly with them; and the ark is taken into Obed-edom's house, and all their joy is suspended.

You have before you now the picture. I shall want you to look at it, first, in detail, to bring out certain truths which I think it teaches to us; and then, I shall want you to regard the picture as a whole, to run your eye along the whole length of the canvas, and see the fullness of its meaning.

I. First, then, we shall take THE PICTURE IN ITS DETAIL.

1. The first observation I make upon it is this, that God's judgment of sin must differ exceedingly from ours. Who among us when he has read this narrative has not thought that Uzzah was treated hardly? What! was he not actuated with a proper motive? He could not bear the idea that the ark should fall into the mire, and therefore he put out his hand. Why, to our mode of thinking, it seemed to be but a small offense, and the motive so excellent that it might almost be justified. I am sure there is a disposition in us to excuse Uzzah, and to think that this judgment which came upon him was not deserved. Let me remark here, that I am not sure Uzzah suffered any eternal punishment as the result of it. Perhaps, he was a gracious man; and God, may smite even his own children with death as a chastisement, and yet their souls may be saved eternally. We have nothing to look at except what God did with him in this world. He struck him dead in this world for touching the ark. Verily, my brethren, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. We cannot readily perceive the evil, but there was sin or else he would not have punished it. He is too good, too just to smite any man more severely than he deserves. God never exaggerates our sins. He looks at them as they are. And what think you, my hearers, if the mere

sin of touching the ark brought death upon the man, what would our sins have brought on us if God had "laid justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet?" Why, we have all of us done ten thousand times worse than Uzzah. Nay, some of you are living in the commission of sin to this very day. You have never repented of your sins, but you love your evil ways, and, though warned many times, (not like Uzzah, who was taken away with a stroke,) though warned many times, you still persevere in your iniquities. Oh, must not God's patience be pressed down under your sins? Must he not have become as Amos hath it, like a cart that is full of sheaves, the axles whereof are ready to break? and then you sink and sink for ever into the pit of eternal wrath. It seems strange that Eve's taking the apple should be the ruin of the entire world; that the mere violation of a sacred tree should bring death into the world, with all its train of woe. But this arises from the fact that we do not know how black a thing sin is. The least sin is so great an evil, so excessively black an abomination, that God were just if he smote us all to hell the moment we had thought an idle thought, or had uttered a single wrong word. Sin is an immeasurable evil. Man cannot weigh it. It is a gulf without a bottom. It is a desperate evil, the desperateness of which we shall never know, unless, as God forbid, we should ever come to feel its terror in the pit of hell.

I think this lesson lies upon the very surface of the narrative, that we do not know how bad a thing sin is, for if the mere act of touching the ark brought death on Uzzah, what a desperate evil sin must be!

2. But, again, we learn, in the second place, from this narrative - that all changes from the written revelation of God are wrong. There has sprung up in the Church of Christ an idea that there are many things taught in the Bible which are not essential; that we may alter them just a little to suit our convenience: that provided we are right in the fundamentals, the other things are of no concern and of no value whatever. Now, look at our picture, and let your mistake for ever be driven away. It did seem to the people of Israel but a very indifferent matter whether the ark was carried on men's shoulders, or whether it was dragged upon a cart. Why, they said, "It cannot matter. It is true God has told us that it is to be borne by the Levites, but what does that signify as long as it is carried? It will be all right. We will do the thing, and if we alter the mode, it will not signify

very materially." Yes, but it did signify, for it was through this alteration which they made in God's law that the ark first began to shake, and to totter, and then Uzzah was tempted to put forth his hand and touch it. So that the death of Uzzah was the punishment upon the whole people for having neglected to observe the minute laws of God in every particular. My brethren, when Moses built the tabernacle, he was not left to build it after his own whim And taste. Every tache and every loop, every board and every fillet, everything was marked down in the divine plan, and Moses must build everything according to the pattern which he had seen in the Mount. Now, this is the pattern for a Christian - this book of God which lies before me. The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is our only rule of practice. And ye think, do ye, that ye may alter some few things, that ye may change them to suit the climate, or to indulge your own ideas of taste or convenience? You fancy, that doctrine for instance, is not of such sublime importance - that if a man does but preach the fundamentals, he may preach any other things he likes, and yet all will be well - that ceremonies, that Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, for instance, are to be out, and hacked and fashioned, to suit modern fancies, and that they are not to be retained in their integrity according to apostolic rule and precedent? But this know, that the slightest violation of the divine law will bring judgments upon the Church, and has brought judgments, and is even at this day withholding God's hand from blessing us. For within a few years we might see all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, if we would but carry God's ark as God would have it carried, instead of marring the gospel by human inventions, and leaving the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am not going this morning to enter into particulars, but just to lay down the general fact, that whatever God has commanded is important, and that I have no right whatever to alter anything - no, not the least thing, but to take the word just as it stands, just as God has revealed it to me, to be my rule of faith and practice. Ay, but there are some of you who never read your Bibles. You have a second-hand religion which you have borrowed from other people, you do not come to this Book to drink at the fountain head. Your grandmother thought so and so, and you think the same; your great grandfather went to church or to chapel, and that is your

reason for going; but you have not come to God's Word to submit your judgment to it. The reason why there are so many sects now-a-days is just this. If we all come straightway to the Bible, we should come far nearer together than we are now. It is not likely we should all see eye to eye. You cannot make a dozen watches all tick to the same time, much less make a dozen men all think the same thoughts. But, still, if we should all bow our thoughts to that one written Word, and would own no authority but the Bible the Church could not be divided, could not be cut in pieces as she now is. We come together when we come to the Word of God. But I am always answered when I talk about these things, "Well, but they are not essential." Who told you they were not? "Now," saith one, "we'll admit that the baptism of infants is not in the Bible, but it is not an essential thing; we may practice it, and no harm will come of it." No, sirs; you have no right to alter a word of God's command; you have no right to turn aside in any respect, or in any manner. God's doctrines are to be preached as God delivers them, and his ordinances are to be practiced after his own mode and law. Woe worth the day when God's ark is put upon the chariot and dragged by oxen, instead of being carried upon the shoulders of men, who read God's Word, and take it as it stands, and then follow out what God commands them, and will not be led by the sleeve or by the nose by any man or set of men.

Forget not this lesson brethren, for it is of the greatest importance to the Church.

3. Now, there is a third thing, and that is, that whenever the practices of Christians differ from Scripture they are sure to incur inconvenience. When the ark was carried on the shoulders of men, it did not matter whether it went up-hill or down-hill, rugged road or smooth, there was the ark carried in state like the litter of a king. But once put it on the cart - although they thought it would look better - then it went jolting here and jolting there, and threatening constantly to tumble into the mire. Whenever we alter one word of Scripture, we shall get ourselves into trouble. We may not see it at first, but we surely shall find it out by-and-bye. A minister, for instance, thinks, "Well, now, I must not preach all the doctrines of the Gospel. it would not suit my people, there is a great deacon sitting in the green pew in the corner, there is the squire of the



parish, he would not like it if I were to be too severe on him." Ah, my friend, alter one word, and you have fallen into a snare, you have entered a labyrinth, and God help you to find your way out again, for you will never be able to get through it alone. Stand to God's Word and you stand safely. Alter one dot of the i, one cross of the t, and you are nowhere at all; you are in an enemy's country, and you cannot defend yourself. When we have got Scripture to back us up we defy the world; but when we have nothing but our own whims or the work of some great preacher, or the decree of a council, or the tradition the Fathers, we are lost. we are trying to weave a rope of sand, we are building a house of cards, that must totter to the ground. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is the religion of Christ's Church. And until we come back to that the Church will have to suffer. She will not carry the ark up to the hill of Zion; she will not see His kingdom come, or his will done in earth as it is in heaven, till she has done with those bullocks and that new cart, and goes back to the New Testament plan of keeping consistently to the truth as it is in Jesus, and contending earnestly for the faith.

4. Furthermore, another thing lies upon the surface of this passage; namely, that one innovation upon sacred writ leads to another. A little error leads to a great one. Nobody ever intended that Uzzah should touch that ark. They had not a thought when they lifted it up and put it on the car that it would lead to poor Uzzah's death and that he would commit the sin of violating the ark, else surely they would have kept to the Scriptural plan. So there are some of you my dear brethren in Christ who are not quite right in your views of Scripture. Well, perhaps you think the same of me. We will speak of somebody else, then. There is a man in the world, whose views are not quite in consistency with Scripture. He says, "Well, it does not matter it is a little thing, a very little thing." Yes but that little wrong thing leads to a great wrong thing. The sinner's path is down hill, and when you take one step in violation of Scripture precept, your next step is not only easy, but seems even to be forced upon you. Doubt election, you will soon doubt perseverance, and you may soon come to deny redemption. Where did the errors of the church of Rome come from? Were they all born in a day? No, they came by slow degrees. It happened thus: - I will trace but one error, against which as a denomination we always bear our protest, and I only take that as a

specimen of the whole. Among the early Christians, it was the practice to baptize those who believed in Christ Jesus, by immersing them in the water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Well, the first wrong doctrine that started up, was the idea that perhaps there was some efficacy in the water. Next it followed that when a man was dying who had never been baptized he would perhaps profess faith in Christ, and ask that he might be baptized; but as he was dying they could not lift him from his bed, they therefore adopted sprinkling as being an easier method by which they might satisfy the conscience by the application of water. That done, there was but a step to the taking of little children into the church - children, unconscious infants, who were received as being members of Christ's body; and thus infant sprinkling was adopted. The error came in by slow degrees - not all at once. It would have been too glaring for the church to receive, if it had shown its head at one time with all its horns upon it. But it entered slowly and gradually, till it came to be inducted into the church. I do not know, an error which causes the damnation of more souls than that at the present-time. There are thousands of people who firmly believe that they shall go to heaven because they were sprinkled in infancy, have been confirmed, and have taken the Sacrament. Sacramental efficacy and baptismal regeneration, all spring from the first error of infant baptism. Had they kept to the Scripture, had the church always required faith before baptism, that error could not have sprung up. It must have died before the light of the truth, it could not have breathed, it could not have had a foothold in the Christian church. But one error must lead to another - you never need doubt that. If you tamper with one truth of Scripture, he that tempts you to meddle with one, will tempt you to tamper with another, and there will be no end to it, till, at last, you will want a new Bible, a new Testament, and a new God. There is no telling where you will end when you have begun. I am speaking very pointedly and very plainly this morning, on a subject which very seldom comes in my way. But I must be clear in my language when I do speak about it, for I do not often make allusions to this truth. Judge me as I judge others. You tell me, if I make one step in error, you do not know how far I may go. I believe you. Believe me also when I say the same. Let us both go to Scripture, let us stand only by this. I like your Prayer Book well enough, but not so well as my Bible. I respect your Church decrees, but not so as I venerate this Book. I believe what

your minister says, so far as it is consistent with this Book. Believe me so far, but not one inch further. Have done with me when I have done with my Master. Think no more of any man you hear, when he goes from the Scripture, and when he errs, than you would think of Satan himself; except this, pity him for his errors, but pin not your faith to his sleeve. Scripture, Scripture only, is the model doctrine, the model practice, the model experience of a Christian; and whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.

5. Having now dwelt upon these points, I will take one more, and then I will leave this looking at the picture in detail. It strikes me that on the very surface of this passage there is a refutation of a very common error, that if we do a thing from a right motive God accepts it, even though it is a wrong thing. The common error of the time is this, "Well," says one, "I have no doubt that if a man is a good Mahomedan, and keeps up to what he knows, he will go to heaven." "Ah," says another, "and if he is a good Roman Catholic, and if he keeps up to what he knows he is safe." "Ay," says another, "we must not judge one another harshly; no doubt those who bow before Juggernaut, if they live up to what they know will be saved." Do you take in the devil-worshippers and the snake-worshippers too? You must let them all in. You have opened your door wide enough to let them all come in. And the Thugs who are going about India cutting men's throats - they do it as a matter of principle, it is a part of their religion, they consider it to be right - do you think they will go to heaven because they have done what they thought is right? "No," says one, "I will not go that length." Yes, but if the principle is right in one case it is right in the other. A principle will go the whole way it will stretch in any direction, and be as applicable to one as to another. But it is all deception and falsehood God has revealed to us the one true religion. and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. We are responsible to God for our faith; we are bound to believe what he tells us to believe, and our judgment is as much bound to submit to God's law as any other power of our being. When we come before God, it will be no excuse for us to say "My Lord, I did wrong, but I thought I was doing right." "Yes, but I gave you my law. but you did not read it, or, if you read it, you read it so carelessly that you did not understand it, and then you did wrong, and you tell me you did it with a right motive. Ay, but it is of no avail

whatever." Just as in Uzzah's case, did it not seem the lightest thing in the world to put out his hand to prevent the ark from slipping off? Who could blame the man? But God had commanded that no unpriestly hand should ever touch it, and inasmuch as he did touch it, though it was with a right motive, yet Uzzah must die. God will have his laws kept. Besides, my dear brethren, I am not sure about the rightness of your motives after all. The State has issued a proclamation, it is engraven, according to the old Roman fashion, in brass. A man goes up with his file, and he begins working away upon the brass, erases here, and amends there. Says he, "I did that with a right motive, I didn't think the law a good one, I thought it was too old-fashioned for these times, and so I thought I would alter it a little, and make it better for the people." Ah, how many have there been who have said, "The old puritanic principles are too rough for these times, we'll alter them, we'll tone them down a little." What are you at, sir? Who art thou that darest to touch a single letter of God's Book which God has hedged about with thunder in that tremendous sentence, wherein he has written, "Whosoever shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and whosoever shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city." It becomes an awful thing when we come to think of it, for men not to form a right and proper judgment about God's Word, for man to leave a single point in it uncanvassed, a single mandate unstudied, lest we should lead others astray, while we ourselves are acting in disobedience to God. The fact is, there is one way to heaven, and there are not fifty ways; there is one gate to heaven, and there are not even two gates. Christ is the way. Trusting in Jesus is the path to Paradise. He that believeth not in Jesus must be damned. The religion of Christ is intolerant; not that it ever touches man in his flesh and blood, even if he rejects it, but it does not allow of a second method of salvation. It demands your full obedience, your child-like faith, or else it threatens you with the direst penalty, if you refuse to yield to it. That idea of free-thinking and the like, and the right of man to think as he likes, has no countenance in Scripture. We are bound to believe what God tells us; as he tells it to us; bound not to alter a single word, but to take the Bible as it is, or else deny it, and take the consequence.

All this seems to me to lay in the picture which we have before us of the death of Uzzah.

II. But leaving these points, which I thought to be very necessary for the warning of all Christians - for judging with charity, we cannot believe that the errors which prevail among us, can have sprung up from attention to the Word - they must have sprung up from the idea, that the little things of Christ were of no importance whatever I now come to the second point, which is to LOOK AT THE PICTURE AS A WHOLE. Here I have two pictures; one for the people of God, the other for the ungodly. I shall dwell but briefly upon the first, and at length on the second.

Brethren in Jesus, despite our mistakes - and we are mistaken in some things, God forgive us - despite our mistakes, we are one in Jesus. Yet, though one in Christ Jesus, we should not think our errors to be unimportant, but should every one of us on his knees seek divine teaching, that we may be purged from every false way, and that we may be led in the way of divine obedience, even unto the end. I am sure my brethren in Jesus, that the one object of your life, as I can say it is the object of mine, is the bringing about the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to bring up the ark from its obscurity, into the place of glory. Every time we bend our knee, there is one prayer we never can forget: - "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, for eighteen hundred and sixty years, the church of Christ has been seeking to bring the kingdom of Christ on earth. Has it come? has it come? Yes blessed be God it has in its measure. Here in this land, and across the Atlantic, and in other nations, there are found many who love and serve our Master. But have we had full fruit for the eighteen hundred and sixty years of labor? I think not. Two hundred years after the death of Christ, I think I may say, the religion of Jesus was almost as powerful in numbers upon the face of the earth, as it is now. And all the time between - God forbid that I should say it has been wasted - has, nevertheless, been a period of going back, rather than advancing - of retreat, rather than rushing victory. Now, how is this to be accounted for? Was there not that in the religion of Christ, which would push its enemies to the very ends of the earth? Let but Paul stand up in Rome, and though after awhile, his head is severed from his body, yet the very empire of the

seven hills is made to totter while he speaks. Let others of the Apostles pass the pillars of Hercules, and come to Britain, and the Druid loses his power; those who bow before bloody gods that delight in human sacrifice renounce their idolatries, and churches are founded throughout England, Ireland and Scotland. They have but to enter a country, and that country yields. It is true the martyrs bleed, and the apostles die, and the confessors are burned, but the truth lives and conquers and overcomes. Within two or three centuries, the name of Jesus is better known than that of any man, and his religion has greater power than any other on the face of the earth. And here are we, now, sending out our missionaries everywhere, and what is the success? Thank God for what it is: it is an excellent reward for all our labor, and far more than we deserve. But there is not the power in our missionaries that there was in the apostles. Our victories of the church have not been like the victories of the olden times. Why is this? My theory to account for it is this. In the first place, the absence of the Holy Spirit in a great measure from us. But if you come to the root of it to know the reason, my fuller other answer is this: - the church has forsaken her original purity, and, therefore, she has lost her power. If once we had done with everything erroneous, if by the unanimous will of the entire body of Christ, every evil ceremony, every ceremony not ordained of Scripture were lopped off and done with, if every doctrine were rejected which is not sustained by Holy Writ; if this church were pure and glean, her path would be onward, triumphant, victorious. She would set her feet on Brahma, and crush Vishnu beneath her feet. She would say to the moon of Mahomet, "Set for ever!" She would dash from his throne the Pope; she would rend up false religions by the roots; she would sit as empress of the earth, and Christ, her husband, would reign with her, and the tabernacles of God would be among men. But we art not pure; we are not clean; we cannot bring up the ark of God. Blessed be God, it still abides in Obed-Edom's house. True religion is to be found in the hearts of God's people, and in some churches the truth is still preserved; but till the whole church shall come forth clear as the moon, fair as the sun, she will never be terrible as an army with banners.

This may seem to you to be of little consequence, but it really is a matter of life and death. I would plead with every Christian - think it over, my

dear brother. When some of us preach Calvinism, and some Arminianism, we cannot both be right; it is of no use trying to think we can be - "Yes," and "no," cannot both be true. When some of us hold a Christian free of all authority but Christ; and others hold a state church; we cannot both be right anyhow. We may be both right in the grand things, but we cannot be right in everything, one or other of us must be wrong. When some sprinkle the infant, and others baptize the believer, we cannot both be right; it is idle for us to think so. Christ has not made a nondescript religion, that will hold all sorts of people in it, and yet all shall be alike obedient. Truth does not vacillate like the pendulum which shakes backwards and forwards. It is not like the comet, which is here, there, and everywhere. One must be right, the other wrong. It is not for me to pronounce who is right, or who is wrong. I am not infallible. It is for me to judge of Scripture, as in the sight of God, for myself. I beg you do the same, Do not think any error to be an unimportant one, but try the spirits, prove whether these things are so. I am quite sure that the best way to promote union is to promote truth. It will not do for us to be all united together by yielding to one another's mistakes. We are to be united heartily, I hope we are. We are to love each other in Christ; but we are not to be so united that we are not able to see each other's faults, and especially not able to see our own. No, purge the house of God, and then shall grand and blessed times dawn on us.

And now; having done with that subject, I turn to those of you who are not converted, but who are longing to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached. I think what I have already said to be important, but this last part of the service is all-important. My dear hearer, I will suppose that in your heart there is an anxious desire to be saved, but you do not understand the plan of salvation: I grieve for you; for if you do not understand it, even though you seek Christ, you will make many mistakes, and you will suffer much inconvenience. It was a right thing in David to wish to bring up the ark, but perhaps he was ignorant of the way to bring it, and see what inconvenience he had to suffer: the ark was jolted, the oxen shook it. Now if you are not clear as to the plan of salvation, you will have many jottings, much shaking, many doubts, many fears. Let me ask and intreat you, then, to search the Scriptures; for in therein ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of

Christ; and let me beg you to endeavor, by God's help, ever to keep in your mind a clear view of the fact, that you are to be saved, if saved at all, by trusting in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ alone. The plan of salvation is, "Trust in Jesus." Make mistakes about other things, you will suffer inconvenience; but make a mistake here, and it will be fatal to you. Methinks I hear some man saying, "Sir, I have longed to be saved, but I am still uneasy and troubled in my mind, I think if I were to do good works, and then to save myself by them, I might trust in Christ." Stand back, Uzzah, stand back, thou art about to touch the ark of God, beware, lest thou shouldst die while thou art doing it other mistakes will make you uneasy; that mistake will be fatal to you. Touch the atonement of Jesus Christ, and there is no salvation if you touch it with a legal hand, seeking to add to it your own self righteousness.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good."

He wants no help from you; leave him to do it all; take him as he is, and go to him just as you are; do not seek to bring anything, but go as you are, and you will be saved. Seek to help Christ, and saved you cannot be. Until you have done with that thought, you must abide in your sorrow, and in your death. No mixing with Jesus; he never came to be a make-weight. Christ must be all, and you must be nothing at all. If you attempt to patch his perfect robe that robe shall never cover your nakedness. It is begemmed with jewels; put one paste jewel of yours upon it, and it is not yours. You must have a whole Christ, and nothing but Christ. You know the old proverb, "Betwixt the two stools he came to the ground." When a man hopes to rely partly on Christ, and partly on himself, he will come to the ground with a vengeance. Rest on Jesus simply, and you are saved; rest on Christ and self, and you are like Uzzah, you have touched the ark, you have sought to mingle man's works with God's works, man's merits with Christ's merits; and tremble, lest the wrath of God should come forth against you, and destroy you.

But after all, my dear friends, you have no merits. Christ freely offers himself to you, if you will take him for nothing. You thought to buy him with your merits. Why you have no merits. Shall I tell you a little parable which shall show you your position. There was a rich man who had a



generous heart, and once upon a time he resolved to give a large estate to a poor neighbor, so he sent for him, and said, "My friend, I am willing to give you a large estate for nothing." The man felt grateful and retired home, but as he lay in his bed he thought, "I should like that estate, but I should not like to be beholden to anybody for it; I think I will pay for it." So he set out the next morning with a heavy bag on his back, and when he came to the rich man's door and the friend came out, he said, "Sir, I value your estate very highly; you promised to let me have it for nothing, but I do not want to be obliged to you, so I have brought a bag all full of gold to buy it with." The rich man said, "I never offered to sell it to you; I said I would give it to you; but come, let us look at your bag of gold." So the poor man opened wide the mouth of the sack; he blushed and stammered, and said, "Oh sir, be not angry with me; now I come to look at it; it is nothing but a bag of silver." The friend said, "Look at it again." He looked again and blushed, and cried, "Let not my lord be angry, but I find it is nothing but a bag of copper." "Look once more," said he. He looked once more into it, and he fell down on his knees, and said, "Forgive me, forgive me; I find, sir, it is a bag of filth. You see I have brought you a bag of filth with which to buy your rich estate." You know the meaning of that parable, do you not? You have brought to God what you thought were good works, golden works; look at them you will see them pale before you, and you will say, "My Lord, they are not so good as I thought they were, they are only silver works after all." Look at them again, and they will become dirty, frown, copper works. "Oh!" say you, "they are not worth more than a farthing now." Look again, and you will see that your prayers, your tears, your good works, are nothing better than filth after all. They are only another form of sin, another shape of iniquity. Oh! sinner, take Christ as he is; take him now, just as thou art. The gospel is just this - trust Christ and you are saved. Rely on what he did, and you are delivered. Just leave off trusting to any ceremonies, to any doctrines, to any forms, to any works, but rely on Jesus and you are saved. "Well," says one, "but if I go on in sin." You cannot go on in sin after you have relied on Jesus, that will stop you, nothing else can; but faith will. "No," says another, "but I have nothing in the world; no reason why I should be saved, I have no good thing." Just so, I know you have not; but still you are told to trust Jesus whether you have any good thing or not. Methinks I hear some one say, "I must not trust Jesus, I have no

right to do it." But, my dear friend, you are commanded to do it. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Is not this the very gospel - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?" Now what God commends me to do I have a right to do; it cannot be wrong for me to do what God tells me to do. The minister, who tells a man he has his right found in his own sense of need, makes the sinner look to himself; but if he tells him, "Feel or not feel, God has commanded you to believe," that makes the sinner turn to Christ and Christ only, this turns his eye from himself to the Savior.

To conclude, I will tell you a little anecdote which I have often told before; it brings to your mind more clearly than any other means, your right to believe in Christ. I am speaking to those who say, "I have no right to trust Christ." But if Christ commands you to do it, and if moreover he tells you, "you are condemned already because you do not believe," you certainly have a right to believe. Sitting one day in Court with a Judge, interesting myself with some trials that were going on, there was wanted a witness. I am not clear about his name, but I think it was Brown. So it was said from the Bench that Brown was wanted next. The usher down in the Court cried out "Brown!" Some one nearer the door cried, "Brown!" and I could hear them calling out in the street two or three times, "Brown! Brown I Brown!" The Court was very crowded. By-and-bye there came in at the Court door with a great deal of difficulty, a little, ugly, mean-looking creature. He came pushing and elbowing his way. There was a fine tall gentleman standing in the Court, looking on. He did not like to be pushed about, and he said in a very peremptory manner, "Who are you?" "Brown," said the man, "I am Brown." "Well," but said the other, "Who is Brown?" "Nobody," said he, "only I was told to come." It was wonderful how everybody made way for Brown, because he was told to come. They just cleared a lane for him and I do not suppose for my lord and duke they would have made room - they were so tightly packed: but Brown must come in anyhow, because he was wanted. It did not matter how poor he looked, how ragged, how greasy, how dirty, Brown was wanted and he had a right to come. So now, God commands you to trust Christ. But you say, "There is a great big sin standing up." And he says, "Who are you?" You say, "A poor sinner." "And what is a poor sinner?" says he.

"Nothing at all," you say; "but Jesus Christ told me to trust in him. If he is wrong I leave the blame with him, I will not keep back from him." He says, "Leap into my arms." I am at the top of a burning house, he cries, "leap, and I will catch you." Then down I go. Dashed to pieces, or saved; I have no other way of salvation - down I go into his arms. I am sinking, the floods are ready to swallow me up. Christ says, "Lay hold of that rope." It looks a frail rope, but I lay hold of it. Sink or swim I will not lay hold of anything else, but that and that alone, and I am safe. Do that, poor sinner, whoever you may be, if you have not entered a place of worship for the last six months, trust Christ now. Now, I beseech you, while the accepted hour is here, may God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Christ; and, though you have come in here covered with sin, you may go out with your sin washed away, peace and joy in your hearts, because the Spirit of God has sweetly led you to trust Jesus and you are saved.

May God now add his blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **In Him: Like Him**

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. - 1 John 2:6

He that saith he abideth in him: "—that is exactly what every Christian does say. He cannot be a Christian unless this be true of him, and he cannot fully enjoy his religion unless he assuredly knows that he is in Christ, and can boldly say as much. We must be in Christ, and abidingly in Christ, or else We are not saved in the Lord. It is our union with the Christ that makes us Christians: by union with him as our life we truly live,—live in the favour of God.—We are in Christ, dear brethren, as the manslayer was in the city of refuge: I hope that we can say we abide in him as our sanctuary and shelter. We have fled for refuge to him who is the hope set before us in the gospel; even as David and his men sheltered themselves in the eaves of En-gedi, so we hide ourselves in Christ. We each one sing, and our heart goes with the words -

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee."

We have entered into Christ as into the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as guest; into a banquet-hall, as returning travellers into their home. And now we abide—in Christ in this sense, that we are joined to him : as the stone is, in the wall, as the wave is in the sea, as the branch is in the vine, so are we in Christ. As the branch receives all its sap from the stem, so all the sap of spiritual life flows from Christ into us. If we were separated from him, we should be as branches cut off from the vine, only fit to be gathered up for the fire, and to be burned. So that we abide in Christ as our shelter, our home, and our life. Today we remain in Christ, and hope for ever to remain in him, as our Head. Ours is no transient union; while he lives as our Head we shall remain his members. We are nothing apart from him. As a finger is nothing without the head, as the whole body is nothing without the head, so should we be nothing without

our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are in him vitally, and therefore we dare ask the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"

Beloved, since we, then, are the people who say that we abide in him, it is upon us that the obligation of the text falls: we ought ourselves also so to walk even as he walked. A Bible ought has great weight with a conscientious man. Ought it to be so? Then it shall be so, God helping me. If we say we must do. If we talk, we must walk, or it will, be mere talk. If we make the profession of abiding in Christ, we must prove it by our practice of walking with Christ. If we say that we are in Christ and abide in him, we must take care that our life and character are conformed to Christ, or else we shall be making an empty boast. This is true of every man who says he is in Christ, for the text is put in the most general and absolute manner: be the man old or young, rich or poor, learned or simple, pastor or hearer, it is incumbent upon him to live like Christ if he professes to live in Christ.

The first thing about a Christian is initiation, initiation into Christ: the next thing is imitation, the imitation of Christ. We cannot be Christians unless we are in Christ; and we are not truly in Christ unless in him we live and move and have our being, and the life of Christ is lived over again by us according to our measure. "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children." It is the nature of children to imitate their parents. Be ye imitators; of Christ as good soldiers, who cannot have a better model for their soldierly life than their Captain and Lord. Ought we not to be very grateful to Christ that he deigns to be our example? If he were not perfectly able to meet all our other wants, if he were an expiation and nothing else, we should glory in him as our atoning sacrifice, for we always put that to the front, and magnify the virtue of his precious blood beyond everything: but at the same time we need an example, and it is delightful to find it where we find our pardon and justification. They that are saved from the death of sin need to be guided in the life of holiness, and it is infinitely condescending on the part of Christ that he becomes an example to such poor creatures as we are. It is said to have been the distinguishing mark of Caesar as a soldier that he never said to his followers "Go!" but he always said "Come!" Of Alexander, also, it was

noted that in weary marches he was sure to be on foot with his warriors, and in fierce attack's he always was in the van. The most persuasive sermon is the example which leads the way. This certainly is one trait in the Good Shepherd's character, "when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them." If Jesus bids us do anything, he first does it himself. He would have us wash one another's feet; and this is the argument—"Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Shall we not do as he does whom we profess to follow? He has left his footprints that we may set our feet in them. Will we not joyfully fix our feet upon this royal road?

That is our theme at this time. We do many of us say that we are in Christ: let us hear how obliged we are by this to walk even as he walked. Oh, Holy Spirit, let us feel the weight of the sacred obligation!

But I stop a minute. I know that there are some here who cannot say that they are in Christ. Then, if you are not in Christ, you are out of Christ; and out of Christ your position is dangerous, terrible, ruinous. If we saw a man hanging over a deep pit, if we saw a man exposed to a sea of fire, and likely to perish in it, all our tenderest emotions would begin to flow, and we should pray in an agony of spirit, "Oh, God, save this man from danger!" My brethren, there are some among us tonight who are in the utmost danger; in a most emphatic sense they are lost already, for they are without God, and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Oh, my hearers, how shall I speak of you without tears? Poor souls, abiding under the wrath of God! Poor souls! The mercy is that you are not past hope. There is an arm that can reach you: there is a voice that calls you—calls you even now; hear it: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else." Can you not even now give one look to him who died for you? Will you not turn the eye of faith that way, and trust him who was nailed to the tree on your behalf? God grant that you may, and then I may include you also in the blessed instruction of the text. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

I. I shall first of all ask you to CONSIDER HOW THIS OBLIGATION IS PROVED. Let us spend a few minutes over the question, Why ought we to

walk as Jesus did?

When we read the word "ought," if we are honest men, we begin to look about us and to make enquiries as to the reason and the measure of this obligation. An "ought" is a compulsion to a true heart. There is a "needs be" to every godly man that he should do what he ought.

What, then, is the ground upon which this "ought" is fixed?

First, it is the design of God that those who are in Christ should walk as Christ walked. It is a part of the original covenant purpose; for "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." That is the drift of the plan of grace, the aim of the covenant. Grace looks towards holiness, that there should be a people called forth to whom Christ should be the elder brother, the firstborn among many brethren. You certainly have not had the purpose of God fulfilled in you, dear friend, unless you have been conformed to the image of his dear Son. "He hath chosen us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This is the aim of election; this is the object of redemption; this is the fruit of calling; this is the concomitant of justification; this is the evidence of adoption; this is the earnest of glory; that we should be holy, even as Christ is holy, and in this respect should wear the lineaments of the Son of God. He hath given his own Son to die for us, that we may die to sin; he has given him to live that we may live like him. In every one of us the Father desires to see Christ, that so Christ may be glorified in every one of us. Do you not feel this to be an imperative necessity to be laid upon you? Would you have the Lord miss his purpose? You are chosen of God to this end, that you should be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works," and what is this but that you should walk even as he walked? Observe,

again, another point of this necessity: it is necessary to the mystical Christ that we should walk as he walked, for we are joined unto the Lord Jesus in one body. Now, Christ cannot be made a monster that would be a blasphemous notion. And yet if any man had eyes, ears, hands, or other members that were not conformable to the head, he would be a strange being. The mouth of a lion, the eye of an ox, the feathers of a bird—these

things would have no consistency with the head of a man. We read of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, that it had a head of fine gold, but legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. Surely, Christ's spiritual body is not compounded of such discordant elements. No, no. He must be all of a piece. The mystical body must be the most beautiful and precious production of God; for the church is Christ's body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And shall that mysterious fulness be something defiled, deformed, full of sin, subject to Satan? God forbid! "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy," and as your HEAD is holy, so be ye, as members of his body, holy too. Ought it not to be so? Does anybody raise a question? Does not every member of Christ, by the very fact that he is joined to him by living union, feel at once that he must walk even as Christ walked?

And this, beloved, again, must all be the fruit of the one Spirit that is in Christ and in us. The Father anointed Christ of old with the same anointing, which rests on us in our measure. The Holy Spirit descended upon him, and rested upon him, and we have an unction from the same Holy One. The Spirit of God has anointed all the chosen of God who are regenerated, and he dwelleth with them and in them. Now, the Spirit of God in every case works to the same result. It cannot be supposed that the Spirit of God in any case produces unholiness: the thought were blasphemy. The fruit of the Spirit is everything that is delightful, right, and good towards God, and generous towards man. The Spirit of God, wherever He works, works according to the mind of God; and God is hymned as "Holy, holy, holy," by those pure spirits who know him best. He is altogether without spot or trace of sin, and so shall we be when the Spirit's work is done. If, then, the Spirit of God dwell in you (and if it do not, you are not in Christ), it must work in you conformity to Christ that you should walk even as he walked.

Perhaps further argument is not needed; but I would have true Christians remember that this is one article of the agreement which we make with Christ when we become his disciples. It is taken for granted that when we enter the service of Jesus we by that act and deed undertake by his help to follow his example. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,



and ye shall find rest unto your souls." You know, if any man love Christ, he must follow him:—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." When we took Christ's cross to be our salvation we took it also to be our heavenly burden. When we yielded ourselves up to Christ to be saved by him, we in spirit renounced every sin. We felt that we had come out from under the yoke of Satan, and that we made no reserve for the lusts of the flesh that we might obey them, but bowed our necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. We put ourselves into Christ's hands unreservedly, and we said, "Lord, sanctify me, and then use me. Take my body and all its members; take my mind and all its faculties; take my spirit and all the new powers which thou hast bestowed upon me with it; and let all these be thine. Reign in me; rule me absolutely, sovereignly, always and alone. I do not ask to be my own, for I am not my own, I am bought with a price." After we have learned the grand truth that, "if one died for all, then all died," we infer that "Christ died for all, that we that live might not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again." Are we not, then, to be true to this blessed compact? "I do remember my faults this day," says one. Ay, but remember also the vows that still engage you. Do not desire to escape from the sacred bond. "This day remember the Lord to whom you dedicated yourself in the days of your youth, perhaps long, years ago, and again entreat him to take full possession of the purchased possession, and hold it against all comers, for ever. So it ought to be. He that says, "I am in him" ought also so to walk even as he walked. Obey the sacrifice of Jesus, yield yourselves as living sacrifices; by your hope of being saved by him put your whole being into his hands to love and serve him all your days.

For, once more, inasmuch as we are in Christ, we are now bound to live to Christ's glory, and this is a great means of glorifying Christ. What can we do to glorify Christ if we do not walk even as he walked? If I came and preached to you, and if I had the tongues of men and of angels, yet if I did not seek to do as my Master did, what avails all that I can say? It is but "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." You know what men say to unholy preachers: they bid them be silent or be consistent. Unholy ministers are a derision, and a scoff, and a by-word. And so it is with unholy Christians, too. You may teach your children at home, or teach them in the Sunday-school class; but if they see your lives to be

Christless, prayerless, godless, they will not learn any good from you. They will rather learn from what you do amiss, than from what you say that is right. Do you blame them that it is so? Are not actions far more forcible than words? Suppose you church-members are unjust in your trade; suppose that in your common conversation you are loose; suppose that in your acts you are licentious or untrue; what does the world say of your Christianity? Why, it becomes to them a thing of contempt. They sniff at it. It is so much dung and sweepings of the street to them, and so it ought to be. In the early ages some of the worst opponents of Christianity used to wing their shafts with the inconsistencies of Christian professors, and they were wise in their generation. One of them said, "Where is that catholic holiness of which we have often heard so much?" and another said, "We heard of these people that they love their Christ, and love other men so that they would even die for love of their brethren; but many of them do not love as well as the heathen whom they despise." I dare say there was a good deal of slander and scandal in what they said; but I am also afraid that, if it were said today, there would be a vast deal of sorrowful truth in it. Christian love is by no means so plentiful as it might be, nor holy living, either. Is not this the thing that weakens the preaching, of the gospel—the want of living the gospel? If all the professed Christians who live in London really walked as Christ walked, would not the salt have more effect upon the corrupt mass than the stuff which is now called salt seems to have? We preach here in the pulpit; but what can we do, unless you preach yonder at home? It is you preaching in your shops, in your kitchens, in your nurseries, in your parlours, in the streets, which will tell on the masses. This is the preaching—the best preaching in the world, for it is seen as well as heard. I heard one say he liked to see men preach with their feet; and this is it, "they ought also so to walk even as Christ walked." No testimony excels that which is borne in ordinary life. Christ ought to be glorified by us, and therefore we ought to be like him, for if we are not, we cannot glorify him, but must dishonor him.

Now, that is my first point. Consider how this obligation is proved, and when you have weighed the argument pray the Holy Ghost to make you yield to its gentle pressure.

II. Now, secondly, CONSIDER WHEREIN THIS WALKING WITH CHRIST AS HE WALKED CONSISTS. Here is a wide subject. I have a sea before me with as much sailing, room as Noah in the ark. I can only just point out the direction in which you should sail if you would make a prosperous voyage.

First, brothers to put it all together in one word, the first thing that every Christian has to see to is holiness. I will not try at any great length to explain what that word means, but it always sounds to me as if it explained itself. You know what wholeness is—a thing, without a crack, or flaw, or break; complete, entire, uninjured, whole. Well, that is the main meaning of holy. The character of God is perfectly holy; in it nothing is lacking; nothing is redundant. When a thing, is complete it is whole, and this applied to moral and spiritual things gives you the inner meaning of "holy." When a man is healthy, perfectly healthy, in spirit, soul, and body, then he is perfectly holy; for sin is a moral disorder, and righteousness is the right state of every faculty. The man whose spiritual health is altogether right is right towards God, right towards himself, right towards men, right towards time, right towards eternity. He is right towards the first table of the law, and right towards the second table. He is an all-round man; he is a whole man, a holy man. Truth is within him; truth is spoken by him; truth is acted by him. Righteousness is in him; he thinks the right thing, and chooses that which is according to the law of uprightness. There is justice in him; he abhors that which is evil. There is goodness in him; he follows after that which will benefit his fellow-men. I cannot spare time to tell you all that the word "holy" means; but if you wish to see holiness, look at Christ. In him you see a perfect character, an all-round character. He is the perfect one; be ye like him in all holiness.

We must go a little into detail; so I say, next, one main point in which we ought to walk according to the walk of our great Exemplar is obedience. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself the form of a servant; and what service it was that he rendered! "He was a son; yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." And what obedience that dear Son of God rendered to the Father! He did not come to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He yielded himself up to come under law to God, and to do the Father's will. Now in this respect we ought also to walk even as

he walked. We have not come into the world to do what we like, to possess what we choose, or to say, "That is my notion, and therefore so shall it be." Sin promised freedom, and brought us bondage; grace now binds us, and ensures us liberty. Obedience is the law of every spiritual nature. It is the Lord's will that in his house his word should be the supreme law, for so only can our fallen natures be restored to their original glory. Set the wandering stars in their spheres, and rule them by the majestic sway of the sun, and then they will keep their happy estate, but not else. Understanding, heart, life, lip, everything, is now to enter into the service of God, even the Father, and it is to be ours to say, "Lord, show me what thou wouldest have me to do." Surely, beyond any other quality, we see in the career of the Son of God the perfection of self-abnegation. No man was ever so truly free as Jesus, and yet no man was so fully subservient to the heavenly will. Never saw these seas a pilot so able to steer according to his own judgment, and never one so carefully to follow the channel as marked down in the chart. His was the unique originality of absolute obedience. Dear friends, you see how it ought to be with you also. It is ours to walk in cheerful subservience to the mind of the Father, even as Jesus did. Does this strike you as an easy thing? It is child's work, certainly; but assuredly it is not child's play.

Such a life would necessarily be one of great activity, for the life of Jesus was intensely energetic. The life of Christ was as full as it could hold. After he had been developed and disciplined by thirty years of seclusion, he showed himself among men as one moved to vehemence with love: "he was clad with zeal as with a cloak." From the day of his baptism till his death he went about doing good. It is wonderful what was packed into about three years: each action had a world of meaning within its own self, and there were thousands of such acts; each sermon was a complete revelation, and every day heard him pour forth such sermons. His biography is made up of the essence of life. Some one remarks that it is wonderful that he did not begin his active life when he was younger. We reply, that it is beautiful that he did not, because he was not called to it, and he was best obeying the Father by living in obscurity. Those thirty years at Nazareth were thirty wonderful years of obedience—obedience; tested by obscurity, patience, restraint, and perhaps dulness. Who among us would find such obedience easy? Would we not far rather rush into

notice and make to ourselves a name? Some of us, perhaps, never learned the obedience of being quiet—but it is a wonderful one. Oh, for more of it! Do we know the obedience of being hidden when our light seems needed?—the obedience of going into the desert for forty years, like Moses, with nothing, to do but wait upon God till God shall put us in commission? There is a wonderful service in waiting till the order comes for us actively to be at it. Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice;" it is in fact better than anything which we can possibly present to God. But when our Lord was at length loosed from his obscurity, with what force he sped along his life-way. How he spent himself! It was a candle burning not only at both ends, but altogether. He not only had zeal burning at his heart, but, like a sheet of flame, it covered him from head to foot There is never an idle hour in the life of Christ. It is wonderful how he sustained the toil. Perhaps he measured out his zeal and his open industry by the fact that he was only to be for a short time here below. It might not be possible to others that they should do as much as he did in so short a space, because they are intended to live longer here, and must not destroy future usefulness by present indiscretion: but still, activity was the rule of our Master's existence. At it, always at it, altogether at it, spending and being spent for his Father; such was his mode of walking, among, men. Oh, friends, if we, indeed, are in him, we ought also so to walk even. as he walked! Wake up, you lazy ones!

Next, we ought to walk as Christ did in the matter of self-denial. Of course, in this work of self-denial we are not called to imitate Christ in offering up ourselves as a propitiatory sacrifice. That would be a vain intrusion into things which are his peculiar domain. The self-denials which we practise should be such as he prescribes us. There is a will-worship which is practised in the Church of Rome of self-denials which are absurd, and must, I think, be hateful in the sight of God rather than pleasing to him. Saint Bernard was a man whom I admire to the last degree, and I count him to be one of the Lord's choice ones; yet in the early part of his life there is no doubt that he lessened his powers of usefulness to a large extent by the emaciation which he endured, and the way in which he brought himself to death's door. At times he was incapable of activity by reason of the weakness which he had incurred through fasting, and colds and exposure, There is no need to inflict

useless torture upon the body. When did the Saviour thus behave himself? Point me to a single mortification of a needless kind. Enough self-denials come naturally in every Christian man's way to make him try whether he can deny himself in very deed for the Lord's sake. You are thus tested when you are put in positions where you might get gain by an unrighteous act, or win fame by withholding a truth, or earn love and honour by pandering to the passions of those about you. May you have grace enough to say, "No; it cannot be. I love not myself, but my Lord. I seek not myself, but Christ. I desire to propagate nothing but his truth, and not my own ideas": then will you have exhibited the self-denial of Jesus. These self-denials will sometimes be hard to flesh and blood. And then in the Church of God to be able to give all your substance, to devote all your time, to lay out all your ability—this is to walk as Jesus walked. When weary and worn, still to be busy; to deny, yourself things which may be allowable, but which if allowable to you would be dangerous to others—this also is like the Lord. Such self-denial as may be helpful to the weak you ought to practise. Think what Christ would do in such a case, and do it; and, whenever you can glorify him by denying yourself, do it. So walk as he did who made himself of no reputation, but took upon himself the form of a servant. and who, though he was rich, brought himself down to poverty for our sakes, that we might be rich unto God. Think of that.

Another point in which we ought to imitate Christ most certainly is that of lowliness. I wish that all Christians did this. When I see some Christian women dressed out—well, like women of the world, though not with half a worldling's taste, and when I see men so big that they cannot speak to poor people, as if they were made of something better than ordinary flesh and blood; when I notice a haughty, high, hectoring disposition anywhere, it grates upon my feelings, and makes me wonder whether these blunderers hope to go to the heaven of the lowly. The Lord Jesus would never have been half as big as some of his followers are. What great folk some of his disciples are, as compared with him! He was lowly, meek, gentle, a man who so loved the souls of others that he forgot himself. You never detect in the Lord Jesus Christ any tendency towards pride or self-exaltation. Quite the reverse: he is ever compassionate and condescending to men of low estate.

And then note again another point, and that is his great tenderness, and gentleness, and readiness to forgive. His dying words ought to ring in the ear of all who find it hard to pass by affronts, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Did he not set us an example of bearing and forbearing? "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." For every curse he gave a blessing,. You cannot be Christians if this spirit of love is foreign to you. "Oh," say you, "we endorse the confession." I do not care. You must love your enemies, or you will die with the Creed in your throats. "Oh," say you, "we are regular in our pews, hearing the gospel." I do not care; you must forgive them that trespass against you, or you will go from your pews to perdition "Oh, but we have been baptized, and we come to the communion." I do not care even about that; for unless you are made meek and lowly in heart you will not find rest unto your souls. Pride goeth not before salvation, but before destruction; and a haughty spirit is no prophecy of elevation, but the herald of a fall. Take care, take care, you that say that you are in Christ; you ought also to walk in all the lowliness and in all the tenderness of Christ, or else at the end you will be discovered to be none of his. Hard, cruel, unrelenting, iron-hearted professors will no more go to heaven than the hogs they fatten.

There is one little big word which tells us more than all this about how Christ walked, and that is the word "love." Jesus was incarnate love. "God is love," but God is a spirit, therefore if you wish to see love embodied, look at Christ. He loves the little children, and suffers them to come to him. He loves the widow, and he is tender to her, and raises her dead son. He loves the sinners, and they draw near to him. He loves all sinful and tempted and tried ones, and therefore he comes to seek and to save. He loves the Father first, and then for the Father's sake he loves the myriads of men. Do you love nobody? Do you live within yourself? Are you immured within your own ribs? Is self all your world? Then you will go to hell. There is no help for it; for the place of unloving spirits is the bottomless pit. Only he that loves can live in heaven, for heaven is love: and you cannot go to glory unless you have learned to love, and to find it your very life to do good to those about you.

Let me add to all this, that he who says that Christ is in him ought also to live as Christ lived in secret. And how was this?

His life was spent in abounding devotion. Ah, me! I fear I shall condemn some here when I remind them of the hymn we just now sang -

"Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervour of his prayer."

If the perfect Christ could not live without prayer, how can such poor imperfect ones as we are live without it? He had no sin within him, and yet he had need to pray. He was pure and holy, and yet he must needs wait upon God all day long, and often speak with his Father; and then when the night came, and others went to their beds, he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. If the Lord Jesus be in you, you must walk as he walked in that matter.

And, then, think of his delight in God. How wonderful was Christ's delight in his God! I can never think of his life as an unhappy one. He was, it is true, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; but still there was a deep spring of wondrous happiness in the midst of his heart, which made him always blessed; for he said to his Father, "I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within heart." He delighted in God. Many a sweet night he spent in those prayer-times of his in fellowship with the Father. Why, it was that which prepared him for the agony of his bloody sweat, and for the "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Those love-visits, those near and dear communings which his holy heart had with the Father were his secret meat and drink. And you and I also must delight in God. This charming duty is far too much neglected. Strange that this honey should so seldom be in men's mouths! Listen to this text, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Many a man says, "I should like to have the desires of my heart" Brother, here is the royal road thereto, the King's ascent to his treasury—"Delight thyself also in the Lord." But, listen. it is very likely you would not obtain the desire that is now in your heart if you did that; for he that delights himself in God rises above the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and comes to desire that which God desires, and therefore it is that he wins the desire of his heart. But, oh, the pleasure, the joy, the bliss of delighting in God! How many times have I sung to myself that last dear stanza of the psalm, wherein the inspired poet sings -



"For yet I know I shall him praise,  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yea, mine own God is he."

Oh, what a pleasure! "Mine own God is he." Rich men glory in wealth, famous men in valour, great men in honour, and I in "mine own God." There is nothing about God but what is delightful to a saint. The infinite God is infinitely delightful to his people. Once get really to know God and to be like him, and even his sternest attributes—his power, his justice, his indignation against sin—will come to be delightful to you. Those men who are cavilling at what God does, questioning over what God has revealed, do not know him, for to know him is to adore him. Oh, brethren, let us find our pleasure, our treasure, our heaven, our all, in the Lord our God, even as our Lord Jesus did. In this thing let us walk even as he walked.

I have not quite done. Dear friends, we ought to walk in holy contentment. Jesus was perfectly content with his lot. When the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, and he had not where to lay his head, yet he never murmured, but found rest in pursuing his life-work. The cravings of covetousness and pinings of ambition never touched our Lord. Friends, if you do, indeed, say that you abide in him, I pray you be of the same contented spirit. "I have learned," said the apostle, as if it were a thing which had to be taught, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

In a word, Christ lived above this world; let us walk as he walked. Christ lived for God, and for God alone; let us live after his fashion. And Christ persevered in such living; he never turned aside from it at all; but as he lived so he died, still serving his God, obedient to his Father's will, even unto death. May our lives be a mosaic of perfect obedience, and our deaths the completion of the fair design. From our Bethlehem to our Gethsemane may our walk run parallel with the pathway of the Well-beloved! Oh, Holy Spirit, work us to this sacred pattern!

III. I close now by saying, in the last place, consider, dear friends, **WHAT IS NEEDFUL TO ALL THIS.**

First, it is needful to have a nature like that of Christ. You cannot give out sweet waters so long as the fountains are impure. "Ye must be born again." There is no walking with Jesus in newness of life unless we have a new heart and a right spirit. See to it, dear friends, that your nature is renewed—that the Holy Ghost has wrought in you a resurrection from among the dead; for, if not, your walk and conversation will savour of death and corruption. A new creature is essential to likeness to Christ: it is not possible that the carnal mind should wear the image of Jesus.

That being done, the next thing that is necessary is a constant anointing of the Holy Spirit. Can any Christian here do without the Holy Spirit? Then I am afraid that he is no Christian. But, as for us, we feel every day that we must cry for a fresh visitation of the Spirit, a renewed sense of indwelling, a fresh anointing from the Holy One of Israel, or else we cannot walk as Christ walked.

And then, again, there must be in us a strong resolve that we will walk as Christ walked; for our Lord himself did not lead in that holy life without stern resolution. He set his face like a flint that he would do the right; and he did the right. Do not, I pray you, be led astray by thoughtlessly following your fellow-men: it is a poor, sheepish business, that running in crowds. Dare to be singular dare to stand alone. Stand to it firmly that you will follow Christ. A Christian man in a discussion attempted to defend the truth, but his opponent grew angry, and cried out vehemently again and again, "Hear me! Hear me!" At last the good man answered, "No, I shall not hear you, nor shall you hear me; but let us both sit down and hear the word of the Lord." And that is the thing to do, brethren, to be hearing Christ and following him; not I to learn of you, nor you of me, but both of Christ: so shall we end all controversy in a blessed agreement at his feet. God help us to get there.

And so, once again, I add that if we want to walk as Christ walked, we must have much communion with him. We cannot possibly get to be like Christ except by being with him. I wish that we could rise to be so much like the Saviour that we should resemble a certain ancient saint who died a martyr's death, to whom the world said, "What are you?" He said, "I am a Christian." They asked, "What trade do you follow?" And he said, "I am a Christian." They inquired, "What language do you speak?" And he said,

"I am a Christian." "But what treasures have you?" said they; and he replied, "I am a Christian." They asked him what friends he had, and he said, "I am a Christian;" for all he was, and all he had, and all he wished to be, and all he hoped to be, were all wrapped up in Christ. If you live with Christ you will be absorbed by him, and he will embrace the whole of your existence: and, in consequence, your walk will be like his.

Take care that you do not in all things copy any but Christ; for if I set my watch by the watch of one of my friends, and he sets his watch by that of another friend, we may all be wrong together. If we shall, each one, take his time from the sun, we shall all be right. There is nothing like going to the fountain-head. Take your lessons in holiness, not from a poor erring disciple, but from the infallible Master. God help you to do so.

A person has written to me this morning to say that he has painted my portrait, but that he cannot finish it until he sees me. I should think not. Certainly you cannot paint a portrait of Christ in your own life unless you see him—see him clearly, see him continually. You may have it general notion of what Christ is like, and you may put a good deal of colour into your copy; but I am sure you will fail unless you see the grand original. You must get to commune with Jesus. You know what we did when we went to school. Our schoolmasters were not quite so wise then as schoolmasters are now. They wrote at the top of the page a certain line for us to follow, and a poor following it was. When I wrote my first line I copied the writing-master's model, but when I wrote the next line I copied my copy of the top line; so that when I reached the bottom of the page I produced a copy of my copy of my copy of my copy of the top line. Thus my handwriting fed upon itself, and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse. So one man copies Christ, perhaps; a friend who hears him preach copies him, and his wife at home copies the hearer, and somebody copies her; and so it goes on all down the line, till we all miss that glorious hand-writing which Jesus has come to teach us. Keep your eye on Christ, dear brother. Never mind me: never mind your friend: never mind the old doctor that you have been hearing so long. Look to Jesus, and to him alone. We have had our sects and our divisions all through that copying of the lines of the boys, instead of looking to the top-line that the Master wrote. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so

to walk even as he walked" May the Spirit of God cause us to do it! Amen and Amen.

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## **The Incarnation And Birth Of Christ**

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. - Micah 5:2

This is the season of the year when, whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to think of the birth of Christ. I hold it to be one of the greatest absurdities under heaven to think that there is any religion in keeping Christmas-day. There are no probabilities whatever that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born on that day, and the observance of it is purely of Popish origin; doubtless those who are Catholics have a right to hallow it, but I do not see how consistent Protestants can account it in the least sacred. However, I wish there were ten or a dozen Christmas-days in the year; for there is work enough in the world, and a little more rest would not hurt labouring people. Christmas-day is really a boon to us; particularly as it enables us to assemble round the family hearth and meet our friends once more. Still, although we do not fall exactly in the track of other people, I see no harm in thinking of the incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus. We do not wish to be classed with those

"Who with more care keep holiday  
The wrong, than others the right way."

The old Puritans made a parade of work on Christmas-day, just to show that they protested against the observance of it. But we believe they

entered that protest so completely, that we are willing, as their descendants, to take the good accidentally conferred by the day, and leave its superstitions to the superstitious.

To proceed at once to what we have to say to you: we notice, first, who it was that sent Christ forth. God the Father here speaks, and says, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel." Secondly, where did he come to at the time of his incarnation? Thirdly, what did he come for? "To be ruler in Israel." Fourthly, had he ever come before? Yes, he had. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

I. First, then, WHO SENT JESUS CHRIST? The answer is returned to us by the words of the text. "Out of thee" saith Jehovah, speaking by the mouth of Micah, I out of thee shall he come forth unto me." It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ, did not come forth without his Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent of the Father, that he might be the Saviour of men. We are, alas! too apt to forget, that while there are distinctions as to the persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of honor; and we do very frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its mercy and the extremity of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do to the Father. This is a very great mistake. What if Jesus came? Did not his Father send him? If he was made a child did not the Holy Ghost beget him? If he spake wondrously, did not his Father pour grace into his lips, that he might be an able minister of the new covenant? If his Father did forsake him when he drank the bitter cup of gall, did he not love him still? and did he not, by-and by, after three days, raise him from the dead, and at last receive him up on high, leading captivity captive? Ah! beloved, he who knoweth the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost as he should know them, never setteth one before another; he is not more thankful to one than the other; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary, all equally engaged in the work of salvation. "He shall come forth unto me." O Christian, hast thou put thy confidence in the man Christ Jesus? Hast thou placed thy reliance solely on him? And art thou united with him? Then believe that thou art united unto the God of heaven; since to the man Christ Jesus thou art brother and holdest closest fellowship, thou art

linked thereby with God the Eternal, and "the Ancient of days" is thy Father and thy friend. "He shall come forth unto me". Did you never see the depth of love there was in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped his Son for the great enterprise of mercy? There had been a sad day in Heaven once before, when Satan fell, and dragged with him a third of the stars of heaven, and when the Son of God launching from his great right hand the Omnipotent thunders, dashed the rebellious crew to the pit of perdition; but if we could conceive a grief in heaven, that must have been a sadder day, when the Son of the Most High left his Father's bosom, where he had lain from before all worlds "Go," saith the Father, "and thy Father's blessing on thy head!" Then comes the unrobing. How do angels crowd around to see the Son of God take off his robes He laid aside his crown; he said, "My father, I am Lord over all, blessed for ever, but I will lay my crown aside, and be as mortal men are." He strips himself of his bright vest of glory; "Father," he says, "I will wear a robe of clay, just such a men wear." Then he takes off all those jewels wherewith he was glorified; he lays aside his starry mantles and robes of light, to dress himself in the simple garments of the peasant of Galilee. What a solemn disrobing that must have been! And next, can you picture the dismissal! The angels attend the Saviour through the streets, until they approach the doors: when an angel cries, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and let the king of glory through!" Oh! methinks the angels must have wept when they lost the company of Jesus - when the Sun of Heaven bereaved them of all its light. But they went after him. They descended with him; and when his spirit entered into flesh and he became a babe, he was attended by that mighty host of angels, who after they had been with him to Bethlehem's manger, and seen him safely, laid on his mother's breast, in their journey upwards appeared to the shepherds and told them that he was born king of the Jews. The Father sent him! Contemplate that subject. Let your soul get hold of it, and in every period of his life think that he suffered what the Father willed; that every step of his life was marked with the approval of the great I AM. Let every thought that you have of Jesus be also connected with the eternal, ever-blessed God; for "he," saith Jehovah, "shall come forth unto me." Who sent him, then? The answer is, his Father.

II. Now, secondly, WHERE DID HE COME TO? A word or two concerning Bethlehem. It seemed meet and right that our Saviour should be born in Bethlehem and that because of Bethlehem's history, Bethlehem's name, and Bethlehem's position - little in Judah.

1. First, it seemed necessary that Christ should be born in Bethlehem, because of Bethlehem's history. Dear to every Israelite was the little village of Bethlehem. Jerusalem might outshine it in splendour; for there stood the temple, the glory of the whole earth, and "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion;" yet around Bethlehem there clustered a number of incidents which always made it a pleasant resting-place to every Jewish mind; and even the Christian cannot help loving Bethlehem. The first mention, I think, that we have of Bethlehem is a sorrowful one. There Rachel died. If you turn to the 35th of Genesis you will find it said in the 16th verse - "And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." A singular incident this - almost prophetic. Might not Mary have called her own son Jesus, her Ben-oni; for he was to be the child of Sorrow? Simeon said to her - "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." But while she might have called him Ben-oni, what did God his Father call him? Benjamin, the son of my right hand. Ben-oni was he as a man; Benjamin as to his Godhead. This little incident seems to be almost a prophecy that Ben-oni - Benjamin, the Lord Jesus, should be born in Bethlehem. But another woman makes this place celebrated. That woman's name was Naomi. There lived at Bethlehem in after days, when, perhaps, the stone that Jacob's fondness had raised had been covered with moss and its inscription obliterated, another woman named Naomi. She too was a daughter of joy, and yet a daughter of bitterness. Naomi was a woman whom the Lord had loved and blessed, but she had to go to a strange land; and she said, "Call me not Naomi (pleasant) but let my

name be called Mara (bitter) for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Yet was she not alone amid all her losses, for there cleaved unto her Ruth the Moabitess, whose Gentile blood should unite with the pure untainted stream of the Jew, and should thus bring forth the Lord our Saviour, the great king both of Jews and Gentiles. That very beautiful book of Ruth had all its scenery laid in Bethlehem. It was at Bethlehem that Ruth went forth to glean in the fields of Boaz; it was there that Boaz looked upon her, and she bowed herself before her lord; it was there her marriage was celebrated; and in the streets of Bethlehem did Boaz and Ruth receive a blessing which made them fruitful so that Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. That last fact gilds Bethlehem with glory - the fact that David was born there - the mighty hero who smote the Philistine giant, who led the discontented of his land away from the tyranny of their monarch, and who afterwards, by a full consent of a willing people, was crowned king of Israel and Judah. Bethlehem was a royal city, because the kings were there brought forth. Little as Bethlehem was, it was much to be esteemed; because it was like certain principalities which we have in Europe, which are celebrated for nothing but for bringing forth the consorts of the royal families of England. It was right, then, from history, that Bethlehem should be the birth-place of Christ.

2. But again: there is something in the name of the place. "Bethlehem Ephratah." The word Bethlehem has a double meaning. It signifies "the house of bread," and "the house of war." Ought not Jesus Christ to be born in "the house of bread?" He is the Bread of his people, on which they feed. As our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, so do we live on Jesus here below. Famished by the world, we cannot feed on its shadows. Its husks may gratify the swinish taste of worldlings, for they are swine; but we need something more substantial, and in that blest bread of heaven, made of the bruised body of our Lord Jesus, and baked in the furnace of his agonies, we find a blessed food. No food like Jesus to the desponding soul or to the strongest saint. The very meanest of the family of God goes to Bethlehem for his bread; and the strongest man, who eats strong meat, goes to Bethlehem for it. House of Bread! whence could come our nourishment but from thee? We have tried Sinai, but on her rugged steeps there grow no fruits, and her thorny heights yield no corn whereon



we may feed. We have repaired even to Tabor itself, where Christ was transfigured, and yet there we have not been able to eat his flesh and drink his blood. But Bethlehem, thou house of bread, rightly wast thou called; for there the bread of life was first handed down for man to eat. And it is also called "the house of war;" because Christ is to a man "the house of bread," or else "the house of war." While he is food to the righteous he causeth war to the wicked, according to his own word - "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Sinner! if thou dost not know Bethlehem as "the house of bread," it shall be to thee a "house of war." If from the lips of Jesus thou dost never drink sweet honey - if thou art not like the bee, which sippeth sweet luscious liquor from the Rose of Sharon, then out of the selfsame mouth there shall go forth against thee a two-edged sword; and that mouth from which the righteous draw their bread, shall be to thee the mouth of destruction and the cause of thine ill. Jesus of Bethlehem, house of bread and house of war, we trust we know thee as our bread. Oh! that some who are now at war with thee might hear in their hearts, as well as in their ears the song -

"Peace on earth, and mercy mild.  
God and sinners reconciled."

And now for that word Ephratah That was the old name of the place which the Jews retained and loved. The meaning of it is, "fruitfulness," or "abundance." Ah! well was Jesus born in the house of fruitfulness; for whence cometh my fruitfulness and any fruitfulness, my brother, but from Bethlehem? Our poor barren hearts ne'er produced one fruit, or flower, till they were watered with the Saviour blood. It is his incarnation which fattens the soil of our hearts. There had been pricking thorns on all the ground, and mortal poisons, before he came; but our fruitfulness comes from him. "I am like a green fir-tree; from thee is my fruit found." "All my springs are in thee." If we be like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season, it is not because we were naturally fruitful, but because of the rivers of water by which we were

planted. It is Jesus that makes us fruitful. "If a man abide in me," he says, "and my words abide him, he shall bring forth much fruit." Glorious Bethlehem Ephratah! Rightly named! Fruitful house of bread - the house of abundant provision for the people of God!

3. We notice, next, the position of Bethlehem. It is said to be "little among the thousands of Judah." Why is this? Because Jesus Christ always goes among little ones. He was born in the little one "among the thousands of Judah." No Bashan's high hill, not on Hebron's royal mount, not in Jerusalem's palaces. but the humble, yet illustrious, village of Bethlehem. There is a passage in Zechariah which teaches us a lesson: - It is said that the man on the red horse stood among the myrtle-trees. Now the myrtle-trees grow at the bottom of the hill; and the man on the red horse always rides there. He does not ride on the mountain-top; he rides among the humble in heart. "With this man will I dwell, saith the Lord, with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." There are some little ones here this morning - "little among the thousands of Judah." No one ever heard your name, did they? If you were buried, and had your name on your tombstone, it would never be noticed. Those who pass by would say, "it is nothing to me: I never knew him." You do not know much of yourself, or think much of yourself; you can scarcely read, perhaps. Or if you have some talent and ability, you are despised amongst men; or, if you are not despised by them, you despise yourself. You are one of the little ones. Well, Christ is always born in Bethlehem among the little ones. Big hearts never get Christ inside of them; Christ lieth not in great hearts, but in little ones. Mighty and proud spirits never have Jesus Christ, for he cometh in at low doors, but he will not come in at high ones. He who hath a broken heart, and a low spirit, shall have the Saviour, but none else. He healeth not the prince and the king, but "the broken in heart, and he bindeth up their wounds." Sweet thought! He is the Christ of the little ones. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

We cannot pass away from this without another thought here, which is, how wonderfully mysterious was that providence which brought Jesus Christ's mother to Bethlehem at the very time when she was to be

delivered! His parents were residing at Nazareth; and what should they want to travel at that time for? Naturally, they would have remained at home; it was not at all likely that his mother would have taken journey to Bethlehem while in so peculiar a condition; but Caesar Augustus issues a decree that they are to be taxed. Very well, then, let them be taxed at Nazareth. No; it pleases him that they should all go to their city. But why should Caesar Augustus think of it just at that particular time? Simply because, while man deviseth his way, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Why, what a thousand chances, as the world has it, met together to bring about this event! First of all, Caesar quarrels with Herod; one of the Herods was deposed; Caesar says, "I shall tax Judea, and make it a province, instead of having it for a separate kingdom. Well, it must be done. But when is it to be done? This taxing, it is said, was first commenced when Cyreneus was governor. But why is the census to be taken at that particular period - suppose, December? Why not have had it last October and why could not the people be taxed where they were living? Was not their money just as good there as anywhere else? It was Caesar's whim; but it was God's decree. Oh! we love the sublime doctrine of eternal absolute predestination. Some have doubted its being consistent with the free agency of man. We know well it is so, and we never saw any difficulty in the subject; we believe metaphysicians have made difficulties; we see none ourselves. It is for us to believe, that man does as he pleases, yet notwithstanding he always does as God decrees. If Judas betrays Christ, "thereunto he was appointed;" and if Pharaoh hardens his heart, yet, "for this purpose have I raised thee up, for to show forth my power in thee." Man doth as he wills; but God maketh him do as he willeth, too. Nay, not only is the will of man under the absolute predestination of Jehovah; but all things, great or little, are of him. Well hath the good poet said, "Doubtless the sailing of a cloud hath Providence to its pilot; doubtless the root of an oak is gnarled for a special purpose, God compasseth all things, mantling the globe like air." There is nothing great or little, that is not from him. The summer dust moves in its orbit, guided by the same hand which rolls the stars along; the dewdrops have their father, and trickle on the rose leaf as God bids them; yea, the sear leaves of the forest, when hurled along by the tempest, have their allotted position where they shall fall, nor can they go beyond it. In the great, and in the little, there is God - God in everything, working all things according

to the counsel of his own will; and though man seeks to go against his Maker, yet he cannot. God hath bounded the sea with a barrier of sand; and if the sea mount up wave after wave, yet it shall not exceed its allotted channel. Everything is of God; and unto him, who guideth the stars and wingeth sparrows, who ruleth planets and yet moveth atoms, who speaks thunders and yet whispers zephyrs, unto him be glory; for there is God in everything,

III. This brings us to the third point: WHAT DID JESUS COME FOR? He came to be "ruler in Israel." A very singular thing is this, that Jesus Christ was said to have been "born the king of the Jews." Very few have ever been "born king." Men are born princes, but they are seldom born kings. I do not think you can find an instance in history where any infant was born king. He was the prince of Wales, perhaps, and he had to wait a number of years, till his father died, and then they manufactured him into a king, by putting a crown on his head; and a sacred chrism, and other silly things; but he was not born a king. I remember no one who was born a king except Jesus; and there is emphatic meaning in that verse that we sing

"Born thy people to deliver;  
Born a child, and yet a king."

The moment that he came on earth he was a king. He did not wait till his majority that he might take his empire; but as soon as his eye greeted the sunshine he was a king; from the moment that his little hands grasped anything, they grasped a sceptre, as soon as his pulse beat, and his blood began to flow, his heart beat royally, and his pulse beat an imperial measure, and his blood flowed in a kingly current. He was born a king. He came "to be ruler in Israel. "Ah!" says one, "then he came in vain, for little did he exercise his rule; 'he came unto his own, and his own received him not;' he came to Israel and he was not their ruler, but he was 'despised and rejected of men,' cast off by them all, and forsaken by Israel, unto whom he came." Ay, but "they are not all Israel who are of Israel," neither because they are the seed of Abraham shall they all be called. Ah, no! He is not ruler of Israel after the flesh, but he is the ruler of Israel after the spirit. Many such have obeyed him. Did not the apostles bow before him, and own him as their king? And now, doth not Israel

salute him as their ruler? Do not all the seed of Abraham after the spirit, even all the faithful, for he is "the father of the faithful," acknowledge that unto Christ belong the shields of the mighty, for he is the king of the whole earth? Doth he not rule over Israel? Ay, verily he doth; and those who are not ruled over by Christ are not of Israel. He came to be a ruler over Israel. My brother, hast thou submitted to the sway of Jesus? Is he ruler in thine heart, or is he not? We may know Israel by this: Christ is come into their hearts, to be ruler over them. "Oh!" saith one, "I do as I please, I was never in bondage to any man." Ah! then thou hatest the rule of Christ. "Oh!" says another, "I submit myself to my minister, to my clergyman, or to my priest, and I think that what he tells me is enough, for he is my ruler." Dost thou? Ah! poor slave, thou knowest not thy dignity; for nobody is thy lawful ruler but the Lord Jesus Christ. "Ay," says another, "I have professed his religion, and I am his follower." But doth he rule in thine heart? Doth he command thy will? Doth he guide thy judgment? Dost thou ever seek counsel at his hand in thy difficulties? Art thou desirous to honor him, and to put crowns upon his head? Is he thy ruler? If so, then thou art one of Israel; for it is written, "He shall come to be ruler in Israel." Blessed Lord Jesus! thou art ruler in thy people's hearts, and thou ever shalt be; we want no other ruler save thyself, and we will submit to none other. We are free, because we are the servants of Christ; we are at liberty, because he is our ruler, and we know no bondage and no slavery, because Jesus Christ alone is monarch of our hearts. He came "to be ruler in Israel;" and mark you, that mission of his is not quite fulfilled yet, and shall not be till the latter-day glories. In a little while you shall see Christ come again, to be ruler over his people Israel, and ruler over them not only as spiritual Israel, but even as natural Israel, for the Jews shall be restored to their land, and the tribes of Jacob shall yet sing in the halls of their temple; unto God there shall yet again be offered Hebrew songs of praise, and the heart of the unbelieving Jew shall be melted at the feet of the true Messias. In a short time, he who at his birth was hailed king of the Jews by Easterns, and at his death was written king of the Jews by a Western, shall be called king of the Jews everywhere - yes, king of the Jews and Gentiles also - in that universal monarchy whose dominion shall be co-extensive with the habitable globe, and whose duration shall be coeval with time itself. He came to be a ruler in Israel, and a ruler most decidedly he shall be, when he shall reign

among his people with his ancients gloriously.

IV. And now, the last thing is, DID JESUS CHRIST EVER COME BEFORE? We answer, yes: for our text says, "Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

First, Christ has had his goings forth in his Godhead. "From everlasting." He has not been a secret and a silent person up to this moment. That new-born child there has worked wonders long ere now; that infant slumbering in its mother's arms is the infant of to-day, but it is the ancient of eternity; that child who is there hath not made its appearance on the stage of this world; his name is not yet written in the calendar of the circumcised; but still though you wist it not, "his goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

1. Of old he went forth as our covenant head in election, "according as he hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world."

Christ be my first elect, he said,  
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head."

2. He had goings forth for his people, as their representative before the throne, even before they were begotten in the world. It was from everlasting that his mighty fingers grasped the pen, the stylus of ages, and wrote his own name, the name of the eternal Son of God; it was from everlasting that he signed the compact with his Father, that he would pay blood for blood, wound for wound, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death, in the behalf of his people; it was from everlasting that he gave himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he might sweat blood, that he might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, suffer the pain of death, and the agonies of the cross. His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting. Pause, my soul, and wonder! Thou hadst goings forth in the person of Jesus from everlasting. Not only when thou wast born into the world did Christ love thee, but his delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men. Often did he think of them; from everlasting to everlasting he had set his affection upon them. What! believer, has he been so long about thy salvation, and will he not

accomplish it? Has he from everlasting been going forth to save me, and will he lose me now? What! has he had me in his hand, as his precious jewel, and will he now let me slip between his precious fingers? Did he choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep scooped out, and will he lose me now? Impossible!

"My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity cannot erase;  
Impress'd on his heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible grace."

I am sure he would not love me so long, and then leave off loving me. If he intended to be tired of me, he would have been tired of me long before now. If he had not loved me with a love as deep as hell and as unutterable as the grave, if he had not given his whole heart to me, I am sure he would have turned from me long ago. He knew what I would be, and he has had long time enough to consider of it; but I am his choice, and there is an end of it; and unworthy as I am, it is not mine to grumble, if he is but contented with me. But he is contented with me - he must be contented with me - for he has known me long enough to know my faults. He knew me before I knew myself; yea, he knew me before I was myself. Long before my members were fashioned they were written in his book, "when as yet there were none of them," his eyes of affection were set on them. He knew how badly I would act towards him, and yet he has continued to love me;

"His love in times past forbids me to think.  
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink."

No; since "his goings forth were of old from everlasting," they will be "to everlasting."

Secondly, we believe that Christ has come forth of old, even to men, so that men have beheld him. I will not stop to tell you that it was Jesus who walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day, for his delights were with the sons of men; nor will I detain you by pointing out all the various ways in which Christ came forth to his people in the form of the angel of the covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the and ten thousand types with which

the sacred history is so replete; but I will rather point you to four occasions when Jesus Christ our Lord has appeared on earth as a man, before his great incarnation for our salvation. And, first, I beg to refer you to the 18th chapter of Genesis, where Jesus Christ appeared to Abraham, of whom we read, "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. "But whom did he bow to? He said "My Lord," only to one of them. There was one man between the other two, the most conspicuous for his glory, for he was the God-man Christ; the other two were created angels, who for a time had assumed the appearance of men. But this was the man Christ Jesus. "And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." You will notice that this majestic man, this glorious person, stayed behind to talk with Abraham. In the 22nd verse it is said, - "And the men turned their faces from thence and went towards Sodom;" that is, two of them, as you will see in the next chapter - "but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." You will notice that this man, the Lord, held sweet fellowship with Abraham, and allowed Abraham to plead for the city he was about to destroy. He was in the positive form of man; so that when he walked the streets of Judea it was not the first time that he was a man; he was so before, in "the plain of Mamre, in the heat of the day." There is another instance-his appearing to Jacob, which you have recorded in the 32nd chapter of Genesis and the 24th verse. All his family were gone, "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God." This was a man, and yet God. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." And Jacob knew that this man was God, for he says in the 30th verse: "for I have seen God face to face. and my life is preserved." Another instance you will



find in the book of Joshua When Joshua had crossed the narrow stream of Jordan, and had entered the promised land, and was about to drive out the Canaanites, lo! this mighty man-God appeared to Joshua. In the 5th chapter, at the 13th verse, we read- And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went unto him, and (like a brave warrior, as he was,) said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." And Joshua saw at once that there was divinity in him; for Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said to him, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" Now, if this had been a created angel he would have reproved Joshua, and said, "I am one of your fellow servants." But no; "the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Another remarkable instance is that recorded in the third chapter of the book of Daniel, where we read the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being cast into the fiery furnace, which was so fierce that it destroyed the men who threw them in. Suddenly the king said to his counsellors- Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, o king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." How should Nebuchadnezzar know that? Only that there was something so noble and majestic in the way in which that wondrous Man bore himself, and some awful influence about him, who so marvellously broke the consuming teeth of that biting and devouring flame, so that it could not so much as singe the children of God. Nebuchadnezzar recognized his humanity. He did not say, "I see three men and an angel," but he said, "I see four positive men, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' You see, then, what is meant by his goings forth being I from everlasting:'

Observe for a moment here, that each of these four great occurrences happened to the saints when they were engaged in very eminent duty, or when they were about to be engaged in it. Jesus Christ does not appear to his saints every day. He did not come to see Jacob till he was in affliction; he did not visit Joshua before he was about to be engaged in a righteous

war. It is only in extraordinary seasons that Christ thus manifests himself to his people. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jesus was with him, for one of the highest and noblest employments of a Christian is that of intercession, and it is when he is so engaged that he will be likely to obtain a sight of Christ. Jacob was engaged in wrestling, and that is a part of a Christian's duty to which some of you never did attain; consequently, you do not have many visits from Jesus. It was when Joshua was exercising bravery that the Lord met him. So with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: they were in the high places of persecution, on account of their adherence to duty, when he came to them, and said, "I will be with you, passing through the fire." There are certain peculiar places we must enter, to meet with the Lord. We must be in great trouble, like Jacob; we must be in great labour, like Joshua; we must have great intercessory faith, like Abraham; we must be firm in the performance of duty, like Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego; or else we shall not know him, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" or, if we know him, we shall not be able to "comprehend with all the saints what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,"

Sweet Lord Jesus! thou whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting, thou hast not left thy goings forth yet. Oh! that thou wouldst go forth this day, to cheer the faint, to help the weary, to bind up our wounds, to comfort our distresses! Go forth, we beseech thee, to conquer sinners, to subdue hard hearts-to break the iron gates of sinners' lusts, and cut the iron bars of their sirs in pieces! O Jesus! go forth; and when thou goest forth, come thou to me! Am I a hardened sinner? Come thou to me; I want thee:

"Oh! let thy grace my heart subdue;  
I would be led in triumph too;  
A willing captive to my Lord,  
To sing the honours of thy word."

Poor sinner! Christ has not left going forth yet. And when he goes forth, recollect, he goes to Bethlehem. Have you a Bethlehem in your heart? Are you little? will go forth to you yet. Go home and seek him by earnest prayer. If you have been made to weep on account of sin, and think

yourself too little to be noticed, go home, little one! Jesus comes to little ones; his goings forth were of old, and he is going forth now. He will come to your poor old house; he will come to your poor wretched heart; he will come, though you are in poverty, and clothed in rags, though you are destitute, tormented, and afflicted; he will come, for his goings forth have been of old from everlasting. Trust him, trust him, trust him; and he will go forth to abide in your heart for ever.

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## **The Incomparable Bridegroom And His Bride**

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? - Song of Solomon 5:9

This morning, we had the great privilege of preaching the doctrine of substitution, and of directing the minds of God's people to the solid rock of the meritorious sacrifice of Christ whereon all their hopes of heaven must be built. What we have to say to-night is less doctrinal, and more practical; therefore let us guard ourselves at the outset. If we should, with very much earnestness, urge believers to good works, let nobody suppose that, therefore, we imagine that men are saved by works. Let no one for a moment dream that, in urging the believer to bring forth fruit unto righteousness, we are at all teaching that salvation is the work of man. I have no doubt that all of us who know anything of true religion are of the same opinion as that celebrated Scotch divine, old David Dickson, who was asked, when dying, what was the principal subject on which his thoughts were engaged, and he answered, "I am gathering up all my good works, and all my bad works, tying them into one bundle, and throwing

them all alike down at the foot of the cross, and am resting alone upon the finished work of Jesus." It is related of that mighty master in Israel, James Durham, that his experience at the last was very much akin to that of his friend Dickson, for he said, "Notwithstanding all my preaching, and all my spiritual experiences, I do not know that I have anything to hang upon excepting this one sentence spoken by Christ, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" "Ah!" replied someone who stood by Mr. Durham at the time, "you might well hazard a thousand souls, if you had them, upon the strength of that one precious text."

Having said so much by way of caution, I want to address some earnest words to the people of God upon certain practical truths that arise out of our text; and the first thing I have to say is this, that the daughters of Jerusalem recognized in the spouse an exceeding beauty, which dazzled and charmed them, so that they could not help calling her the "fairest among women." This was not her estimate of herself; for she had said, "I am black, but comely." Nor was it the estimate of her enemies; for they had smitten her, and wounded her. But it was the estimate of fair, candid, and impartial onlookers.

I. This leads me to remark, first, that OUR CHARACTER SHOULD GIVE WEIGHT TO OUR PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

You will observe that it was in consequence of thinking her the "fairest among women" that they asked the spouse, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" They thought that one so fair might well have her choice of a Bridegroom, that one so lovely herself would be likely to have an eye to loveliness in her Husband, and consequently they considered her judgment to be worth some attention, and they put to her the question why her Beloved was more than another beloved. Take it for granted, dear friends, as a truth which your own observation and experience will make every day more and more clear, that your power to spread religion in the world must mainly depend upon your own personal character, of course, in absolute reliance upon the Holy Spirit. I suppose it is the earnest wish of every Christian to win for Christ some new converts, to bring some fresh province under the dominion of the King of kings. I will tell you how this may be accomplished.

Your power to achieve this noble purpose must largely depend upon your own personal consistency. It little availeth what I say if I do the reverse. The world will not care about my testimony with the lip, unless there be also a testimony in my daily life for God, for truth, for holiness, for everything that is honest, lovely, pure, and of good report. There is that in a Christian's character which the world, though it may persecute the man himself, learns to value. It is called consistency,—that is, the making of the life stand together, not being one thing in one place and another thing in another, or one thing at one time and quite different on another occasion. It is not consistency to be devout on Sunday and to be dishonest on Monday. It is not consistency to sing the songs of Zion to-day, and to shout the songs of lustful mirth tomorrow. It is not consistency occasionally to wear the yoke of Christ, and yet frequently to make yourself the serf of Satan. But to make your life all of a piece is to make it powerful, and when God the Holy Ghost enables you to do this, then your testimony will tell upon those amongst whom you live. It would be ludicrous, if it were not so sorrowful a thing, to be spoken of even with weeping, that there should be professed Christians who are through inconsistency among the worst enemies of the cross of Christ. I heard, the other day, a story which made me laugh. A poor creature, in a lunatic asylum, had got it into his head that he was some great one, and he addressed a person who was visiting the asylum in the following words:—"I am Sir William Wallace; give me some tobacco!" What a ridiculous contrast between his proud assertion and his poor request! Who but a lunatic would have said such a thing? Yet alas! we know people who say, by their actions, if not in words, "I am a Christian, but I will take advantage of you when I can; I am one of the blood-royal of heaven, my life is hid with Christ in God, and my conversation is in heaven, but—but—I like worldliness, and sensual pleasure, and carnal mirth quite as well as other men!" I say again, that this kind of thing would be superlatively ludicrous if it were not ineffably sorrowful, and it is, anyhow, utterly contemptible. If your life be not all of a piece, the world will soon learn how to estimate your testimony, and will count you to be either a fool or a knave, and perhaps both.

But it is not enough to be barely consistent; what the world expects in Christians is real holiness as well as consistency. Holiness is something

more than virtue. Virtue is like goodness frozen into ice, hard and cold; but holiness is that same goodness when it is thawed into a clear, running, sparkling stream. Virtue is the best thing that philosophy can produce, but holiness is the true fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of that alone. There must be about us an unworldliness, a something out of the common and ordinary way, or else, mark you, that uncommon gospel, that heavenly gospel, which we hold, will not seem to be bringing forth its legitimate fruit. If you are just barely honest, and no more, if you are barely moral, and no more, it is of no service that you should try to speak of Christ; the world will not reckon you as the fairest among women, and it will not enquire anything about your Well-beloved.

But, brethren and sisters, I feel as if, instead of exhorting you thus, I might better turn to confession myself, and ask you to join me in confessing how far short we come of being anything like the fairest among women as to character. We do hope that we have something Christ-like about us; but oh, how little it is! How many imperfections there are! How much is there of the old Adam, and how little of the new creature in Christ Jesus! Archbishop Usher was once asked to write a treatise upon Sanctification; this he promised to do, but six months rolled away, and the good Archbishop had not written a sentence. He said to a friend, "I have not begun the treatise, yet I cannot confess to a breach of my promise, for, to tell you the truth, I have done my best to write upon the subject; but when I came to look into my own heart, I saw so little of sanctification there, and found that so much which I could have written would have been merely by rote as a parrot might have talked, that I had not the face to write it." Yet, if ever there was a man renowned for holiness, it was Archbishop Usher; if ever there was a saintly man who seemed to be one of the seraphic spirits permitted to stray beyond the companionship of his kind among poor earth-worms here, it was Usher; yet this is the confession that he makes concerning himself! Where, then, shall we hide our diminished heads? I am sure we may all say, with good Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, who was another bright example of seraphic holiness, that what we want is more grace. He had written a pamphlet on some political matter, and Lord North wrote to know what he could give him in return. His answer was, "I want what your lordship cannot give me,—more grace." That is also true of us, we want more grace. It is to be

had; and if we had it, and it transformed us into what we should be, oh, what lives of happiness and of holiness we might lead here below, and what mighty workers should we be for our Lord Jesus Christ! How would his dear name be made to sound to the utmost ends of the earth! I fear me it is but a dream; but just conceive that all of you, the members of this church, were made to be truly saintly, saints of the first water, saints who had cast off the sloth of worldliness, and had come out in the full glory of newness of life in Christ Jesus, oh, what a power might this church become in London, and what a power to be felt the wide world over! Let us seek it, let us strive after it, recollecting that it is a truth never to be denied that only in proportion to the sanctity and spirituality of our character will be our influence for good amongst the sons of men.

II. Advancing now a step, our second remark will be, that **WE SHOULD CHARGE OTHERS CONCERNING CHRIST**. "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

The "fairest among women" was asked why she had so spoken: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." By this "charge" is meant, I suppose, that the spouse adjured them, and spoke solemnly to them about her Beloved. Christians, be troublesome to the world! O house of Israel, be like a burdensome stone to the world! You are not sent here to be recognized as honorable citizens of this world, to be petted and well-treated. Even Christ himself, the peaceable One, said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" What I mean is this, we are not to be quiet about our religion. The world says to us, "Hold your tongue about religion, or at least talk about it at fit times; but do not introduce it at all seasons so as to become a pest and a nuisance." I say again, and you know in what sense I mean it, be a nuisance to the world; be such a man that worldlings will be compelled to feel that there is a Christian in their midst. An officer was walking out of the royal presence on one occasion, when he tripped over his sword. The king said to him, "Your sword is rather a nuisance." "Yes," was the officer's reply, "your majesty's enemies have often said so." May you be a nuisance to the world in that sense, troublesome to the enemies of the King of kings! While your conduct should be courteous, and everything that could be desired as

between man and man, yet let your testimony for Christ be given without any flinching and without any mincing of the matter.

This afternoon, I was reading a sermon by a certain divine, whose subject of discourse was, why the working-classes do not go to a place of worship, and the preacher seems to have made up his mind that, whatever is preached in this Tabernacle, is especially obnoxious to laboring men and women. The reason he gives why the working-classes do not attend places of worship is that we preach such dreadful doctrines. It is very remarkable that places where these truths are preached are crowded, while places where the opposite things are proclaimed are often empty! It is curious, if the doctrine of the gospel is such a very horrible thing that it drives people away, that at the places where it is preached there are more people than can get in, whereas where some of the modern doctrines are declared, you may see more spiders than people! It is a singular circumstance, certainly, yet one for which we can easily account. A Socinian minister was once asked by one who preached Evangelical truth, "If I, who proclaim doctrines which you say are obnoxious to common reason, have my place full, and you, who preach such pretty, reasonable doctrines, can get nobody to hear you, do you not think it is because the people have an idea that what I teach is true, and that what you preach, though it is very pleasant and palatable, is not true, and therefore they do not care to hear it?" It is not by altering our testimony that we are to hope to win an audience, and it is not by hiding the light of the gospel under a bushel that you or I shall discharge our obligations to our Lord. We must speak up for Christ, and so speak up for Him that men will be moved to ask us the question, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

I have read that Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, had every pew in the chapel where he preached sketched out on a plan, and the names of all the occupants of the pews written on it, so that he might pray for every one, and, if possible, speak to everyone. Such a plan might not be practicable in so large a building as this, but it is an excellent method; and if we cannot adopt it, let this place be mapped out in your own mind, and let every believer, wherever he sits, consider that there is a little district allotted to him, and let him seek to have a word of courteous Christian conversation



about divine things with all who sit near him. I suggest this as a very excellent mode of beginning to "charge "others about Christ; and then in your daily business, in the workshop, at fit times and seasons, at periods when Christian prudence and Christian zeal would give their voice together, introduce Christ, and begin to talk of him, and hold him up as the great cure-all for human diseases, the great staff and support for human weakness. We shall never see as much blessing as we might until the work of the Church becomes far more general than it is at present. There is something which every believer can do for his Lord. He must be able to tell of what he has tasted and handled of the Word of Life, and if he has not tasted and handled it, then he is not a child of God at all. The best teaching in the world is experimental; nothing wins upon men like personal witnessing, not merely teaching the doctrine as we find it in the Book, but as we have felt it in its living power upon our own hearts. When we begin to tell of its effect upon ourselves, it is wonderful what power there is upon others in that testimony. A person talks to me about a certain medicine, how it is compounded, what it looks like, how many drops must be taken at a dose, and so on. Well, I do not care to hear all that, and I soon forget it; but he tells me that for many months he was bed-ridden, he was in sore distress and in great pain, and like to die; and, looking at him as he stands before me in perfect health, I am delighted with the change, and he says that it was that medicine which restored him. If I am a sick man in the same state as he was, I say to him, "Give me the name and address, for I must try that medicine for myself." I believe that the simple witness of converted boys and girls, converted lads and lasses, especially the witness of converted fathers and mothers and friends beloved, the witness that comes of the grey head that is backed up by years of godly living, has a wonderful power for the spread of the gospel, and we cannot expect that God will give us any very large blessing until the whole of us shall be at work for our Lord. We need not all climb up the pulpit stairs, but each one of us can proclaim Christ according to our ability, and according to the circumstances in which he has placed us. When we shall do that, then we may expect to see "greater things than these." Days that shall make us laugh for very joy of heart, and well nigh make us dance like David did before the ark, will come when all the rank and file of the army, and even those who halt upon their crutches, shall march unanimously against the foe.

III. Thirdly, it is important for us to MAKE ALL WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH US FEEL THAT CHRIST JESUS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH US.

You perceive that the question of the text is not, "What is thy Beloved that he should be equal to others?" It is, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" The idols of the heathen are all made to stand in the Pantheon face to face, and there is no quarrelling among them; but as soon as you introduce Christ there, they must all go down, or he will not stay. The principle of the toleration of every form of doctrine—I mean not, of course, civil toleration, which we hold to be always necessary and right, but I mean mental toleration,—the principle of the mental toleration of all forms of doctrine, and all forms and shades of action, is heathenish, for where Christ comes he comes to reign; and when once he enters the soul of a man, it is down, down, down with everything else.

There is a text which is often misunderstood. I heard it read thus only last Sunday: "No man can serve two masters." I very much question whether he cannot; I believe he could serve, not only two, but twenty. That is not the meaning of the text; the true reading of it is, "No man can serve two masters." They cannot both be masters; if two of them are equal, then neither of them is really master. It is not possible for the soul to be subject to two master-passions. If a man says, "I love Christ," that is well; but if he says, "I love Christ, and I love money, and I love them both supremely," that man is a liar, for the thing is not possible. There is only one that can be the master-passion; and where Jesus enters the soul, love to him must be the master-passion of the heart.

It strikes me that a Christian, living fully up to his privileges, would be such a man as this;—if he had, on one side, the opportunity to enjoy pleasure, and, on the other side, a painful opportunity of honoring Christ, he would prefer to honor Christ rather than to enjoy himself. If, on the one hand, there were gain, even lawfully to be had, and on the other hand, Christ could be honored in a way that would bring no monetary gain, the man would prefer the glorifying of his Master to the obtaining of the advantage in cash which was held out to him. And if it comes to this, that by soft speeches he may get himself into good repute, and that by sternly speaking out and rebuking error he may honor his Master but

bring much contempt upon himself, if he be a genuine Christian he will always take the latter course. The first question he will ask will be, "How can I most honor my Lord? How can I best glorify him?"

It is clear that Christ is not first in every nominal Christian's heart. No, alas! he is not first, and he is not even second, he is very far down in the scale. Look at them,—good honest tradespeople, perhaps, but from the first dawn of Monday morning to the putting up of the shutters on Saturday night, what is the main business of their life? It is only, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Now, where is Christ in such a case as that? Look at others; with them the question is, "Where shall I invest such-and-such an amount of spare cash? How shall I best lay by such-and-such a sum? What field shall I buy next? What house shall I add to my estate?" As for the Lord Jesus, he is put off with the cheese-parings and the candle-ends; he gets a little now and then dropped into the offering-box, but it is only a mere trifle compared with what he ought to receive. The man's words are nine hundred and ninety-nine for himself, and perhaps not much more than half a one for Christ; almost all his time goes to the world, and not to his Lord; his whole self goes to himself, and not to the Savior to whom he professes to belong.

This is not the case with the truly Christ-like man. With him, Christ is first, Christ is last, Christ is midst, Christ is all in all; and when he speaks about anything connected with Christ, his words come with such a solemn earnestness, that men are impressed with what he says, and they turn round to him, and ask, as the daughters of Jerusalem enquired of the spouse, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

IV. Our last thought is this; if ever, through the grace of God, we should possess such a character, and bear such a testimony as we have been talking about, so that men shall ask us the question of the text, **IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER IT.**

This is an age in which the world asks many questions, and from some Christians it cannot get an answer. I will say one thing which some of you may not like to hear, perhaps, but I cannot help that. There are some of

you who are Baptists; but why? Well, I suppose, because I happen to be one, and you have followed me without carefully studying the teaching of the New Testament upon the question. I fear it is so with some of you, and there are others of you who are Wesleyans, or Independents, or Church people, but the only reason you can give for being so, is that your grandmother, or your mother, happened to be of that denomination. This is an age in which people do not estimate truth as they should do. A good earnest controversy seems to me to be a very healthy thing, because it turns men's attention somewhat more than usual to divine things; but you know how it is, even with many professing Christian people. They think it would be wicked to read a novel; but if it is written upon a religious subject, it is a very proper thing then. There is hardly a weekly newspaper, nowadays, or even a penny magazine, that can live without having a novel in it; and there must be a market for all this rubbish or it would not be supplied so plentifully. Why, sirs, in Puritanic times, men read solid books like John Owen "On the Mortification of Sin"; they studied such works as Richard Gilpin "On Satan's Temptations", or Stephen Charnock on "The Divine Attributes"; but, in these days, people who ought to read these solid books, so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, are often wasting their time over poor stuff which only addles the brain, and does the soul no good. I would to God that we could again see a race of sturdy believers, who would hold to nothing but what they had tested by the Word of God; who would receive nothing merely because it was taught by their minister, or by their parents, or by any human authority, but who would accept with unquestioning faith everything that is revealed in the Inspired Book. Our motto still should be, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We want to breed again—and oh, may God give us grace to do so!—a race of men who shall be rooted and grounded in the faith, and who, when they are asked for a reason for the hope that is in them, shall be able to give it, not with fear and trembling and hesitation, but with holy boldness and determination, because they have tested and tried the matter for themselves.

See how the spouse does; she does not pause a minute before she gives her reply. She is asked, "What is thy Beloved more than another

beloved?" and she has the answer, as we say, at her fingers' ends, and why was this? Why, because she had it in her heart. So she says, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." She does not say, "Stop a bit, I must read up on that question; I must get myself well-instructed upon it," but it is such a vital point, had one so dear to her, as it touches the person of her Lord, that she answers at once, "Is my Beloved better than any other beloved? Certainly he is, and here are the reasons." She puts them together one after another without a pause, so that the daughters of Jerusalem must have been convinced; and I commend her example to you also, my beloved in Christ Jesus, Do study the Word, that your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. I beseech you, if I have taught you anything that is not revealed in the Scriptures, or if you have received anything only as by my authority, give it up until you have tested and tried it by the Word of the Lord. I am not afraid what the result will be, for if in anything I have erred, I pray the Lord to teach me and also to teach you, so that we may grow together in the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of the faith. Do let us all seek to be taught of God; and then, with a holy life added to this divine instruction, and a clear testimony for Jesus Christ constantly borne by us, our witnessing must tell upon the age in which we live.

Oh, that the Lord would send us times of true revival once again! Run your finger down the page of history till you come to the Reformation; what was there in Luther, in Calvin, in Zwingle, that they should have been able to shake the world any more than there is in men who are living nowadays? Nothing but this, that they believed what they did believe, and they spoke with an awful earnestness, like men who meant what they said, and straightway there arose a noble race of men, men who felt the power of faith, and lived it out, and the world was made to feel that "there were giants in those days." Then, again, in later times, when the Church had fallen into a fatal slumber, there came the age of Whitefield and Wesley. What was the power of the early Methodists? Why, simply the power of true sincerity combined with holiness! What if I say that it was the power of intruding religion upon men, of forcing men to hear God's voice, of compelling a sleeping world to wake out of its slumbers? As I sat, last week, in the hall of the Free Church Assembly in Edinburgh, just beneath the Castle, I started in my seat, I thought the whole hall was

going to fall, for at one o'clock the gun on the Castle was fired from Greenwich by electricity. It startled every one of us, and I noticed that nearly everybody took out his watch to see whether it was right by the gun. I thought to myself, "That is just what the Christian Church ought to do. It ought, at the proper time, to give a loud, clear, thundering testimony for God and for truth, so that every man might examine his own conscience, and get himself put right where he is wrong." Our testimony for Christ ought not to be like the ticking of an ordinary clock, or as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but a mighty booming noise that commands and that demands a hearing. Let our soul be but linked with heaven, let the Spirit of the Lord flash the message along the wires, and our life may be just as accurate and just as startling as that time-gun at Edinburgh. So, when men ask us, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" we shall have an answer ready for them, which may God bless to them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Independence Of Christianity**

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. -  
Zechariah 4:6

God's first and greatest object is his own glory. There was a time, before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of days, when God dwelt alone in the magnificence of his sublime solitude. Whether he should create, or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question - Would it be to his honor or not? He determined that he would glorify himself by creating; but, in creating, beyond all doubt, his motive was his glory. And since that time, he hath ever ruled the earth, and even blessed it with the same object in his infinite mind - his own glory and honor. Lesser motive for God to have, were less than divine; it is the highest position to which you or I could attain, to live for God; and the very highest virtue of God is for him to magnify himself in all his greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal. Whatever, then, God

permits or does, he doeth with this one motive, his own glory. And even salvation, costly though it was, and infinitely a benefaction to us, had for its first object, and for its grand result, the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

Now, as this is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. It is true that God has a church, that that church has been redeemed and will be preserved for his glory, and it is equally true that everything that is done to the church, in the church, or for the church either with the permission or by the power of God, is for God's glory, as well as for the church's weal. You will notice, in reading Scripture, that whenever God has blessed the church, he has secured himself the glory of the blessing, though they have had the profit of it. Sometimes he has been pleased to redeem his people by might but then he has so used the might and power that all the glory hath come to him, and his head alone hath worn the crown. Did he smite Egypt, and lead forth his people, with a strong hand and outstretched arm? The glory was not to the rod of Moses, but to the Almighty power which made the rod so potent. Did he lead his people through the wilderness, and defend them from their enemies? Still, did he, by teaching the people their dependence upon him, preserve to himself all the glory? So that not Moses or Aaron amongst the priests or prophets could share the honor with him. And tell me, if ye will, of slaughtered Anak, and the destruction of the tribes of Canaan; tell me of Israel's possessing the promised land; tell me of Philistines routed, and laid heaps on heaps; of Midianites made to fall on each other; tell me of kings and princes who fled apace and fell, until the ground was white, like the snow in Salmon. I will say of everyone of these triumphs, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;" and I will say at the end of every victory, "Crown him, crown him, for he hath done it; and let his name be exalted and extolled, world without end." Sometimes, however, God chooseth not to employ the agency of power. If he chooses to save, by might and by power, it is that glory may be unto him; and when he says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," it is still with the same object, and the same desire, that we may be led -

"To give to the King of kings renown,

The Lord of Lords with glory crown,"

God is jealous of his own honor; he will not suffer even his church to be delivered in such a way as to honor men more than God; he will take to himself the throne without a rival he will wear a crown that never head did wear, and sway a scepter that never head hath grasped, for as truly as he is God, the earth shall know that he, and he alone, hath done it, and unto him shall be the glory.

Now, my objects this morning will be to glorify God, by showing to you, who love the Saviour, that the preservation and the triumph of the church are both of them to be accomplished, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, in order that all the honor might be to God, and none of it to man. I shall divide my text very simply; it divides itself. First, not by might; secondly, nor by power; thirdly, but by my Spirit.

You will ask me whether there is any distinction to be drawn between these two words, "NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER." I answer, yes. The best Hebrew scholars tell us that the "might," in the first place, may be translated, "army." The Septuagint does so translate it. It signifies power collectedly - the power of a number of men combined together. The second word, "power," signifies the prowess of a single individual, so that I might paraphrase my text thus - "Not by the combined might of men laboring to assist each other, nor by the separate might of any single hero, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And now you will see the distinction, which is not without a difference.

To begin then, the preservation and the triumph of the church cannot be accomplished BY MIGHT - that is, not by might collectedly.

First, let us consider that collected might to represent human armies. The church, we affirm, can neither be preserved nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. We have all thought otherwise in our time, and have foolishly said when a fresh territory was annexed to our empire, "Ah! what a providence that England has annexed Oude," - or taken to itself some other territory - "Now a door is opened for the Gospel. A Christian power will necessarily encourage Christianity, and seeing that a Christian power is at the head of the Government, it will be likely that the



natives will be induced to search into the authenticity of our revelation, and so great results will follow. Who can tell but that, at the point of the British bayonet, the Gospel will be carried, and that, by the edge of the true sword of valiant men, Christ's Gospel will be proclaimed?" I have said so myself; and now I know I am a fool for my pains, and that Christ's church hath been also miserably befooled; for this I will assert, and prove too, that the progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity, and that the spread of our empire, so far from being advantageous to the Gospel, I will hold, and this day proclaim, hath been hostile to it.

We will just confine our attention for a moment or two to India. I believe that British rule there, has been useful in many ways. I shall not deny the civilizing influence of European society; or that great things have been done for humanity; but I do assert, and can prove it, that there would have been greater probability of the Gospel spreading in India if it had been let alone, than there has been ever since the domination of Great Britain. Ye thought that when Christians, as ye called them, had the land, they would favor religion. Now I will state a fact which ought to go through the length and breadth of the land; it does not rest on hearsay, I was informed of it a little while ago by a clergyman, upon whose memory the fact is vividly impressed. A Sepoy in a certain regiment was converted to God by a missionary. He proposed to be baptized, and become a Christian. Mark, not a Christian after our way and fashion, as a Baptist, or an Independent or a Methodist; but a Christian according to the fashion of the Episcopalian church established in this realm. He was seen by the chaplain, and was received as a Christian. What think you became of that Sepoy? Let the East India Company blush for ever, he was stripped of his regimentals, dismissed the service and sent home, because he had become a Christian! Ah! we dreamed that if the; had the power they would help us. Alas! the policy of greed cannot easily be made to assist the Kingdom of Christ.

But I have another string to my bow, I believe that the help of Government would have been far worse than its opposition, I do regret that the Company sometimes discourages missionary enterprise; but I believe that, had they encouraged it, it would have been far worse still, for

their encouragement would have been the greatest hindrance we could receive. If I had to-morrow to go to India to preach the Gospel, I should pray to God, if such a thing could be, that he would give me a black face and make me like a Hindoo; for otherwise I should feel that when I preached I should be regarded as one of the lords - one of the oppressors it may sometime be added - and I should not expect my congregation to listen to me as a man speaking to men, a brother to brother, a Christian full of love, but they would hear me, and only cavil at me, because even my white face would give me some appearance of superiority. Why in England, our missionaries and our clergymen have assumed a kind of superiority and dignity over the people; they have called themselves clergy, and the people laity; and the result has been that they have weakened their influence. I have thought it right to come amongst my fellow men, and be a man amongst men, just one of themselves, their equal and their friend; and they have rallied around me, and not refused to love me. And I should not expect to be successful in preaching the gospel, unless I might stand and feel that I am a brother, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. If I cannot stand before them thus, I cannot get at their hearts. Send me, then, to India as one of the dominant ruling race, and you give me a work I cannot accomplish when you tell me to evangelise its inhabitants. In that day when John Williams fell in Erromanga, ye wept, but it was a more hopeful day for Erromanga than the day when our missionaries in India first landed there. I had rather go to preach to the greatest savages that live, than I would go to preach in the place that is under British rule. Not for the fault of Britain, but simply because I, as a Briton, would be looked upon as one of the superiors, one of the lords, and that would take away much of my power to do good. Now, will you just cast your eye upon the wide world? Did you ever hear of a nation under British rule being converted to God? Mr. Moffat and our great friend Dr. Livingstone have been laboring in Africa with great success, and many have been converted. Did you ever hear of Kaffir tribes protected by England, ever being converted? It is only a people that have been left to themselves, and preached to by men as men, that have been brought to God. For my part, I conceive, that when an enterprise begins in martyrdom, it is none the less likely to succeed, but when conquerors begin to preach the gospel to those they have conquered, it will not succeed, God will teach us that it is not by might All swords that have ever

flashed from scabbards have not aided Christ a single grain. Mahommedans' religion might be sustained by scimitars, but Christians' religion must be sustained by love. The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace. The battle, and the garment rolled in blood, are not a fitting prelude to "peace on earth, goodwill to men." And I do firmly hold, that the slaughter of men, that bayonets, and swords, and guns, have never yet been, and never can be, promoters of the gospel. The gospel will proceed without them, but never through them. "Not by might." Now don't be be fooled again, if you hear of the English conquering in China, don't go down on your knees and thank God for it, and say it's such a heavenly thing for the spread of the gospel - it just is not. Experience teaches you that, and if you look upon the map you will find I have stated only the truth, that where our arms have been victorious, the gospel has been hindered rather than not; so that where South Sea Islanders have bowed their knees and cast their idols to the bats, British Hindoos have kept their idols, and where Bechuanas and Bushmen have turned unto the Lord, British Affairs have not been converted, not perhaps because they were British, but because the very fact of the missionary being a Briton, put him above them, and weakened their influence. Hush thy trump, O war; put away thy gaudy trappings and thy bloodstained drapery, if thou thinkest that the cannon with the cross upon it is really sanctified, and if thou imaginest that thy banner hath become holy, thou dreamest of a lie. God wanteth not thee to help his cause. "It is not by armies, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Now, understanding this word "might," in another sense, to signify great corporations, or, as we say, denominations of men. Now-a-days, people get a queer notion in their head, and they form what they call a denomination. It is all wrong; there never ought to have been any denominations at all, for according to Scripture, every church is independent of every other. There ought to have been as many separate churches as there were separate opinions; but denominations, which are the gathering up of those churches, I take it, ought not to have existed at all. They may do some good, but they do a world of mischief. Now, when first denomination starts it is very much opposed. Take, for instance, Methodism; how earnest were its first preachers, how indefatigably did

they toil, and how incessantly were they persecuted; yet what a harvest of souls God gave to them! What a great blessing was showered from the cloud that first started at Oxford, with those few young men preaching the everlasting gospel! Methodism goes on till it grows to be a most respectable kind of society, its ramifications extend all over England and it has societies in every country - and now - God forbid I should say anything against Methodism; let those who like it believe it; I do not like it - but I do say now, when they have come to the greatest is the time when they are doing the least. They will confess that the ancient power of Methodism has to a great degree failed. That power which once seemed to turn the world upside down, and set the whole of the churches on fire with a divine light and life, is to a great degree quenched. Wars and rumors of wars are in their camp; till, what with new connections and old connections, reformed and confessional, and an infinite quantity of names, one does not know into how many fraternities they intend to divide themselves. The fact is, that just when the corporation began to be the greatest, God said, "Now then, you have done your work, to a great degree, it shall not be by you any longer; not by might, not by your allied forces. You have said our efforts will cover the earth with the gospel." "Now," says God, "I will diminish you by thousands, I will take off your roll year by year, as many as would make another denomination strong; and though you shall still exist, you shall have to weep and repent with bitterness, because of your departed zeal." It is just the same with every other denomination. When we Baptists were reckoned to be the poorest lot in the world, and everybody sneered at us, we did far more good than we do now. There was far more pure doctrine, and far better preaching than there is at the present time. But we began to be respectable - and just as we began to be respectable we began to lose our power. Every fresh Gothic Baptist chapel was a diminution of simplicity; and every fresh place where the minister become intellectual, as it was called, was just a loss of evangelical might, till now, as a denomination, we are just as low as any other: and we need some of our old leaders again, just to preach the word with demonstration and with power, and to overthrow all those grand conventionalisms which have tried to make the Baptist denomination respectable. I pray to God I may never be called to preach to a much applauded congregation; it would be a sad and evil day. To be despised, to be spit upon, to be caricatured, and to be jeered, is the

highest honor that a Christian minister can have; and to be pampered, flattered, and applauded by men, is a poor, base thing, that is not worth having. If any come here and say "They are not a respectable sort;" we reply, "we labor to preach to the poor." But mark this, whenever a great denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns, and take away its glory, till the world shall say, "It is not by might nor by power."

And now, I shall give one more application of the word "might." It is so with one particular church, just as I have been observing. I tremble for the church of which I am the pastor. I never trembled for it when we were few, when we were earnest in prayer, and devout in supplication, when it was a thing of contempt to go into "that miserable Baptist Chapel in Park Street," when we were despised and maligned and slandered. I never trembled for them then; God was blessing the ministry, souls were saved, and we walked together in the fear of the Lord and in love. But I tremble for it now, now that God hath enlarged our borders, and given us to count our members not by tens but by hundreds, now that we can say we are the largest Baptist church in England. I do tremble now, because now is just the time when we shall begin to say, "We are a great people," "We shall do very much," "We are a great agency," "The world will look upon us, and we will do a great deal." If we ever say that, God will say, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm," and he will hide the light of his countenance from us, so that our mountain that standeth firm shall begin to shake. O churches! - all of ye here that are representatives of churches, carry ye the tidings. O churches! take heed lest ye trust in yourselves; take heed lest ye say, "We are a respectable body," "We are a mighty number," "We are a potent people;" take heed lest ye begin to glory in your own strength; for when that is done, "Ichabod" shall be written on your walls and your glory shall depart from you. Remember, that he who was with us when we were but few, must be with us now we are many, or else we must fail; and he who strengthened us when we were but as "little in Israel," must be with us, now that we are like "the thousands of Manasseh," or else it is all over with us and our day is past. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord."

II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. You know, beloved, that

after all, the greatest works that have been done have been done by the ones. The hundreds do not often do much, the companies never do, it is the units, just the single individuals, that after all are the power and the might. Take any parish in England where there is a well-regulated society for doing good - it is some young woman or some young man who is the very life of it. Take any church, there are multitudes in it, but it is some two or three that do the work. Look on the Reformation, there might be many reformers, but there was but one Luther, there might be many teachers, but there was but one Calvin. Look ye upon the preachers of the last age, the mighty preachers who stirred up the churches; there were many coadjutors with them, but after all, it was not Whitfield's friends, nor Wesley's friends, but the men themselves that did it. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing. A man alone can do more than a man with fifty men at his heels to fetter him. Committees are very seldom of much use, and bodies and societies sometimes are loss of strength instead of a gain. It is said, that if Noah's Ark had had to be built by a company, they would not have laid the keel yet; and it is perhaps true. There is scarcely anything done by a body, it almost always fails; because what is many men's business is just nobody's business at all. Just the same with religion, the grand things must be done by the ones, the great works of God must be accomplished by single men. Look back through old history. Who delivered Israel from the Philistines? It was a solitary Samson. Who was it gathered the people together to rout the Midianites? It was one Gideon, who cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Who was he that smote the enemy? It was one Shamgar, with his ox goad, or it was an Elon, who with his dagger, put an end to his country's tyrant. Separate men - Davids with their slings and stones, have done more than armies could accomplish. "But," says God, "it is not even by individual might, the gospel is to be spread." Take individual might in different senses; sometimes we may say, of this kind, it represents learning. We discover here and there certain great and mighty men in learning, that can take an infidel, strap him on to the dissecting board, and just anatomise him in a minute, they are great doctors of divinity, they have achieved the highest titles that can be given them at the universities; they have read the Scriptures thoroughly, they are mighty theologians, they could dispute with John Owen, and could entirely take the wind out of the sails of Calvin, they know a great deal, a very great deal; they can write most

excellent reviews, and are much gifted in philosophical disquisitions. But did you ever hear, in the course of all your life, of any one of these being blessed by God to lead any great religious movement? Such a thing may have been, but I have forgotten all about it; there may have been such an occurrence, but I do not remember it. This I am sure of; that the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had taken no degree, except it was a good degree of being excellent fishermen, this I am certain, that all through the ages God has not often used men of any very great intellectual compass, they have not seemed to be men of profound learning; they have generally been men of determined will and strong principle, but not often of any very high intellectual attainments. Do I, therefore, rail at learning? O! no; God forbid, the more of that the better. Let men be as wise as they can be, and as learned as they can be, but still the fact remaineth, and there is no one that can dispute it - that God hath often taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, in order that men may see "It is not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

I have the pleasure and happiness of being acquainted with a large number of the most eminent ministers in England; I have walked and talked with them, and spoken to them about the things of the kingdom, and with great pleasure, and if they were present they would not think me severe in what I am about to say. Many of those at whose feet we have been prepared to sit as little children to hear their wisdom, confessed as ministers, that when they reviewed up their life, they felt that it has been unprofitable. They have been learned, but they would say with Owen, "I would give up all my talents to preach like Bunyan the tinker." They have wished that they could have believed something else besides having attained a name for profound learning and research. My brethren, it is not their fault, they have labored well and earnestly, I find no fault whatever with them: it is God's supremacy that stamps this upon them and makes them feel the force of it - that it must not be by power, and their very intellectual prowess, puts them out of the way - so that they are incapable of being used by God as a mass at least, though individuals may be, for any very great result in the church, because then it would seem to be by power.

"No, no," says one. "If a man is not learned that does not signify much, a

man must be eloquent." That is another mistake, it is not by power of eloquence that souls are saved. I believe every man that preaches the gospel in his heart is eloquent; so I have used a wrong word. I mean, however, that great oratorical powers are very seldom made use of by God for any very great result; not even here, is God pleased to let it be seen to be by power. Ye have heard of the preaching of Whitfield did ye ever read his sermons? If ye did ye will say they were rather contemptible productions. There is nothing in them that I should think could have approached to oratory; it was only the man's earnestness that made him eloquent. Have ye heard any preacher that has been blessed by God to move the multitude? He has been eloquent, for he has spoken earnestly, but as to oratory, there has been none of it. I, for my own part, must eschew every pretension thereunto. I am certain I never think, when I come into this pulpit, "How shall I talk to this people in a grand fashion?" I think when I come up here, "I have got something to say, I will tell them it." How I will tell them, it does not signify much to me, I shall find the words somehow or other I daresay, God helping me, but about any of the graces of eloquence, or the words of oratory, I am utterly and quite in the dark, nor do I wish to imitate any who have been masters in that. I believe that the men whom we call eloquent now they are dead, were laughed at in their day as poor bungling speakers. Now they are buried they are canonized, but in their lives they were abused.

Now, my brethren, God, I do think will generally cast a slur upon fine speaking and grand compositions and so on, in order that he may show that it is not by individual power, but by his Spirit. I could stand here, and point my finger in a certain circle around this place, and I could pause at such a chapel and say, There is a man preaching there whose compositions are worthy to be read by the most intellectual of persons, but whose chapel contains this morning, a hundred. I will point you to another of whose preaching we can say that it was the most faultless oratory to which we ever listened, but his congregation were nearly all of them asleep. We might point you to another, of whom we could say that there was the most chaste simplicity, the most extraordinary beauty in the compositions he delivered, but there has not been a soul known to be saved in the chapel for years. Now, why is that? I think it is because God says, it is not by power, it shall not be by individual power. And I will say



this that whenever God is pleased to raise up a man by individual power to move the world, or to work any reform, he invariably selects a man whose faults and whose errors are so glaring and apparent to everyone, that we are obliged to say, "I wonder that man should do it, surely it must be of God, it could not be of that man." No, there are some men who are too great for God's designs, their style is too excellent. If God blessed them the world would cry - especially the literary world - it is their talent that God blesses; but God, on the other hand takes up some rough fellow, truly an earthen vessel, puts his treasure in him, and just shakes the whole world. People cry, "We do not see how it is, it is not in the man certainly;" the critic takes up his pen, dips it in gall, writes a most fearful character about the man, the man reads it, and says, "It is just true, and I am glad of it for if it had not been true God would not have used me. I glory in my infirmities, because Christ's own power rests on me. If I had not those infirmities so much could not have been done, but the very infirmities have insured against men's saying, 'It was the man.'" I have often been delighted at some of my opponents, they have sneered at everything in me - from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, I have been all over bruises and putrifying sores, every word has been vulgarity, every action has been grotesque, the whole of it has been abominable and blasphemous; and I said, 'Well that is delightful, now that is good.' And while some persons have said, 'Now we must defend our minister,' I have thought, "You had better let it alone, it is much the best that it should be so; for suppose it is true - and it is, the most of it - there is all the more glory to God; for who can deny that the work is done?" And he is a great workman that can use bad tools and yet produce a fine piece of workmanship; and if the conversion of hundreds of souls now present, if the sobriety of drunkards, if the chastity of harlots, if the salvation of men who have been swearers, blasphemers, thieves and vagabonds from their youth up, is not a grand result, I do not know what is. And if I have been the unwieldy, uncouth, unworthy tool employed in doing it, I bless God, for then you cannot honor me, but must give all the glory to him, and to him all the glory belongs. He will have it proved that "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

III. And now to conclude lest I weary you. Whilst the progress and advance of the church are neither to be accomplished by the collected

might of armies, corporations, nor churches, nor by the separate exertions of individuals, by the might neither of learning nor of eloquence, yet both the objects are to be accomplished BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

I was thinking, yesterday, my friends, what a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were on a sudden to pour out his Spirit as he did on the day of Pentecost. I was then sitting down meditating upon this sermon, and I thought! oh, if God should pour his Spirit upon me, should I not leap from this place where I am now sitting, and on my knees begin to pray as I never did before; and should I not go next Sabbath-day to a congregation who would feel a solemn awe about them! Every word I spoke would strike like arrows from the bow of God; and they themselves would feel that it was "none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven!" Thousands would cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" and go away carrying the divine fire till the whole of this city would be kindled. And then I had pictured to myself what would come over all the churches if they were in the same condition, and all the people received that same Spirit. I had seen the minister from Monday morning till Saturday night doing little or nothing; delivering his weekly lecture, attending one prayer-meeting, and thinking himself hard worked I saw him, on a sudden, start from his couch, and go round to all the sick of his chapel, and I marked how he delivered a short address of comfort to the sick, with such holy gravity and such divine simplicity, that they lifted their heads from their pillows, and began to sing, even in the agonies of death. I thought I saw others of them girding up their loins, and crying, "What am I doing? - men are perishing, and I am preaching to them but three times a week and am called to the work of the ministry." I thought I read of all those ministers going into the open-air to preach next Monday night; I thought I saw the whole of them flying, like angels fly, to-and-fro this land. And then I thought I saw the deacons all full of the Spirit too, and found them with all their powers, doing everything in the fear of God. I found those who had been lords and rulers no longer seeking to be like Diotrephes; I saw the heavenly influence spread over every mind, I saw the vestries too small for the prayer-meetings, and I saw the chapel crowded, and I heard the brethren who year after year had prayed the same monotonous prayer, break forth

in earnest burning words; I saw the whole assembly melted in tears when the pastor addressed them, and urged them to prayer, and I heard the brethren one by one as they rose up speak like men who had been with Jesus, and had learned how to pray. They prayed as if they had heard Christ pray in Gethsemane, that prayer which was such as never man prayed; and then I thought I saw all those members, and those deacons, and those pastors going out into the world. And, oh, I pictured what preaching there would be, what tract distributing, what alms giving, what holy living! And then I already thought I heard every house at vesper uttering its song, and every cottage as its matin, sending up its prayer to heaven. I thought I saw upon every ploughshare "consecrated to God," and every bell upon the horses, "holiness unto the Lord." And then I thought I saw the different denominations rushing into each others arms; I saw the bishop doff his mitre, and clasp his dissenting brother and call him friend, and bid him preach in his cathedral. And I thought I saw the stiff puritanical dissenter casting away his hatred of conformity, and receiving the Church of England brother to his heart. I thought I saw baptized and unbaptized sitting at one table. I saw Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent, and Quaker agreeing in one thing - that Christ crucified was all: and clasping one another's hands. Ay, and then I thought I have the angels coming down from heaven. And I was not long before I finished my reverie by hearing the shout - "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" It was a reverie, but it will be true some day. By the Spirit of God all this will be accomplished. How and by what means I know not, but I know the great agency must be the Holy Spirit.

And now, dear friends, let me counsel you. The grand thing the church wants in this time, is God's Holy Spirit. You all get up plans and say, "Now, if the church were altered a little bit, it would go on better." You think if there were different ministers, or different church order, or something different, then all would be well. No, dear friends, it is not there the mistake lies, it is that we want more of the Spirit. It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway, and it would not go, and they put up a driver, and they said, "Now, that driver will just do." They try another and another. One proposes that such-and-such a wheel should be altered, but still it will not go. Some one then bursts in amongst those

who are conversing and says, "No, friends; but the reason why it will not move, is because there is no steam. You have no fire, you have no water in the boiler: that's why it will not go. There may be some faults about it; it may want a bit of paint here and there, but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up." But now people are saying, "This must be altered, and that must be altered; but it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. You may have the same ministers, and they shall be a thousand times more useful for God, if God is pleased to bless them. You shall have the same deacons, they shall be a thousand times more influential than they are now, when the Spirit is poured down upon them from on high. That is the church's great want, and until that want be supplied, we may reform, and reform, and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit, and then whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity, when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst.

But I beseech you be earnest in praying for this. Do you know that there is no reason to day, why I should not have preached to day, so that every soul in the place was converted, if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to manifest himself. There is not any solitary shadow of a reason why every soul that has been within the sound of my lips should not have been converted by something said to-day if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bless the word. Now I will repeat, there, is not a humble Primitive Methodist, nor a poor insignificant preacher of any sort on earth, but who, if he preaches the truth, God the Spirit may not make as useful in conversion, as any of the great departed, who are now before God's throne. All we want is the Spirit of God. Dear Christian friends, go home and pray for it; give no rest until God reveals himself, do not tarry, here you are, do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog-trot as you have done; do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion; awake, awake, awake! Put on thy strength, O Jerusalem, start ye from your slumbers, arouse ye from your lethargy, and cry unto God and say unto him, "Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days," then when he shall do it, you will find that while it is not by might, nor by power, it is by God's Spirit.

And now I conclude with a brief address that shall not occupy a moment. Sinner, unconverted sinner, thou hast often tried to save thyself, but thou hast often failed. Thou hast, by thine own power and might, sought to curb thy evil passions and licentious desires with thee, I lament that all thine efforts have been unsuccessful. And I warn thee, it will be unsuccessful, for thou never canst by thine own might save thyself; with all the strength thou hast, thou never canst regenerate thine own soul; thou canst never cause thyself to be born again, And though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to thee, unless God the Spirit shall do it. I pray for thee that God the Spirit may convince thee of sin, and if thou art already convinced, I bid thee believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he has died for thee, hath washed away thy sins; thou art forgiven. Believe that; be happy, and go thy way rejoicing; an, God Almighty be with thee until thou diest.

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## **India's Ills And England's Sorrows**

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. - Jeremiah 9:1

Sometimes, tears are base things; the offspring of a cowardly spirit. Some men weep when they should knit their brows, and many a woman weepeth when she should resign herself to the will of God. Many of those briny drops are but an expression of child-like weakness. It were well if we could wipe such tears away, and face a frowning world with a constant countenance. But oft times tears are the index of strength. There are periods when they are the noblest things in the world. The tears of penitents are precious: a cup of them were worth a king's ransom. It is no sign of weakness when a man weeps for sin, it shows that he hath strength of mind; nay more, that he hath strength imparted by God,

which enables him to forswear his lusts and overcome his passions, and to turn unto God with full purpose of heart. And there are other tears, too, which are the evidences not of weakness, but of might -- the tears of tender sympathy are the children of strong affection, and they are strong like their parents. He that loveth much, must weep much; much love and much sorrow must go together in this vale of tears. The unfeeling heart, the unloving spirit, may pass from earth's portal to its utmost bound almost without a sigh except for itself; but he that loveth, hath digged as many wells of tears as he has chosen objects of affection; for by as many as our friends are multiplied, by so many must our griefs be multiplied too, if we have love enough to share in their griefs and to bear their burden for them. The largest hearted man will miss many sorrows that the little man will feel, but he will have to endure many sorrows the poor narrow-minded spirit never knoweth. It needs a mighty prophet like Jeremiah to weep as mightily as he. Jeremiah was not weak in his weeping; the strength of his mind and the strength of his love were the parents of his sorrow. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." This is no expression of weak sentimentalism; this is no utterance of mere whining presence; it is the burst of a strong soul, strong in its affection, strong in its devotion, strong in its self-sacrifice. I would to God we knew how to weep like this; and if we might not weep so frequently as Jeremy I wish that when we did weep, we did weep as well.

It would seem as if some men had been sent into this world for the very purpose of being the world's weepers. God's great house is thoroughly furnished with everything, everything that can express the thoughts and the emotions of the inhabitant, God hath made. I find in nature, plants to be everlasting weepers. There by the lonely brook, where the maiden cast away her life, the willow weeps for ever; and there in the grave yard where men lie slumbering till the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken them, stands the dull cypress, mourning in its sombre garments. Now as it is with nature, so it is with the race of man. Mankind have bravery and boldness; they must have their heroes to express their courage. Mankind have some love to their fellow-creatures; they must have their fine philanthropists to live out mankind's philanthropy. Men have their

sorrows, they must have their weepers; they must have men of sorrows who have it for their avocation and their business, to weep, from the cradle to the grave to be ever weeping, not so much for themselves as for the woes of others, it may be I have some such here; I shall be happy to enlist their sympathies; and truly if I have none of that race, I shall boldly appeal to the whole mass of you, and I will bring before you causes of great grief; and when I bid you by the love you bear to man, and to his God, to begin to weep; if you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now. Come, let me show you wherefore I have taken this my text, and why I have uttered this mournful language; and if your hearts be not as stolid as stone, sure there should be some tears shed this morning. For if I be not foolish in my utterances and faint in my speech, you will go home to your chambers to weep there. "Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of 572 tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

I want your griefs this morning, first, for persons actually slain -- "the slain of the daughter of our people;" and then I shall need your tears for those morally slain, "the slain of the daughter of our people."

I. To begin, shell, with ACTUAL MURDER AND REAL BLOODSHED. My brethren, our hearts are sick nigh unto death with the terrible news brought us post after post, telegraph after telegraph; we have read many letters of the Times, day after day, until we have folded up that paper, and professed before God that we could read no more. Our spirits have been harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty. We, perhaps, may not have been personally interested in the bloodshed, so far as our own husbands, wives, brothers, and sisters have been concerned, but we have felt the tie of kindred very strongly when we have found our race so cruelly butchered in the land of the East. It is for us to-day humbly to confess our crime. The government of India has been a cruel government; it has much for which to appear before the bar of God. Its tortures -- if the best evidence is to be believed -- have been of the most inhuman kind; God forgive the men who have committed such crimes in the British name. But those days are past.

May God blot out the sin. We do not forget our own guilt; but an

overwhelming sense of the guilt of others, who have with such cold-hearted cruelty tormented men and women, may well excuse us if we do not dilate upon the subject.

Alas! alas, for our brethren there! They have died; alas for them! They have been slain by the sword of treachery, and traitorously murdered by men who swore allegiance. Alas for them! But, O ye soldiers, we weep not for you. Even when ye were tortured, ye had not that high dishonor to bear to which the other sex has been obliged to submit. O England! weep for thy daughters with a bitter lamentation; let thine eyes run down with rivers of blood for them. Had they been crushed within the folds of the hideous boa, or had the fangs of the tiger been red with their blood, happy would their fate have been compared with the indignities they have endured! O Earth! thou hast beheld crimes which antiquity could not parallel; thou hast seen bestial lust gratified upon the purest and the best of mortals. God's fairest creatures stained; those loved ones, who could not brook the name of lust, given up to the embraces of incarnate devils! Weep, Britain, weep, weep for thy sons and for thy daughters! If thou art cold-hearted now, if thou readest the tale of infamy now without a tear, thou art no mother to them! Sure thine heart must have failed thee, and thou hast become less loving than thine own lions, and less tender than beasts of prey, if thou dost not weep for the maiden and the wife, Brethren, I am not straining history; I am not endeavoring to be pathetic where there is no pathos. No; my subject of itself is all pathos; it is my poor way of speaking that doth spoil it. I have not to-day to act the orator's part, to garnish up that which was nothing before; I have not to magnify little griefs -- rather I feel that all my utterances do but diminish the woe which every thoughtful man must feel. Oh, how have our hearts been harrowed, cut in pieces, molten in the fire! Agony hath seized upon us, and grief unutterable, when, day after day, our hopes have been disappointed, and we have heard that still the rebel rages in his fury, and still with despotic might doth as he pleaseth with the sons and daughters, the husbands and the wives of England Weep, Christians, weep! And ye ask me of what avail shall be your weeping eye bidden you weep today, because the spirit of vengeance is gathering; Britain's wrath is stirred; a black cloud is hanging over the head of the mutinous Sepoys! Their fate shall be most dreadful, their doom most tremendous, when England shall



smite the murderers, as justly she must. There must be Judicial punishment enacted upon these men, so terrible that the earth shall tremble, and both the ears of him that heareth it shall tingle! I am inclined, if I can, to sprinkle some few cooling tears upon the fires of vengeance. No, no, we will not take vengeance upon ourselves. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Let not Britain's soldiers push their enemies to destruction, through a spirit of vengeance, as men, let them do it as the appointed executioners of the sentence of our laws. According to the civil code of every country under heaven, these men are condemned to die. Not as soldiers should we war with them, but as malefactors we must execute the law upon them. They have committed treason against government, and for that crime alone the doom is death! But they are murderers, and rightly or wrongly, our law is, that the murderer must die the death. God must have this enormous sin punished, and though we would feel no vengeance as Britons, yet, for the sake of government, God's established government on earth, the ruler who beareth the sword must not now bear the sword in vain. Long have I held that war is an enormous crime; long have I regarded all battles as but murder on a large scale: but this time, I, a peaceful man, a follower of the peaceful Savior, do propound war. No, it is not war that I propound, but a just and proper punishment. I will not aid and abet soldiers as warriors, but as executioners of a lawful sentence, which ought to be executed upon men, who, by the double crime of infamous debauchery, and fearful bloodshed, have brought upon themselves the ban and curse of God, so that they must be punished, or truth and innocence can never walk this earth. As a rule I do not believe in the utility of capital punishment, but the crime has been attended with all the horrid guilt of the cities of the plain, and is too bestial to be endured. But still, I say, I would cool down the vengeance of Britons, and therefore I would bid you weep. Ye talk of vengeance, but ye know not the men with whom ye have to deal; many a post may come, and many a month run round, and many a year may pass before ye hear of victory over those fierce men. Be not too proud. England talked once of her great deeds, and she hath since been humbled. She may yet again learn that she is not omnipotent. But ye people of God, weep, weep for this sin that hath broken loose, weep for this hell that hath found its way to earth; go to your chambers and cry out to God to stop this bloodshed. You are to be the saviours of your nation.

Not on the bayonets of British soldiery, but on the prayers of British Christians, do we rest. Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, lament most bitterly, for this desperate sin; and then cry to God to save! Remember, he heareth prayer -- prayer moveth the arm of the Omnipotent. Let us proclaim a fast; let us gather a solemn assembly; let us cry mightily unto him; let us ask the God of armies to avenge himself; let us pray him so to send the light of the gospel into the land, that such a crime may be impossible a second time; and this time, so to put it down, that it may never have an opportunity of breaking loose again. I know not whether our government will proclaim a national fast; but certain I am it is time that every Christian should celebrate one in his own heart. I bid all of you with whom my word has one atom of respect, if my exhortation has one word of force, I do exhort you to spend special time in prayer just now. Oh! my friends, ye cannot hear the shrieks, ye have not seen the terror-stricken faces, ye have not beheld the flying fugitives; but you may picture them in your imagination; and he must be accursed who does not pray to God, and lift up his soul in earnest prayer, that he would be pleased now to put his shield between our fellow-subjects and their enemies. And you, especially, the representatives of divers congregations in various parts of this land, give unto God no rest until he be pleased to bestir himself. Make this your cry: "O Lord our God arise, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let all them that hate thee become as the fat of rams." So shall God, through your prayers, haply, establish peace and vindicate justice, and "God, even our own God, shall bless us, and that right early."

II. But I have now a greater reason for your sorrow -- a more disregarded, and yet more dreadful source of woe. If the first time we said it with plaintive voice, we must a second time say it yet more plaintively -- "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night," FOR THE MORALLY SLAIN of the daughter of my people.

The old adage is still true, "One-half of the world knows nothing about how the other half lives." A large proportion of you professing Christians have been respectably brought up; you have never in your lives been the visitants of the dens of infamy, you have never frequented the haunts of

wickedness, and you know but very little of the sins of your fellow creatures. Perhaps it is well that you should remain as ignorant as you are; for, where to be ignorant is to be free from temptation, It would be folly to be wise. But there are others who have been obliged to see the wickedness of their fellows; and a public teacher, especially, is bound not to speak from mere hearsay, but to know from authentic sources what is the spirit of the times. It is our business to look with eagle eye through every part of this land, and see what crime is rampant -- what kind of crime, and what sort of infamy. Ah, my friends, with all the advancement of piety in this land, with all the hopeful signs of better times, with all the sunlight of glory heralding the coming morn, with all the promises and with all our hopes, we are still obliged to bid you weep because sin aboundeth and iniquity is still mighty. Oh, how many of our sons and daughters, of our friends and relatives, are slain by sin! Ye weep over battle-fields, ye shed tears on the plains of Balaklava; there are worse battlefields than there, and worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword.

Ah, weep ye for the drunkenness of this land! How many thousands of our race reel from our sin-palaces into perdition! Oh, if the souls of departed drunkards could be seen at this hour by the Christians of Britain, they would tremble, lift up their hands in sorrow, and begin to weep. My soul might be an everlasting Niobe, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and the destruction brought on them by that one demon, and by that one demon only! I am no enthusiast, I am no total abstainer. -- I do not think the cure of England's drunkenness will come from that quarter. I respect those who thus deny themselves, with a view to the good of others, and should be glad to believe that they accomplish their object. But though I am no total abstainer, I hate drunkenness as much as any man breathing, and have been the means of bringing many poor creatures to relinquish this bestial indulgence. We believe drunkenness to be an awful crime and a horrid sin; we look on all its dreadful effects, and we stand prepared to go to war with it, and to fight side by side with abstainers, even though we may differ from them as to the mode of warfare. Oh! England, how many thousands of thy sons are murdered every year by that accursed devil of drunkenness, that hath such sway over this land!

But there are other crimes too. Alas, for that crime of debauchery! What scenes hath the moon seen every night! Sweetly did she shine last evening; the meadows seemed as if they were silvered with beauty when she shone upon them. But ah! what sins were transacted beneath her pale sway! Oh, God, thou only knowest: our hearts might be sickened, and we might indeed cry for "A lodge in some vast wilderness," had we seen what God beheld when he looked down from the moon-lit sky! Ye tell me that sins of that kind are common in the lower class of society. Alas, I know it; alas, how many a girl hath dashed herself into the river to take away her life, because she could not bear the infamy that was brought upon her! But lay not this to the poor; the infamy and sin of our streets begin not with them. It beginneth with the highest ranks -- with what we call the noblest classes of society. Men that have defiled themselves and others will stand in our senates, and walk among our peers; men whose characters are not reputable -- it is a shame to speak even of the things that are done of them in secret -- are received into the drawing rooms and into the parlors of the highest society, while the poor creature who has been the victim of their passions is hooted and cast away! O Lord God, thou alone knowest the awful ravages that this sin hath made. Thy servant's lips can utter no more than this, he hath gone to the verge of his utterance, he feeleth that he hath no further license in his speech, still he may well cry -- "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" If ye have walked the hospital, if ye have seen the refuges, if ye have talked with the inmates -- and if ye know the gigantic spread of that enormous evil, ye may well sympathize with me when I say, that at the thought of it my spirit is utterly cast down. I feel that I would rather die than live whilst sin thus reigns and iniquity thus spreads.

But are these the only evils? Are these the only demons that are devouring our people? Ah, would to God it were so. Behold, throughout this land, how are men falling by every sin, disguised as it is under the shape of pleasure. Have ye never, as from some distant journey ye have returned to your houses at midnight, seen the multitudes of people who are turning out of casinos, low theatres, and other houses of sin? I do not frequent those places, nor from earliest childhood have I ever trodden those floors, but, from the company that I have seen issuing from these

dens, I could only lift up my hands, and pray God to close such places; they seem to be the gates of hell, and their doors, as they very properly themselves say, "Lead to the pit." Ah, may God be pleased to raise up many who shall warn this city, and bid Christian people by day and night "for the slain of the daughter of our people!" Christians, never leave off weeping for men's sins and infamies. There are sins by day; God's own day, this day is defiled, is broken in pieces and trodden under foot. There are sins every morning committed, and sins each night. If ye could see them ye might be never happy, if ye could walk in the midst of them and behold them with your eyes, if God would give you grace, ye might perpetually weep, for ye would always have cause for sorrow. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

But now I must just throw in something which will more particularly apply to you. Perhaps I have very few here who would indulge in open and known sin; perhaps most of you belong to the good and amiable class who have every kind of virtue, and of whom it must be said, "One thing thou lackest;" My heart never feels so grieved as at the sight of you. How often have I been entertained most courteously and hospitably, as the Lord's servant, in the houses of men and of women whose characters are supremely excellent, who have every virtue that could adorn a Christian, except faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; who might be held up as the very mirrors and patterns to be imitated by others. How has my heart grieved when I have thought of these, still undecided, still godless, prayerless and Christless. I have many of you in this congregation to-day -- I could not put my finger upon one solitary fault in your character, you are scrupulously correct in your morals -- Alas, alas, alas for you, that you should still be dead in trespasses and sins, because you have not been renewed by divine grace! So lovely, and yet without faith; so beautiful, so admirable, and yet not converted. O God, when drunkards die, when swearers perish, when harlots and seducers sink to the fate they have earned, we may well weep for such sinners; but when these who have walked in our midst and have almost been acknowledged as believers, are cast away because they leek the one thing needful, it seems enough to make angels weep. O members of churches, ye may well take up the cry of Jeremiah when ye remember what multitudes of these you have in your

midst -- men who have a name to live and are dead: and others, who though they profess not to be Christians, are almost persuaded to obey their Lord and Master, but are yet not partakers of the divine life of God.

But now I shall want, if I can, to press this pathetic subject a little further upon your minds. In the day when Jeremiah wept this lamentation with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, Jerusalem was in all her mirth and merriment. Jeremiah was a sad man in the midst of a multitude of merry makers; he told them that Jerusalem should be destroyed, that their temple should become a heap, and Nebuchadnezzar should lay it with the ground. They laughed him to scorn; they mocked him. Still the viol and the dance were only to be seen. Do you not picture that brave old man, for he was bravely plaintive, sitting down in the courts of the Temple? And though as yet the pillars were unfallen, and the golden roof was yet unstained, he lifted up his hands and pictured to himself this scene of Jerusalem's Temple burned with fire, her women and her children carried away captive, and her sons given to the sword. And when he pictured this, he did, as it were, in spirit set himself down upon one of the broken pillars of the Temple, and there, in the midst of desolation which was not as yet -- but which faith, the evidence of things not seen, did picture to him -- cry, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." And now, to-day, here are many of you masquers and merry makers in this ball of life, ye are here merry and glad to-day, and ye marvel that I should talk of you as persons for whom we ought to weep. "Weep ye for me!" you say; "I am in health, I am in riches, I am enjoying life; why weep for me? I need none of your sentimental weeping!" Ah, but we weep because we foresee the future. If you could live here always, we might not, perhaps, weep for you; but we, by the eye of faith, look forward to the time when the pillars of heaven must totter, when this earth must shake, when death must give up its prey, when the great white throne must be set in the clouds of heaven, and the thunders and lightnings of Jehovah shall be launched in armies, and the angels of God shall be marshalled in their ranks, to swell the pomp of the grand assize -- we look forward to that hour, and by faith we see you standing before the Judge; we see his eye sternly fixed on you, we hear him read the book; we mark your tottering knees, whilst sentence after sentence of thundering wrath strikes on your appalled ear; we think we see your

blanched countenances; we mark your terror beyond all description, when he cries, "Depart, ye cursed!" We hear your shrieks; we hear you cry, "Rocks hide us; mountains on us fall!" We see the angel with fiery brand pursuing you, we hear your last unutterable shriek of woe as you descend into the pit of hell -- and we ask you if you could see this as we see it, would you wonder that at the thought of your destruction we are prepared to weep? "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep" over you who will not stand in the judgment, but must be driven away like chaff into the unquenchable fire! And by the eye of faith we look further than that; we look into the grim and awful future: our faith looks through the gate of iron bound with adamant; we see the place of the condemned, our ear, opened by faith, hears "The sullen groans, and hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts!" Our eye anointed with heavenly eye salve sees the worm that never dieth, it beholds the fire that never can be quenched, and sees you writhing in the flame! O professors, if ye believed not in the wrath to come, and in hell eternal, I should not wonder that ye were unmoved by such a thought as this. But if ye believe what your Savior said when he declared that he would destroy both body and soul in hell, I must wonder that ye could endure the thought without weeping for your fellow-creatures who are going there. If I saw mine enemy marching into the flames, I would rush between him and the fire and seek to preserve him; and will you see men and women marching on in a mad career of vice and sin, well aware that "the wages of sin is death," and will you not interpose so much as a tear? What! are you more brutal than the beast, more stolid than the stone! It must be so, if the thought of the unutterable torment of hell, doth not draw tears from your eyes and prayer from your hearts. Oh, if to-day some strong archangel could unbolt the gates of hell, and for a solitary second permit the voice of wailing and weeping to come up to our ears; Oh, how should we grieve! Each man would put his hand upon his loins and walk this earth in terror. That shriek might make each hair stand on an end upon our heads, and then make us roll ourselves in the dust for anguish and woe --

"Oh, doleful state of dark despair,  
When God has far removed,  
And fixed their dreadful station where

They must not taste his love."

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for some of you that are going there this day. Remember, again, O Christian, that those for whom we ask you to weep this day are persons who have had great privileges, and consequently, if lost, must expect greater punishment. I do not to-day ask your sympathies for men in foreign lands, I shall not bid you weep for Hottentots or Mahomedans though ye might weep for them, and ye have goodly cause to do so -- but I ask this day your tears for the slain of the daughter of your own people. Oh! what multitudes of heathens we have in all our places of worship! what multitudes of unconverted persons in all the pews of the places where we usually assemble to worship God; and I may add, what hundreds we have here who are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world. And these are not like Hottentots who have not heard the Word: they have heard it, and they have rejected it. Many of you, when you die, cannot plead, as an excuse, that you did not know your duty; you heard it plainly preached to you, you heard it in every corner of the streets, you had the book of God in your houses. You cannot say that you did not know what you must do to be saved. You read the Bible, you understand salvation -- many of you are deeply taught in the theory of salvation; when ye perish, your blood must be on your own head, and the Master may well cry over you to-day, "Woe unto thee, Bethsaida, woe unto thee Chorazin! For if the mighty works that were done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." I wonder at myself this day; I hate my eyes, I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets now, because they will not weep as I desire, over poor souls who are perishing! How many have I among you whom I love and who love me! We are no strangers to one another, we could not live at a distance from each other, our hearts have been joined together long and firmly. Ye have stood by me in the hour of tribulation, ye have listened to the Word, ye have been pleased with it; I bear you witness that if you could pluck out your eyes for me you would do it. And yet I know there are many of you true lovers of God's Word in appearance, and certainly great lovers of God's servant, but alas for you, that you should still be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Alas, my sister, I can weep for thee! Woe, woe, my brother, I can



weep for thee! we have met together in God's house, we have prayed together, and yet we must be sundered. Shepherd, some of thy flock will perish! O sheep of my pasture, people of my care, must I have that horrid thought upon me, that I must lose you? Must we, at the day of judgment, say farewell for ever? Must I bear my witness against you? I shall be honest; I have dealt faithfully with your souls. God is my witness, I have often preached in weakness; often have I had to groan before him that I have not preached as I could desire; but I have never preached insincerely. Nobody will ever dare to accuse me of dishonesty in this respect; not one of your smiles have I ever courted. I have never dreaded your frowns; I have been in weariness oftentimes, when I should have rested, preaching God's Word. But what of that? That were nothing; only this much, there is some responsibility resting upon you. And remember, that to perish under the sound of the Gospel is to perish more terribly than anywhere else. But, my hearers, must that be your lot? And must I be witness against you in the day of judgment? I pray God it may not be so; I beseech the Master, that he may spare us each such a fate as that.

And now, dear friends I have one word to add before I leave this point. Some of you need not look round on this congregation to find cause for weeping. My pious brethren and sisters, you have cause enough to weep in your own families. Ah, mother! I know thy griefs; thou hast had cause to cry to God with weeping eyes for many a mournful hour, because of thy son; thine offspring hath turned against thee; and he that came forth of thee has despised his mother's God. Father, thou hast carefully brought up thy daughter; thou has nourished her when she was young, and taken her fondly in thine arms; she was the delight of thy life, yet she hath sinned against thee and against God. Many of you have sons and daughters that you often mention in your prayers, but never with hope. You have often thought that God has said of your son, "Ephraim is given to idols; let him alone;" the child of your affection has become an adder stinging your heart! Oh, then weep, I beseech you. Parents, do not leave off weeping for your children; do not become hardened towards them, sinners though they be; it may be that God may yet bring them to himself. It was but last church meeting that we received into our communion a young friend who was educated and brought up by a pious minister in Colchester. She had been there many years, and when she came away to

London the minister said to her, "Now, my girl, I have prayed for you hundreds of times, and I have done all I can with you; your heart is as hard as a stone; I must leave you with God!" That broke her heart; she is now converted to Jesus. How many sons and daughters have made their parents feel the same! "There," they have said, "I must leave you, I cannot do more." But in saying that, they have not meant that they would leave them unwept for, but they have thought within themselves, that if they were damned, they would follow them weeping to the very gates of hell, if by tears they could decoy them into heaven. How can a man be a Christian, and not love his offspring? How can a man be a believer in Jesus Christ, and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the kingdom, towards his children? I have heard of ministers of a certain sect, and professors of a certain class, who have despised family prayer, who have laughed at family godliness and thought nothing of it. I cannot understand how the men can know as much as they do about the gospel, and yet have so little of the spirit of it. I pray God, deliver you and deliver me from anything like that. No, it is our business to train up our children in the fear of the Lord; and though we cannot give them grace, it is ours to pray to the God who can give it; and in answer to our many supplications, he will not turn us away, but he will be pleased to take notice of our prayers and to regard our sighs.

And now, Christian mourners, I have given you work enough; may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do it. Let me exhort you, yet once again, to weep. Do you need a copy? Behold your Master; he has come to the brow of the hill; he sees Jerusalem lying on the hill opposite to him, he looks down upon it, as he sees it there -- beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth -- instead of feeling the rapture of some artist who surveys the ramparts of a strong city, and marks the position of some magnificent tower in the midst of glorious scenery, he bursts out and he cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem I how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Go ye now your ways, and as ye stand on any of the hills around, and beheld this Behemoth city! lying in the valley, say; "O London, London! how great thy guilt. Oh! that the Master would gather thee under his wing, and make thee his city, the joy of the whole earth! O London, London! full of privileges, and full of

sin, exalted to heaven by the gospel, thou shalt be cast down to hell by thy rejection of it!" And then, when ye have wept over London, go and weep over the street in which you live, as you see the sabbath broken, and God's laws trampled upon, and men's bodies profaned -- go ye and weep! Weep, for the court in which you live in your humble poverty, weep for the square in which you live in your magnificent wealth; weep for the humbler street in which you live in competence, weep for your neighbors and your friends, lest any of them, having lived godless, may die godless! Then go to your house, weep for your family, for your servants, for your husband, for your wife, for your children. Weep, weep, cease not weeping, till God hath renewed them by his Spirit. And if you have any friends with whom you sinned in your past life, be earnest for their salvation. George Whitfield said there were many young men with whom he played at cards, in his lifetime, and spent hours in wasting his time when he ought to have been about other business; and when he was converted, his first thought was, "I must by God's grace have these converted too." And he never rested, till he could say, that he did not know of one of them, a companion of his guilt, who was not now a companion with him in the tribulation of the gospel. Oh, let it be so with you! Nor let your exertions end in tears; mere weeping will do nothing without action. Get you on your feet, ye that have voices and might, go forth and preach the gospel, preach it in every street and lane of this huge city; ye that have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor, and sick, and needy, and dying, the uneducated, the unenlightened; ye that have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness; ye that have power in prayer, go forth and pray, ye that can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity -- every one to his post, every one of you to your gun in this day of battle, now for God and for his truth; for God and for the right; let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under his banner! O God, without whom all our exertions are vain, come now and stir up thy church to greater diligence and more affectionate earnestness, that we may not have in future such cause to weep as we have this day! Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus; he hath died, look to him and live, and God the Almighty bless you! To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever.

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## **Indwelling Sin**

Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile. - Job 40:3-4

Surely, if any man had a right to say, I am not vile, it was Job; for, according to the testimony of God himself, he was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil." Yet we find even this eminent saint, when by his nearness to God he had received light enough to discover his own condition, exclaiming, "Behold I am vile." We are sure that what Job was forced to say, we may each of us assent unto, whether we be God's children or not; and if we be partakers of divine grace, it becomes a subject of great consideration for us, since even we, although we be regenerated, must exclaim, each one for himself, "Behold, I am vile."

It is a doctrine, as I believe, taught us in Holy Writ, that when a man is saved by divine grace, he is not wholly cleansed from the corruption of his heart. When we believe in Jesus Christ all our sins are pardoned; yet the power of sin, albeit that it is weakened and kept under by the dominion of the new-born nature which God doth infuse into our souls, doth not cease, but still tarrieth in us, and will do so to our dying day. It is a doctrine held by all the orthodox, that there dwelleth still in the regenerate, the lusts of the flesh, and that there doth still remain in the hearts of those who are converted by God's mercy, the evil of carnal nature. I have found it very difficult to distinguish, in experimental matters, concerning sin. It is usual with many writers, especially with hymn writers, to confound the two natures of a Christian. Now, I hold that there is in every Christian two natures, as distinct as were the two natures of the God-Man Christ Jesus. There is one nature which cannot

sin, because it is born of God - a spiritual nature, coming directly from heaven, as pure and as perfect as God himself, who is the author of it; and there is also in man that ancient nature which, by the fall of Adam, hath become altogether vile, corrupt, sinful, and devilish. There remains in the heart of the Christian a nature which cannot do that which is right, any more than it could before regeneration, and which is as evil as it was before the new birth - as sinful, as altogether hostile to God's laws, as ever it was - a nature which, as I said before, is curbed and kept under by the new nature in a great measure, but which is not removed and never will be until this tabernacle of our flesh is broken down, and we soar into that land into which there shall never enter anything that defileth.

It will be my business this morning, to say something of that evil nature which still abides in the righteous. That is does remain, I shall first attempt to prove; and the other points I will suggest to you as we proceed.

I. The FACT, the great and terrible fact, that **EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE IN THEM EVIL NATURES**. Job said, "Behold, I am vile." He did not always know it. All through the long controversy he had declared himself to be just and upright: he had said, "My righteousness I will hold fast, and I will not let it go;" and notwithstanding he did scrape his body with a potsherd, and his friends did vex his mind with the most bitter revilings, yet he still held fast his integrity, and would not confess his sin; but when God came to plead with him, he had no sooner listened to the voice of God in the whirlwind, and heard the question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" than at once he put his finger on his lips, and would not answer God, but simply said, "Behold, I am vile." Possibly some may say, that Job was an exception to the rule; and they will tell us, that other saints had not in them such a reason for humiliation; but we remind them of David, and we bid them read the 51st penitential Psalm, where we find him declaring that he was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him; confessing, that he had sin within him. In many other places in the Psalms, David doth continually acknowledge and confess, that he is not perfectly rid of sin; that still the evil viper doth twist itself around his heart. Turn also, if you please, to Isaiah. There you have him, in one of his visions, saying that he was a man of unclean lips, and that he dwelt among a people of unclean lips. But more especially,

under the gospel dispensation, you find Paul, in that memorable chapter we have been reading, declaring, that he found in "his members a law warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin." Yea, we hear that remarkable exclamation of struggling desire and intense agony, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Do you expect to find yourselves better saints than Job? do you imagine that the confession which befitted the mouth of David is too mean for you? are ye so proud, that ye will not exclaim with Isaiah, "I also am a man of unclean lips?" Or rather, have ye progressed so far in pride, that ye dare to exalt yourselves above the laborious Apostle Paul, and to hope that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwelleth any good thing? If ye do think yourselves to be perfectly pure from sin, hear ye the word of God: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar."

But scarcely do I need to prove this, beloved; for all of you, I am sure, who know anything about the experience of a living child of God, have found that in your best and happiest moments sin still dwells in you; that when you would serve your God the best, sin frequently works in you the most furiously. There have been many saints of God who have abstained, for a time, from doing anything they have known to be sin; but still there has not been one who has been inwardly perfect. If a being were perfect, the angels would come down in ten minutes, and carry him off to heaven, for he would be ripe for it as soon as he had attained perfection. I have found in talking to men who have said a good deal about perfection, that after all they really did not believe in any such thing. They have taken with the word and attached a different meaning to it, and either then proved a doctrine which we all knew before, or else supposed a perfection so absurd and worthless, that I would not give three half-pence for it if I might have it. In many of them it is a fault, I believe, of their brains, rather than their hearts; and as John Berridge says, "God will wash their brains before they get to heaven." But why should I stay to prove this, when you have daily proofs of it yourselves? how many times do you feel that corruption is still within you? Mark how easily you are surprised into sin. You rise in the morning, and dedicate yourselves by fervent prayer to God, thinking what a happy day you have before you. Scarce have you

uttered your prayer, when something comes to ruffle your spirit, your good resolutions are cast to the winds, and you say, "This day, which I thought would be such a happy one, has suffered, a terrific inroad; I cannot live to God as I would." Perhaps you have thought, "I will go up stairs, and ask my God to keep me." Well, you were in the main kept by the power of God, but on a sudden something came; an evil temper on a sudden surprised you; your heart was taken by storm, when you were not expecting an attack; the doors were broken open, and some unholy expression came forth from your lips, and down you went again on your knees in private, exclaiming, "Lord, I am vile." I have found out that I have a something in my heart, which, when I have bolted my doors, and think all is safe, creeps forth and undoes every bolt, and lets in the sin. Besides, beloved, you will find in your heart, even when you are not surprised into sin, such an awful tendency to evil, that it is as much as you can do to keep it in check, and to say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Nay, you will find it more than you can do, unless a divine power is with you, and preventing grace restrains your passions and prevents you from indulging your inbred lusts. Ah, soldiers of Jesus, ye have felt - I know ye have felt the uprisings of corruption, for ye know the Lord in sincerity and in truth; and ye dare not, unless you would make yourselves liars to your own hearts, hope to be in this world perfectly free from sin.

Having stated that fact, I must just make a remark upon it, and leave it. How wrong it is of any of us, from the fact of our possessing evil hearts, to excuse our sins. I have known some persons, who profess to be Christians, speak very lightly of sin. There was corruption still remaining, and therefore they said they could not help it. Such persons have no visible part nor lot in God's covenant. The truly loving child of God, though he knows sin is there, hates that sin; it is a pain and misery to him, and he never makes the corruption of his heart as an excuse for the corruption of his life; he never pleads the evil of his nature, as an apology for the evil of his conduct. If any man can, in the least degree, clear himself from the conviction of his own conscience, on account of his daily failings, by pleading the evil of his heart, he is not one of the broken-hearted children of God; he is not one of the tried servants of the Lord, for they groan concerning sin, and carry it to God's throne; they know it is

in them - they do not, therefore, leave it, but seek with all their minds to keep it down, In order that it may not rise and carry them away. Mind that, unless you should make what I say a cloak to your licentiousness, and a covering to your guilt.

II. Thus we have mentioned the fact, that the best of men have sin still remaining in them. Now, I will tell you what are the doings of this sin. What does the sin which still remains in our hearts do? I answer -

1. Experience will tell you that this sin exerts a checking power upon every good thing. You have felt, when you would do good, that evil was present with you. Just like the chariot, which might go swiftly down the hill, you have had a clog put upon your wheels; or, like the bird that would mount towards heaven, you have found your sins, like the wires of a cage, preventing your soaring towards the Most High. You have bent your knee in prayer, but corruption has distracted your thoughts. You have attempted to sin, but you have felt "hosannah's languish on your tongue." Some insinuation of Satan has taken fire, like a spark in tinder, and well nigh smothered your soul with its abominable smoke. You would run in your holy duties with all alacrity; but the sin that doth so easily beset you entangles your feet, and when you would be nearing the goal, it trips you up, and down you fall, to your own dishonor and pain. You will find indwelling sin frequently retarding you the most, when you are most earnest. When you desire to be most alive to God - you will generally find sin most alive to repel you. The "evil heart of unbelief" puts itself straight in the road, and saith, "Thou shalt not come this way;" and when the souls says, "I will serve God - I will worship in his temple," the evil heart saith, "Get thee to Dan and Beersheba, and bow thyself before false gods, but thou shalt not approach Jerusalem; I will not suffer thee to behold the face of the Most High." You have often felt this to be the case: a cold hand has been placed upon your hot spirit when you have been full of devotion and prayer. And when you have had the wings of the dove, and thought you could flee away and be at rest, a clog has been put upon your feet, so that you could not mount. Now, that is one of the effects of indwelling sin.

2. But indwelling sin does more than that: it not only prevents us from going forward, but at times even assails us, as well as seeks to obstruct us.



It is not merely that I fight with indwelling sin; it is indwelling sin that sometimes makes an assault on me. You will notice, the Apostle says, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now, this proves that he was not attacking his sin, but that this sin was attacking him. I do not seek to be delivered from a man against whom I lead the attack: but it is the man who is opposing from whom I seek to be delivered. And so sometimes the sin that dwelleth in believers flies at us, like some foul tiger of the woods, or some demon, jealous of the celestial spirit within us. The evil nature riseth up: it doth not only seek to stop us in the way, but, like Amalek, it labours to destroy us and cut us off utterly. Did you ever feel, beloved, the attacks of inbred sin? It may be, you have not: but if not, depend upon it you will. Before you get all the way to heaven, you will be attacked by sin. It will not be simply your driving out the Canaanite; but the Canaanite, with chariot of iron, will attempt to overcome you, to drive you out, to kill your spiritual nature, damp the flame of your piety, and crush the new life which God has implanted in you.

3. The evil heart which still remaineth in the Christian, doth always, when it is not attacking or obstructing, still reign and dwell within him. My heart is just as bad when no evil emanates from it, as when it is all over vileness in its external developments. A volcano is ever a volcano; even when it sleeps, trust it not. A lion is a lion, even though he play like a kid; and a serpent, is a serpent, even though you may stroke it while for a season it slumbers; there is still a venom in its sting when its azure scales invite the eye. My heart, even though for an hour, it may not have had an evil thought, is still evil. If it were possible that I could live for days without a single temptation from my own heart to sin, it would be still just as evil as it was before; and it is always either displaying its vileness, or else preparing for another display. It is either loading its cannon to shoot against us, or else it is positively at warfare with us. You may rest assured that the heart is never other than it originally was; the evil nature is still evil; and when there is no blaze, it is heaping up the wood, wherewith it is to blaze another day. It is gathering up from my joys, from my devotions, from my holiness, and from all I do, some materials to attack me at some future period. The evil nature is only evil, and that continually, without the slightest mitigation or element of good. The new

nature must always wrestle and fight with it; and when the two natures are not wrestling and fighting, there is no truce between them. When they are not in conflict, still they are foes. We must not trust our heart at any time; even when it speaks most fair, we must call it liar; and when it pretends to the most good, still we must remember its nature, for it is evil, and that continually.

The doings of indwelling sin I will not mention at length: but it is sufficient to let you recognize some of your own experience, that you may see that it is in keeping with that of the children of God, for that you may be as perfect as Job, and yet say, "Behold, I am vile."

III. Having mentioned the doings of indwelling sin, allow me to mention, in the third place, THE DANGER WE ARE UNDER FROM SUCH EVIL HEARTS. There are few people who think what a solemn thing it is to be a Christian. I guess there is not a believer in the world who knows what a miracle it is to be kept a believer. We little think the miracles that are working all around us. We see the flowers grow; but we do not think of the wondrous power that gives them life. We see the stars shine; but how seldom do we think of the hand that moves them. The sun gladdens us with his light; yet we little think of the miracles which God works to feed that sun with fuel, or to gird him like a giant to run his course. And we see Christians walking in integrity and holiness; but how little do we suspect what a mass of miracles a Christian is. There are as great a number of miracles expended on a Christian every day, as he hath hairs on his head. A Christian is a perpetual miracle. Every hour that I am preserved from sinning, is an hour of as divine a might as that which saw a new-born world swathed in its darkness, and heard "the morning stars sing for joy." Did ye never think how great is the danger to which a Christian is exposed from his indwelling sin? Come let me tell you.

One danger to which we are exposed from indwelling sin arises from the fact that sin is within us, and therefore it has a great power over us. If a captain has a city, he may for a long preserve it from the constant attacks of enemies without. He may have walls so strong, and gates so well secured, that he may laugh at all the attacks of besiegers; and their sallies may have no more effect upon his walls than sallies of wit. But if there should happen to be a traitor inside the gates - if there should be one who

hath charge of the keys, and who could unlock every door and let in the enemy, how is the toil of the commander doubled! for he hath not merely to guard against foes without, but against foes within. And here is the danger of the Christian. I could fight the devil; I could overcome every sin that ever tempted me, if it were not that I had an enemy within. Those Diabolians within do more service to Satan than all the Diabolians without. As Bunyan says in his Holy War, the enemy tried to get some of his friends within the City of Mansoul, and he found his darlings inside the walls did him far more good than all those without. Ah! Christians, thou couldst laugh at thine enemy, if thou hadst not thine evil heart within; but remember, thine heart keeps the keys, because out of it are the issues of life. And sin is there. The worst thing thou has to fear is the treachery of thine own heart.

And moreover, Christian, remember how many backers thy evil nature has. As for thy gracious life, it finds few friends beneath the sky; but thine original sin hath allies in every quarter. It looks down to hell, and it finds them there, demons ready to let slip the dogs of hell upon thy soul. It looks out into the world, and sees "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." It looks around, and it seeth all kinds of men, seeking, if it be possible, to lead the Christian from his steadfastness. It looks into the Church, and it finds all manner of false doctrine ready to inflame lust, and guide the soul from the sincerity of its faith. It looks to the body, and it finds head, and hand, and foot, and all other members ready to be subservient to sin. I could overcome my evil heart if it had not such a mighty host of allies, but it makes my position doubly dangerous, to have foes without the gates, in league and amity with a foe more vile within.

And I would have thee recollect, Christian, one more thing, and that is, that this evil nature of thine is very strong and very powerful - stronger than the new nature, if the new nature were not sustained by Divine power. How old is my old nature? "It is as old as myself," the aged saint may say, "and has become all the stronger from its age." There is one thing which seldom gets weaker through old age - that is, old Adam; he is as strong in his old age as he is in his young age, just as able to lead us astray when our head is covered with grey hairs, as he was in our youth.

We have heard it said that growing in grace will make our corruptions less mighty; but I have seen many of God's aged saints, and asked them the question, and they have said, "No," their lusts have been essentially as strong, when they have been many years in their Master's service, as they were at first, although more subdued by the new principle within. So far from becoming weaker, it is my firm belief that sin increases in power. A person who is deceitful becomes more deceitful by practising deceit. So with our heart. It did inveigle us at first, and easily entrapped us, but having learnt a thousand snares, it doth mislead us now perhaps more easily than before; and although our spiritual nature has been more fully developed, and grown in grace, yet still the old nature hath lost little of its energy. I do not know that the house of Saul waxeth weaker and weaker in our hearts; I know that the house of David waxeth stronger; but I do not know that my heart gets less vile, or that my corruptions become less strong. I believe that if I should ever say my corruptions are all dead, I should hear a voice, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson;" or, "The Philistines be in thee, Samson." Notwithstanding all former victories, and all the heaps upon heaps of sins I may have slain, I should yet be overcome if Almighty mercy did not preserve me. Christian! mind thy danger! There is not a man in battle so much in danger from the shot, as thou art from thine own sin. Thou carriest in thy soul an infamous traitor, even when he speaks thee fair he is not to be trusted; thou hast in thy heart a slumbering volcano, but a volcano of such terrific force that it may shake thy whole nature yet; and unless thou art circumspect, and art kept by the power of God, thou hast a heart which may lead thee into sins the most diabolical, and crimes the most infamous. Take care, O take care, ye Christians! If there were no devil to tempt you, and no world to lead you astray, you would have need to take care of your own hearts. Look, therefore, at home. Your worst foes are the foes of your own households. "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," and out of it death may issue too, - death which would damn thee if sovereign mercy did not prevent. God grant, my brethren, that we may learn our corruptions in an easy way, and not discover them by their breaking out into open sin.

IV. And now I come to the fourth point, which is, THE DISCOVERY OF OUR CORRUPTION. Job said, "Behold, I am vile." That word "behold"

implies that he was astonished. The discovery was unexpected. There are special times with the Lord's people, when they learn by experience that they are vile. They heard the minister assert the power of inbred lust, but perhaps they shook their heads and said, "I cannot go so far as that;" but after a little while they found, by some clearer light from heaven, that it was a truth after all - "Behold, I am vile." I remember preaching a little while ago from some deep text concerning the desperate evil of the heart; and one of my most esteemed friends said, "Well, I have not discovered that," and I thought within myself, what a blessing, brother! I wish I had not; for it is a most fearful experience to pass through: I dare say there are many here now who say "I trust in no righteousness of my own. I trust in nothing in the world but the blood of Christ; but still I have not discovered the vileness of my heart in the way you have mentioned." Perhaps not, brother; but it may not be many years before you are made to learn it. You may be of a peculiar temperament. God has preserved from all contact with temptations which would have revealed your corruptions, or perhaps he has been pleased, as a reward of his grace for deeds which you have been enabled to do for him, to give you a peaceable life, so that you have not been often tossed about by the tumults of your own soul; but nevertheless, let me tell you, that you must expect to find, in the inmost depths of your heart, a lower depth still. God comfort you, and enable you, when you come out of the furnace, to lie lower than ever at the footstool of divine mercy! I believe we generally find out most of our failings when we have the greatest access to God. Job never had such a discovery of God as he had at this time. God spoke to him in the whirlwind, and then Job said, "I am vile." It is not so much when we are desponding, or unbelieving, that we learn our vileness; we do find out something of it then, but not all. It is when by God's grace we are helped to climb the mount, when we come near to God, and when God reveals himself to us, that we feel that we are not pure in his sight. We get some gleams of his high majesty; we see the brightness of his skirts, "dark - with insufferable light;" and after having been dazzled by the sight, there comes a fall: as if, smitten by the fiery light of the sun, the eagle should fall from his lofty heights, even to the ground. So with the believer. He soars up to God, and on a sudden down he comes. "Behold," he says, "I am vile. I had never known this if I had not seen God. Behold, I have seen him; and now I discover how vile I am." Nothing shows blackness like

exposure to light. If I would see the blackness of my own character, I must put it side by side with spotless purity; and when the Lord is pleased to give us some special vision of himself, some sweet intercourse with his own blessed person, then it is that the soul learns, as it never knew before, with an agony perhaps which it never felt, even when at first convinced of sin, "Behold, I am vile." God is pleased to do this. Lest we should be "exalted above measure, by the abundance of the revelation," he sends us this "thorn in the flesh," to let us see ourselves after we have seen him.

There are many men who never know much of their vileness till after the blood of Christ has been sprinkled on their consciences, or even till they have been many years God's children. I met, some time ago, with the case of a Christian, who was positively pardoned before he had a strong sense of sin. "I did not," he said, "feel my vileness, until I heard a voice, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions;' and after that, I thought how black I had been. I did not think of my filthiness," said he, "till after I saw that I had been washed." I think there are many of God's people, who, though they had some notion of their blackness before they came to Christ, never knew how thoroughly vile they were till afterwards. They thought then, "How great must have been my sin to need such a Saviour! how desperate my filth, to require such a washing! how awful my guilt, to need such an atonement as the blood of Christ." You may rest assured, that the more you know of God and of Christ, the more you will know of yourself; and you will be obliged to say, as you did before, "Behold, I am vile;" vile in an extraordinary sense, even as you never guessed or fancied until now. "Behold, I am vile!" "I am vile, indeed!" No doubt many of you will still think, that what I say concerning your evil nature is not true, and you may, perhaps, imagine that grace has cut your evil nature up; but you know little about spiritual life, if you suppose that. It will not be long before you find the old Adam as strong in you as ever; here will be a war carried on in your heart to your dying day, in which grace shall prevail, but not without sighs, and groans, and agonies, and wrestlings, and a daily death.

V. Here is the way in which God discovers our vileness to ourselves. Now, if it be true that we are still vile, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES? And here let

me solemnly speak to such of you as are heirs of eternal life, desiring as your brother in Christ Jesus to urge you to some duties which are most necessary, on account of the continual filthiness of your heart.

In the first place, if your hearts be still vile, and there be still an evil nature in you, how wrong it is to suppose that all your work is done. There is one thing concerning which I have much reason to complain of some of you. Before your baptism you were extremely earnest; you were always attending the means of grace, and I always saw you here; but there are some, some even now in this place, who, as soon as they had crossed that rubicon, began from that moment to decrease in zeal, thinking that the work was over. I tell you solemnly, that I know there are some of you who were prayerful, careful, devout, living close and near to your God, until you joined the church; but from that time forth, you have gradually declined. Now, it really appears to me a matter of doubt whether such persons are Christians. I tell you I have very grave doubts of the sincerity of some of you. If I see a man less earnest after baptism, I think he had no right to be baptized; for if he had had a proper sense of the value of that ordinance, and had been rightly dedicated to God, he would not have turned back to the ways of the world. I am grieved, when I see one or two who once walked very consistently with us, beginning to slide away. I have no fault to find with the great majority of you, as to your firm adherence to God's word. I bless God, that for the space of two years and more you have held firm and fast by God. I have not seen you absent from the house of prayer, nor do I think your zeal has flagged; but there are some few who have been tempted by the world, who have been led astray by Satan, or who, by some change in their circumstances, or some removal to a distance, have become cold, and not diligent in the work of the Lord. There are some of my hearers who are not as earnest as they once were. My dear friends, if you know the vileness of your hearts, you would see the necessity of being as earnest now as ever you were. Oh! if, when you were converted, your old nature were cut up, there would be no need of watchfulness now. If all your lusts were entirely gone, and all the strength of corruption dead within you, there would be no need of perseverance; but it is just because ye have evil hearts, that I bid you be just as earnest as ever you were, to stir up the gift of God which is in you, and look as well to yourselves as ever you did. Fancy not the battle is

over, man; it is but the first trump, summoning to the warfare. The trump has ceased, and thou thinkest the battle is over; I tell thee, nay, the fight has but now begun; the hosts are only just led forth, and thou hast newly put on thine harness; thou hast conflicts yet to come. Be thou earnest, or else that first love of thine shall die, and thou shalt yet "go out from us, proving that thou wast not of us." Take care, my dear friends, of backsliding; it is the easiest thing in the world, and yet the most dangerous thing in the world. Take care of giving up your first zeal; beware of cooling in the least degree. Ye were hot and earnest once; be hot and earnest still, and let the fire which once burnt within you still animate you. Be ye still men of might and vigour, men who serve their God with diligence and zeal.

Again, if your evil nature is still within you, how watchful you ought to be! The devil never sleeps; your evil nature never sleeps; you ought never to sleep. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." These are Jesus Christ's words, and there is nothing needs repetition half so much as that word "watch." We can do almost anything better than watch; for watching is very wearisome work, especially when we have sleepy souls to watch with. Watching is very fatiguing work. There is little open honor got by it, and therefore we do not have the hope of renown to cheer us up. Watching is a work that few of us, I am afraid, rightly perform; but if the Almighty had not watched over you, the devil would have carried you away long ago. Dear friends, I bid you watch constantly. When the adjoining house is on fire, how speedily do persons rise from their beds, and if they have combustibles, move them from the premises, and watch, lest their house also should become a prey to the devouring element! You have corruption in your heart: watch for the first spark, lest it set your soul on fire. "Let us not sleep as do others." You might sleep over the crater of a volcano, if you liked; you might sleep with your head before the cannon's mouth; you might, if you pleased, sleep in the midst of an earthquake, or in a pest-house; but I beseech you, do not sleep while you have evil hearts. Watch your hearts; you may think they are very good, but they will be your ruin if grace prevent not. Watch daily; watch perpetually; guard yourselves, lest you sin. Above all, my dear brethren, if our hearts be, indeed, still full of vileness, how necessary it is that we should still exhibit faith in God. If I must trust my God when I first set



out, because of the difficulties in the way, if those difficulties be not diminished, I ought to trust God just as much as I did before. Oh! beloved, yield your hearts to God. Do not become self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency is Satan's net, wherein he catcheth men, like poor silly fish, and doth destroy them. Be not self-sufficient. Think yourselves nothing, for ye are nothing, and live by God's help. The way to grow strong in Christ is to become weak in yourself. God poureth no power into man's heart till man's power is all poured out. Live, then, daily, a life of dependence on the grace of God. Do not set thyself up as if thou wast an independent gentleman; do not start in thine own concerns as if thou couldst do all things thyself; but live always trusting in God. Thou has as much need to trust him now as ever thou hadst; for, mark thee, although thou wouldst have been damned without Christ, at first, thou wilt be damned without Christ now, unless he still keeps thee, for thou has as evil a nature now as thou hadst then.

Dearly beloved, I have just one word to say, not to the saints, but to the ungodly - one cheering word, sinner, poor lost sinner! You think you must not come to God because you are vile. Now, let me tell you, that there is not a saint in this place but is vile too. If Job, and Isaiah, and Paul, were all obliged to say, "I am vile," oh, poor sinner, wilt thou be ashamed to join the confession, and say, "I am vile," too? If I come to God this night in prayer, when I am on my knees by my bedside, I shall have to come to God as a sinner, vile and full of sin. My brother sinner! dost thou want to have any better confession than that? Thou wantest to be better, dost thou? Why, saints in themselves are no better. If divine grace does not eradicate all sin in the believer, how dost thou hope to do it thyself? and if God loves his people, while they are yet vile, dost thou think thy vileness will prevent his loving thee? Nay, vile sinner, come to Jesus! vilest of the vile! Believe on Jesus, thou off-cast of the world's society, thou who art the dung and dross of the streets, I bid thee come to Christ. Christ bids thee believe on him.

"Not the righteous, not the righteous,  
Sinners, Jesus came to save."

Come now; say, "Lord, I am vile; give me faith. Christ died for sinners; I am a sinner. Lord Jesus, sprinkle thy blood on me." I tell thee, sinner,

from God, if thou wilt confess thy sin, thou shalt find pardon. If now with all thy heart thou wilt say, "I am vile; wash me;" thou shalt be washed now. If the Holy Spirit shall enable thee to say with thine heart now, "Lord, I am sinful -

'Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.'"

Thou shalt go out of this place with all thy sins pardoned; and though thou comest in here with every sin that man hath ever committed on thy head, thou shalt go out as innocent, yea, more innocent than the newborn babe. Though thou comest in here all over sin, thou shalt go out with a robe of righteousness, white as angels are, as pure as God himself, so far as justification is concerned. For "now," mark it "now is the accepted time," if thou believest on him who justifieth the ungodly. Oh! may the Holy Spirit give thee faith that thou mayest be saved now, for then thou wilt be saved for ever! may God add his blessing to this feeble discourse for his name's sake!

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# **Inexcusable Irreverence And Ingratitude**

They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful. - Romans 1:20-21

This first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a dreadful portion of the Word of God. I should hardly like to read it all through aloud; it is not intended to be so used. Read it at home, and be startled at the awful vices of the Gentile world. Unmentionable crimes were the common pleasures of those wicked ages; but the chapter is also a striking picture of heathenism at the present time. After a missionary had gone into a certain part of Hindostan, and had given away New Testaments, a Hindoo waited upon him, and asked him this question: "Did you not write that first chapter in the Epistle to the Romans after you came here?" "No," replied the missionary, "I did not write it at all; it has been there nearly two thousand years." The Hindoo said, "Well, if it has not been written since you came here, all I can say is, that it might have been so written, for it is a fearfully true description of the sin of India." It is also much more true, even of London, than some of us would like to know. Even here are committed those vices, the very mention of which would make the cheek of modesty to crimson. However, I am not going to talk about Hindoos; they are a long way off. I am not going to speak about the ancient Romans; they lived a couple of thousand years ago. I am going to speak about ourselves, and about some persons here whom my text admirably fits. I fear that I am speaking to some who are "without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

I. The first charge against those who are mentioned in my text is, WANT OF REVERENCE. "They knew God," but "they glorified him not as God." They knew that there was a God; they never denied his existence; but they had no reverence for his name, they did not render him the homage to which he is entitled, they did not glorify him as God.

Of many this is still true in this form, they never think of God. they go from year to year without any practical thought of God. Not only is he not in their words, but he is not in their thoughts. As the Psalmist puts it, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not at all in his thoughts." The marginal reading is very expressive: "All his thoughts are, There is no God." Whether there is a God, or not, makes no practical difference to the wicked; they have so little esteem for him that, perhaps, if we could prove that there were no God, they would feel easier in their conscience. There must be something very wrong with you when you would rather that there were no God. "Well," says one, "I do not care much whether there is a God or not; I am an agnostic. "Oh!" I said, "that is a Greek word, is it not? And the equivalent Latin word is 'Ignoramus'." Somehow, he did not like the Latin nearly as much as the Greek. Oh, dear friends, I could not bear to be an "ignoramus" or an "agnostic" about God! I must have a God; I cannot do without him. He is to me as necessary as food to my body, and air to my lungs. The sad thing is, that many, who believe that there is a God, yet glorify him not as God, for they do not even give him a thought. I appeal to some here, whether that is not true. You go from the beginning of the week to the end of it without reflecting upon God at all. You could do as well without God as with him. Is not that the case? And must there not be something very terrible in the condition of your heart when, as a creature, you can do without a thought of your Creator, when he that has nourished you, and brought you up, is nothing to you, one of whom you never think?

These people, further, have no right conceptions of God. The true conception of God is that he is all in all. If God is anything, we ought to make him everything; you cannot put God in the second place. He is Almighty, All-wise, All-gracious, knowing everything, being in every place, constantly present, the emanations of his power found in every part of the universe. God is infinitely glorious; and unless we treat him as such, we have not treated him as he ought to be treated. If there be a king, and he is set to open the door or do menial work, he is not honoured as a king should be. Shall the great God be made a lackey for our lusts? Shall we put God aside, and say to him, "When I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee: when I have more money, I will attend to religion," or, "When I can be religious, and not lose anything by it, then I

will seek thee"? Dost thou treat God so?" Oh, beware, this is high treason against the King of kings! Wrong ideas of God, grovelling thoughts of God, come under the censure of the text, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

Again, dear friends, there are some who think of God a little, but they never offer him any humble, spiritual worship. Do not imagine that God can be worshipped by anything which is merely mechanical or external, but which is from the heart. A strange god must that god be who is pleased with what some men call worship. I have been into many a Romish church, and seen upon the altar paper flowers that would have been a disgrace to a tap-room; and I have said, "Is God pleased with this kind of thing?" Then I have been into a better building, and I have seen crucifixes and altars adorned like a fine lapidary's shop; and I have said to myself, "They might adorn a bride; but God cares not for jewels." Is your conception of God that he desires your gold and your silver, and your brass and your fine linen, and all these adornments? Thou thinkest that he is such an one as thyself. Surely, thou hast poor conceptions of God. When the organ peals out its melodious tones, but the heart is not in the singing, dost thou think that God has ears like a man, that can be tickled with sweet sounds? Why hast thou brought him down to thy level? He is spiritual; the music that delights him is the love of a true heart, the prayer of an anxious spirit. He has better music than all your organs and drums can ever bring to him. If he wanted music, he would have not asked thee, for winds and wave make melodies transcendently superior to all your chief musicians can compose. Does he want candles when his torch makes the mountains to be great altars, smoking with the incense of praise to the God of creation? Oh, brethren, I fear that it has been true of many who externally appeared to be devout, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God"! Weep over your sin: now have you glorified him as God. Fall on your face, and be nothing before the Most High: now you have glorified him as God. Accept his righteousness; adore his bleeding Son; trust in his infinite compassion. Now you have glorified him as God, for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." How far, my dear hearers, have you complied with that requisition?

Further, the people mentioned in my text did not glorify God, for they did not obediently serve him. My dear hearer, have you served God? Have you looked upon yourself as a servant of God? When you awoke in the morning, did you say, "What does God expect me to do to-day?" When you have summed up the day, have you applied this test, "How far have I endeavoured to serve God to-day?" There are many who are the servants of themselves; and there is no master more tyrannical than unsanctified self. Many are toiling, like slaves at the galleys, for wealth, for honour, for respectability, for something for themselves. But, remember, if the Lord be God, and he made us, we are bound to serve him. How is it that God has kept you alive these forty years, perhaps twice forty, and you have never glorified him as God, by rendering him any service whatsoever? This is a very solemn enquiry. I should like everyone whom it concerns to take it home to his own conscience.

There is another charge to be brought against those who glorified not God, although they knew him; that is, they did not trust him. The place for man is under the shadow of God's wings. If he made me, I ought to seek him in the hour of trouble. In the time of my need, I should apply to his bounty. If I feel unhappy, I should look to him for comfort. My dear hearers, are there not some of you who never did trust God yet? You run to your neighbours as soon as ever you are in difficulties. You trust your old uncle; but you never trust your God. Oh, what a wretched business is this, if God, who is all truth and all love, does not have the confidence of his own creatures! Remember how the Lord spake by the mouth of Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see good when it cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought; neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The people mentioned in the text knew God, but they did not trust him.

In addition to this, they did not seek to commune with him. Are there not

some here who never tried to speak to God? It never occurred to you, did it? And God has not spoken to you; at least, you have not known whose voice it was when he did speak. It is a very sad business when a boy, who has been at home with his father and mother for years, has never spoken to them. He came down in the morning, and ate his breakfast; he came in, and devoured his dinner; he took his supper with them by night; but never spoke to them. Would you have a boy of that kind living with you? You would be obliged to say. "John, you must go; it pains me to send you away, but I cannot bear to have you sitting here in silence. If I speak to you, you never answer me." Some of you cannot remember the time when you spoke to God, or God spoke to you: it is so very long ago, if it ever did occur in your past experience. There is a man somewhere here who did speak to God the other day. He called upon God with a foul and blasphemous oath. When he was telling a lie, he called upon God to witness it. Ah! Yes, you have broken the silence; but it would have been better not to have spoken, than to have uttered those vile blasphemies against the Most High. Your horrible words have entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; and, as the Lord liveth, you will have more to answer for them to the great judge of all men, unless you seek his face, and find forgiveness through his Son. Our Saviour said that, for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment; how much more shall they be required to answer for every evil, false, slanderous, blasphemous word they have spoken!

But are there not many persons who have uttered an oath, and are scrupulously careful about speaking the truth, who have never had any spiritual converse with God? Wretched creatures indeed are you, even though you are healthy and prosperous, you have missed the highest good, the best blessing that man can know.

There are some who, although they know God, they do not want to be reconciled to him. there is a way of perfect reconciliation between God and man. Whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is at once forgiven; he is adopted into the family of God; he drinks the wine of the love of God; he is saved with an everlasting salvation. There are many who know this in their minds; but it never excites any desire for it in their hearts. No, whether reconciled or unreconciled, does not trouble them. Knowest

thou, O man, that the English of it is, "I defy God; I neither want his love, nor fear his hate; I will lift my face before his thunderbolts and dare him to do his worst."? Oh, fatal defiance of the blessed God! May the Spirit of God work upon thy conscience now, to make thee see the evil of this condition, and turn from it! While I speak, I feel deeply troubled to have to say what I do; but I am only speaking of what many a conscience here must confess to be true. You live, some of you, knowing God, but not glorifying him as God.

II. Now I take from my text the second accusation, which is certainly quite as sad as the other. Those who are mentioned by Paul are accused of WANT OF GRATITUDE. It is said of them that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

I cannot say anything much worse of a man than that he is not thankful to those who have been his benefactors; and when you say that he is not thankful to God, you have said about the worst thing you can say of him. Now look not merely at the people who lived in Paul's day, but at those who are living now. I will soon prove ingratitude on the part of many. There are many counts in the indictment we have to bring against them in God's High Court of Justice.

First, God's law is despised. You young men and women, who are beginning life, if you are intelligent and wise, say, "We wish that we knew what we ought to do for our own preservation and happiness; and we should also like to know what to avoid lest we should do ourselves harm." Well, now. The book of the law of the ten commands is simply the sanitary regulation of the moral world, telling us what would damage us, and what would benefit us. We ought to be very thankful to have such plain directions. "Thou shalt." "Thou shalt not." But see. God has taken the trouble to give us this map of the way, and to direct us in the right road; yet some have despised the heavenly guide. They have gone directly in the teeth of the law; in fact, it looks as if the very existence of the law has been a provocation for them to break it. Is not this a piece of dreadful ingratitude? Whenever God says, "Thou shalt not," it is because it would be mischievous to us to do it. Sometimes, in London, when the ice in the parks is not strong enough to bear, they put up boards on which is the word "Dangerous." Who but a fool would go where that danger-signal is?



The ten commands indicate what is dangerous: nay, what is fatal. Keep clear of all that is forbidden.

Next, God's day is dishonoured by those who are not thankful to him. God has, in great mercy, given us a day, on day in seven, wherein to rest, and to think of holy things. There were seven days that God had in the week. He said, "Take six, and use them in your business." No, we must have the seventh as well. It is as if one, upon the road, saw a poor man in distress, and having but seven shillings, the generous person gave the poor man six; but when the wretch had scrambled to his feet, he followed his benefactor to knock him down, and steal the seventh shilling from him. How many do this! The Sabbath is their day for sport, for amusement, for anything but the service of God. They rob God of his day, though it be but one in seven. This is base unthankfulness. May not many here confess that they have been guilty of it? If so, let no more Sabbaths be wasted; but let their sacred hours, and all the week between, be spent in diligent search after God; and then, when you have found him, the Lord's-day will be the brightest gem of all the seven, and you will sing with Dr. Watts,—

"Welcome, sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise;  
Welcome to this reviving breast,  
And these rejoicing eyes!"

Moreover, God's Book is neglected by these ungrateful beings. He has given us a Book; here is a copy of it. Was there ever such a Book, so full of wisdom, and so full of love? Let a man look at it on bended knee; for he may find heaven between those pages. But, when God has taken the trouble to make this wonderful Book, there are many who do not take the trouble to read it. Ah, me, what ingratitude! A father's love-letter to his son, and his son leaves it unread! Here is a Book, the like of which is not beneath the cope of heaven, and God has exercised even his omniscience to make it a perfect Book, for all ranks and conditions of men, in all periods of the world's history; and yet, such is man's ingratitude, that he turns away from it.

But there is something much worse; God's Son is refused by the

unthankful. God had but one Son, and such a Son; one with himself, infinite, holy, his delight! He took him from his bosom, and sent him to this earth. The Son took our nature, and became a servant, and then died the death of a felon, the death of the cross, and all to save us, all for the guilty, all for men who were his enemies. I feel guilty myself while I am talking about it, that I do not burst into tears. This must be one of the mysteries that the angels cannot comprehend, that after Christ had died, there were found sinners who would not be saved by him. They refused to be washed in the fountain filled with blood; they rejected eternal life, even though it streamed from the five great founts of his wounded body. They chose hell rather than salvation by his blood. They were so in love with their dire enemy, sin, that they would not be reconciled to God, even by the death of his Son. Oh, ingratitude, thou hast reached thy utmost limit now, for thou hast trodden under foot the Son of God, and hast counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hast done despite unto the Spirit of Grace! Is it not terrible?

I might stop here; but, for the sake of pricking the conscience of some, I want to say, dear friends, that there are some persons so ungrateful, that God's deliverances are forgotten. Some years ago, I spoke with a soldier who rode in the fatal charge at Balaclava; and when he told me so, I took him by the hand; I could not help it, though he was a stranger to me. The tears were in my eyes, and I said, "Sir, I hope that you are God's man after such a deliverance as that." Almost all the saddles emptied, shot and shell flying to the right and left, death mowing down the whole brigade; yet he escaped. But I did not find that he had given his heart to Christ. Over there is a man who has been in a half-a-dozen shipwrecks; and if he does not mind, he will be shipwrecked to all eternity! One here has had yellow fever. Ah sir, there is a worse fever than that on you now! I cannot speak of all the cases here of strange deliverances; but I do not doubt that I address some who have been between the jaws of death. They have looked over the edge of that dread precipice, beneath which is the fathomless abyss. You vowed that, if God would spare your life, you would never be what you were before; and in truth you are not, for you are worse than ever. You are sinning now against light, and in shameful ingratitude. God have mercy upon you!

How often, dear friends, is there ingratitude on the part of unconverted men in the matter of God's providences ignored! Why, look at some of you! You never missed a meal in your lives. When you went to the table, there was always something on it. You never had to lose a night's rest for want of a bed. Some of you, from your childhood, have had all that heart could wish. If God has treated you so, while many are crushed with poverty, should he not have some gratitude from you? You had a good mother; you had a tender father; you have gone from one form of relationship to another with increasing comfort. You are spared, and your mother is spared; your wife and children are spared. Indeed, God has made your path very smooth. Some of you are getting on in business, while other men are failing; some of you have every comfort at home, while others have been widowed, and their children have fallen, one after the other. Will you never be grateful? Hard, hard heart, wilt thou never break? Will any mercy bend thee? I do appeal to some here, whose path has been so full of mercies, that they ought to think of God, and turn to him with sincere repentance and faith.

But one says, "I have had good luck." What can be worse than that? Here is unthankfulness to God indeed, when you ascribe his good gifts to "good luck." "Well, you know, but I have been a very hard-working man." I know you have, but who gave you this strength for your work? "I have a good supply of brains while others do not." Did you make your own brains? Do you not feel that any man who talks about his own wisdom, and his own wit, writes "FOOL" across his forehead in capital letters? We owe everything to God; shall we not give God nothing? Shall we have no gratitude to him from whom all our blessings have come? God forgive us if it has been so, and give us grace to alter our past course at once!

Once more, there is another piece of ingratitude of which many are guilty, God's Spirit is resisted by them. The Spirit of God comes to them, and gently touches them. Perhaps he has done so to-night while you have been sitting here. You have said, "Do not talk quite so plainly to us. Give us a little comfort, a little breathing space; and do not be quite so hard on us." I hope that it was the Spirit of God rather than the preacher who was dealing with you. At any rate, he has done so a good many times; and you have tried to drive from your heart your best Friend. You have been so

ungenerous to him that, when he came to lead you to Christ, you summoned all your strength, and the devil came to help you, and up till now you have resisted the Spirit of God with some degree of success. The Lord have mercy upon you! But how true is my text still, even of many who are found in the house of prayer, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful"!

III. Now I finish with my third point, which is, that THIS IRREVERENCE AND INGRATITUDE WERE AGAINST KNOWLEDGE. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

Will you kindly notice, that, according to my text, knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice? "They knew God." It was no good to them to know God, for "they glorified him not as God." So my theological friend over there, who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines, it does not matter what you think, or what you know, unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful. Nay, your knowledge may be a millstone about your neck to sink you down in woe eternal, unless your knowledge is turned to holy practice.

Indeed, knowledge will increase the responsibility of those who are irreverent and ungrateful. Paul says, "They are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." Whatever excuse might be made for those who never heard of God, there was none for these people. My dear hearers, you also are "without excuse." Many of you have had godly parents, you have attended a gospel ministry, your Sunday-school teachers and Christian friends have taught you the way of salvation; you are not ignorant. If you do not glorify God, if you are not thankful to him, it will be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for you, for they never had the privileges that you have despised. Remember how the Saviour upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." I hardly know which is the greater wonder, that the poor people who saw Christ's mighty works did not repent, or that those who would have repented if they had seen those works were not permitted to

see them.

I wish, dear friends, that you could go out of this state of not glorifying God, and not being thankful. Surely, you only want to have the case stated, and the Spirit of God to speak to your conscience, to cause you to say, "I cannot bear to be in such a dreadful condition without regard to God any longer." May God enable you to repent to-night! Change your mind. That is the meaning of the word "repent." Change your mind, and say, "We will glorify God. There is a Great First Cause. There is a Creator. There must be an omnipotent, all-wise Being. We will worship him. We will say in our hearts, 'This God shall be our God, and we will trust him, if he will but accept us.'"

Then remember the years that are past. They involve a great debt, and you cannot pay it; for, if you go one serving God without a flaw to the end of your life, there is the old debt still due; there are the years that are gone, and "God requireth the years that are past." Well, now, hear what he has done. He has given his dear Son to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree"; and if you will trust Christ, then know of a surety that Christ has put away your sin, and you are forgiven. "Look,"—that is his word—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." When the brazen serpent was lifted up, all that those who were bidden had to do was to look at the serpent of brass; and everyone that looked, lived. If any man of that crowd had looked at Moses, that would have healed him. If he had looked at the fiery serpents, and tried to pull them off, that would not have healed him. But he looked to the brazen serpent, and, as his eyes caught the gleam of the brass, the deadly serpent's bites were healed, and the man lived. Look to Jesus. Look now. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do so!

"I do not feel fit," says one. That is looking to yourself. "I do not feel my need enough." Says another. That is trusting to your sense of need. Away with everything that is in you, or about you, and just trust Christ, and you shall immediately be saved. Whoever, in this great congregation will but look to Jesus shall be saved upon the spot. However great your iniquities, however stony your heart, however despairing your mind, look, look, look, look. And then, when you look to Christ, your ingratitude will be forgiven, and it will die. You will love him who has loved you, and you

shall be saved, and saved forever.

When we received eighty-two into the church last Lord's-day evening, I could not help breathing an earnest prayer that this might be the beginning of a revival. May it come to-night, and may many in these two galleries, and down below, be carried away by that blessed tide of mighty grace that shall sweep them off their feet, and land them safe on the Rock of ages!

Will you, dear friends, pray for this? I shall feel that even my poor, weak instrumentality will be quite sufficient for the greatest work if I have your prayers at my back. Will you to-night at the family altar, or at your own bedsides, make it a special subject of prayer that men, who knew God, but glorified him not as God, and were not thankful, may to-night turn to God? If I could get at some of you who are living without Christ, I should like to do what the Roman ambassadors used to do. When they come to a king who was at war with the empire, they said to him, "Will you have peace with Rome, or not?" If he said that he must have time to think it over, the ambassador, with his rod, drew a ring around the man, and said, "You must decide before you cross that line, for, if you do not say 'Peace' before you step out of it, Rome will crush you with her armies." There are no doors to the pews, else I would say, "Shut those doors, and do not let the people out until God decides them." Lord, shut them in! Lord, arrest them: hold them fast, and let them not go till each one of them has said, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **The Inexhaustible Barrel**

And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah. - 1 Kings

17:16

In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. Divine love is rendered conspicuous when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that lone star which smiles through the rifts of the thunder-clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is love in the midst of wrath. In the present instance, God had sent an all-consuming famine upon the lands of Israel and Sidon. The two peoples had provoked the Most High, the one by renouncing him, and the other by sending forth their queen Jezebel, to teach idolatry in the midst of Israel. God therefore determined to withhold both dew and rain from the polluted lands. But while he did this, he took care that his own chosen ones should be secure. If all the brooks are dry, yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and if that should fail, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, for God had not simply one Elijah, but he had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab's table, too, by his faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah. Let us from this draw this inference, that come what may God's people are safe. If the world is to be burned with fire, among the ashes there shall not be found the relics of a saint. If the world should again be drowned with water, (as it shall not) yet should there be found another ark for God's Noah. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let all its pillars tremble, let the skies themselves be rent in twain, yet amid the wreck of worlds the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save his people under heaven, he will save them in heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety. Be ye then confident, when ye hear of wars, and rumors of wars. Let no agitation distress you. Whatsoever cometh upon the earth, you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon his promise, rest ye in his faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you.

Though, however, I make these few observations by way of preface, this is not the subject of this morning. I propose to take the case of the poor widow of Sarepta as an illustration of divine love, as it manifests itself to

man; and I shall have three things for you to notice. First, the object of divine love; secondly, the singular methods of divine love; and, then, in the third place, the undying faithfulness of divine love - "The barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord."

I. In the first place let me speak upon THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

1. And here we remark at the very beginning, how sovereign was the choice. Our Savior himself teaches us when he says, "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Here was divine sovereignty. When God would make choice of a woman it was not one of his own favored race of Israel, but a poor benighted heathen, sprung from a race who of old had been doomed to be utterly cut off. Here was electing love in one of its sovereign manifestations. Men are always quarrelling with God because he will not submit his will to their dictation. If there could be a God who was not absolute men would think themselves gods, and hence sovereignty is tasted because it humbles the creature, and makes him bow before a Lord, a King, a Master, who will do as he pleases. If God would choose kings and princes, then would men admire his choice. If he would make his chariots stay at the door of nobles, if he would step from his throne and give his mercy only to the great, the wise, and the learned, then might there be heard the shout of praise to a God who thus honored the fine doings of man. But because he chooses to take the base things of this world, the things that are despised, and the things that are not; because he takes these things to bring to nought the things that are, therefore is God hated of men. Yet, know that God hath set apart him that is godly for himself. He hath chosen to himself a people whom he will bring to himself at last, who are his peculiar treasure, the favourites of his choice. But these people are by nature the most unlikely ones upon the face of the whole world. Men to-day sunken in sin, immersed in folly, brutalized, without knowledge, without wit, these are the very ones that God ordains to save. To them he sends the word in its effectual might, and these are plucked like brands from the burning. None can guess the



reasons of divine election. This great act is as mysterious as it is gracious. Throughout Scripture we are continually startled with resplendent instances of unlimited sovereignty, and the case of this widow is one among the many. Electing love passes by the thousands of widows that dwelt in God's own land, and it journeys beyond the borders of Canaan, to cherish and preserve a heathen woman of Sarepta.

Some men hate the doctrine of divine Sovereignty; but those who are called by grace love it, for they feel, if it had not been for sovereignty they never would have been saved. Ah, if we are now his people, what was there in any of us to merit the esteem of God? How is it that some of us are converted, while our companions in sin are left to persevere in their godless career? How is it that some of us who were once drunkards, swearers, and the like, are now sitting here to praise the God of Israel this day? Was there anything good in us that moved the heart of God to save us? God forbid that we should indulge the blasphemous thought. There was nothing in us that made us better than others, or more deserving. Sometimes we are apt to think that it was the reverse. There was much in us that might have caused God to pass us by if he had looked to us. And yet, here we are, praising his name. Tell me, ye that deny divine sovereignty, how is it that the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while the self-righteous Pharisee is shut out? How is it that from the scum and draft of this city, God picks up some of his brightest jewels, while among the learned and philosophic, there are very few that bow the knee to the God of Israel? Tell me, how is it that in heaven there are more servants than masters, more poor than rich, more foolish than learned? What shall we say of this? - "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

2. But if there be sovereignty in the choice, I cannot omit another thought akin to it. What undeservingness there was in the person! She was no Hannah. I read not that she had smitten the Lord's enemies, like Jael, or had forsaken the gods of her country, like Ruth. She was no more notable than any other heathen. Her idolatry was as vile as theirs, and her mind as foolish and vain as that of the rest of her countrymen. Ah, and in the

objects too, of God's love there is nothing whatever that can move his heart to love them; nothing of merit, nothing which could move him to select them. Hark! how the blood-bought ones all sing before the throne. They cast their crowns at the feet of Jehovah, and unitedly say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory for ever." There is no divided note in heaven upon this matter. Not one spirit in glory will dare to say that he deserved to come there. They were strangers once, and they were sought by grace. They were black, and they were washed in blood. Their hearts were hard, and they were softened by the Spirit. They were dead, and they were quickened by divine life. And all the reasons for this gracious work in and upon them are to be found in the breast of God, and not at all in them. Simple as this truth seems, and lying as it does at the very basement of the gospel system, yet how often is it forgotten! Ah! men and brethren, ye are saying, "I would come to Christ if I had a better character. I think that God would love me if there were some good works, and some redeeming traits in my character." Nay, but hear me, my brother, God loveth not man for anything in man. The saved ones are not saved on account of anything they did; but simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Thou art in as good a place as say other unregenerate sinner on the face of the earth; why should not God have mercy upon thee? Thy merits or thy demerits have nought to do with the matter. If God intends to bless, he looks not to what thou art. He finds his motive in the depth of his own loving will, and not in thee. Oh! canst thou believe it, that black, and filthy, and diseased, and leprous though thou be, the love of God can shed itself abroad in thy heart? O my trembling hearer! do not despair, for he is able to save unto the very uttermost.

3. In continuing to regard this woman, I want you to notice that her condition was miserable too, in the very last degree. She had not only to suffer the famine which had fallen upon all her neighbors, but her husband was taken from her. He would have shared with her the last morsel that his weary limbs could earn; he would have bidden her lean her head upon his strong and faithful breast, and would have said, "My wife, if there be bread to be had thy mouth shall taste it; if there be water to drink thou shalt not thirst." But alas! he was taken from her, and she was a widow. Besides this, he had left her no inheritance. She had no

patrimony, no servant. You learn this from the fact that she had not even firewood. Now, there was no reason why she should not have had that even in time of famine of bread, for there was no famine of wood, unless she had been extremely poor. Such was her extremity that she goes outside the city upon the common lands to pick up a few sticks with which she may cook her meal. She had, you see then, nothing wherewithal to buy bread, for even the fuel she must gather for herself. I told you that her husband had left her nothing, yes, he had left her something; but that something, though much beloved, was but another fountain of trouble to her. He had left her a son, her only son, and this son has now to share her starvation. I believe he was too weak to accompany his mother upon this occasion. They had been so long without food that he could not rise from the bed, or else, good soul, she would have brought him with her, and he could have helped to gather a few sticks. But she had laid him upon the bed, fearing that he might die before she reached her home, knowing that he could not accompany her because his limbs were too feeble to carry the little weight of his own poor emaciated body. And now she has come forth with a double trouble, to gather a handful of sticks to dress her last meal, that she may eat it and die.

Ah, my dear friends, this is just where sovereign grace finds us all - in the depth of poverty and misery. I do not mean, of course, temporal poverty, but I mean spiritual distress. So long as we have a full barrel of our own merits, God will have nothing to do with us. So long as the cruse of oil is full to overflowing, we shall never taste the mercy of God. For God will not fill us until we are emptied of self. Ah, what misery does conviction of sin cause in the breast of the sinner. I have known some so wretched, that all the torments of the inquisition could not equal their agony. If tyrants could invent the knife, the hot irons, the spear, splinters put beneath the nails, and the like, yet could not they equal the torment which some men have felt when under conviction of sin. They have been ready to make an end of themselves. They have dreamed of hell by night, and when they have awakened in the morning it was to feel what they have dreamed. But then it has been in this very time when all their hope was gone, and their misery was come to its utmost extremity, that God looked down in love and mercy on them. Have I such a hearer in this crowd this morning?

Have I not one who is smitten in his heart, whose life is blasted, who walks about in the weariness of his spirit, crying, "Oh, that I were gone out of this world, that I might be rid of sin; for oh, my burden presses upon me as though it would sink me to the lowest hell. My sin is like a millstone round my neck and I cannot get rid of it." My hearer, I am glad to hear thee speak thus; I rejoice in thy unhappiness; and that not because I love to see thee miserable, but because this sorrow of thine is a step to everlasting blessedness. I am glad that thou art poor, for there is one that will make thee rich. I am glad that barrel of meal of thine is wasted, for now shall a miracle of mercy be wrought for thee, and thou shalt eat the bread of heaven to the full. I am glad that cruse of oil is gone, for now rivers of love and mercy shall be bestowed on thee. Only believe it. In God's name I assure thee, if thou art brought to extremity God will now appear for thee. Look up, sinner - look away from thyself - look up to God who sits upon the throne, a God of love. But if that be too high for thee, look up sinner to yon cross. He that hangs there died for such as thou art. Those veins were opened for sinners utterly ruined and undone. That agony he suffered was for those who feel an agony of heart like thine. His griefs he meant for the grievers, his mourning made atonement for the mourners. Canst thou now believe the word which is written? - "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Darest thou trust thyself now upon the merits of Christ? Canst thou say, "Sink or swim, my hope is in the cross." Oh, sinner, if God but help thee to do this, thou art a happy man. Thy poverty shall be removed, and like the widow of Sarepta, thou shalt know no lack until the day when God shall take thee up to heaven, where thou shalt be satisfied throughout eternity.

I do not know whether I have made what I intended to state sufficiently clear but what I wanted to bring out is this; - Just as God sent his prophet Elijah out of pure sovereignty to a woman who deserved nothing at his hands, and just as he sent a prophet to her in the time of her greatest misery and sorrow, so is the word of God sent to you, my hearer, this morning, if you are in a similar condition.

II. Now, I come to the second point: THE GRACE OF GOD IN ITS DEALINGS.

I would have you notice first of all, that the love of God towards this woman in its dealings was of the most singular character, You will notice that the first word this poor woman heard from the God of Israel was one which rather robbed her than made her rich. It was this: "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink." It was taking something from that already much-diminished store. And then on the heels of that there came another: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." This was rather demanding than bestowing. And yet singular it is, this is just the way sovereign mercy deals with men. It is an apparent demand rather than an open gift. For what does God say to us when first he speaks? He says this: "Repent and be converted every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But saith the soul, "I cannot repent, it is beyond my power; I cannot believe - I would that I could believe - but this is beyond my reach. And has God asked me to exert a strength which I have not? Does he demand that of me which I cannot give? I thought that he gave; I did not know that he asked of me." Ay but soul, notice what this woman did in obedience to the command. She went and fetched the water, and she brought the morsel of bread; and the water was not diminished by what she gave, and the bread itself was increased in the spending of it. When God saith to the sinner, "Believe," if that sinner believeth, it is not by his own power, but by grace which goes with the command. But the sinner does not know that at first. He thinks that he believes: he thinks that he repents. Why, I do not believe that the meal which the woman brought to the prophet was any meal of hers: it was meal taken out of her store, and yet not taken out of it; it was meal given her by miracle - the first installment of miraculous provision. And so if thou believest, thou wilt say, "I have believed." Yes it was taken out of your barrel, but still it was not your believing, it was an; act of faith wrought in you. Here is a poor man with a withered arm: he wants to have that restored. Now, you will imagine that the first thing Christ will say to him will be, "Man, I will make thy withered arm alive; I will once more nerve it so that thou shalt have power to lift it." Nay, he does not say any such thing. But before he gives the man the power he says to him, "Stretch out thy hand!" Suppose he had cried out, "Sir, I cannot;" his withered arm would have hung dangling at his side till he died. But instead of that the command came; the man had the will to obey, and

suddenly he had the power, for he stretched out his withered hand. What! say you, did he stretch out that hand of his own might! No, and yet he was commanded to do it. And so if you are willing to believe, if now your hearts say, "I would believe, I would repent," the power shall come with the will, and the withered hand shall be stretched out.

I do preach continually the exhortation and the command. I am not ashamed to say with the prophet Ezekiel, "Ye dry bones live! ye dead souls live." If this is esteemed unsound doctrine, I shall be yet more heretical. "Man cannot do it; why tell him to do it?" Why simply as an exercise of faith. If I tell a man to do what he can do, anybody can tell him that; but God's servant tells him to do what he cannot do, and the man does it; for God honors the command of his servant, and gives the strength with the command. To sinners dead in sin the cry is given this morning: "Do you want salvation? Believe on Christ. Would you have your sins forgiven? Look to him." Oh! do not answer, "I cannot believe, I cannot look." Instead thereof, may the Spirit of God incline your mind, so that you may say, "I will believe," and then you will believe. O may you say, "I will repent." and then you will repent. And though it be not your own strength, it will be a strength given so instantly upon the moment that you for a time will not know whether it is your strength or God's strength, until you get further advanced in the divine life, and then you will discover that all the strength from first to last is of God. I say that the dealings of divine grace with this woman are to be looked upon as extremely singular in that light. And yet they are but the type and the model of the dealings of God with all whom he saves.

3. Now, the next point. The dealings of love with this poor woman were not only singular, but exceedingly trying. The first thing she hears is a trial: Give away some of that water which thy son and thyself so much require! Give away a portion of that last little cake which ye intended to eat and die! Nay, all through the piece it was a matter of trial, for there never was more in the barrel than there was at the first. There was a handful at night, and a handful the next morning; but there never were two handfuls there at a time. To the very last there was nothing but just a little oil in the cruse. Whenever she looked at it, there was only a little glazing of oil to spread upon the meal cakes. The cruse was never full,

there was not a drop more in it than there was at first. So that this woman the first time she had eaten the meal out of the barrel, might have thought to herself, "Well, I have breakfasted in a most extraordinary manner, but where shall I find food at noon." But when she went there was just one handful more. She took that out and prepared it, and unbelief would have whispered, "But there will be none at eventide." But, however, when night came there was just enough for the hour. The barrel never filled, and yet it never emptied. The store was little, but it was always sufficient for the day.

Now, if God saves us, it will be a trying matter. All the way to heaven, we shall only get there by the skin of our, teeth. We shall not go to heaven sailing along with sails swelling to the breeze, like sea birds with their white wings but we shall proceed full often with sails rent to ribbons, with masts creaking, ands the ship's pumps at work both by night and day. We shall reach the city at the shutting of the gate, but not an hour before. O believer, thy Lord will bring thee safe to the end of thy pilgrimage; but mark, thou wilt never have one particle of strength to waste in wantonness upon the road. There will be enough to get thee up the hill Difficulty, but only enough then by climbing on your hands and knees. You will have strength enough to fight Apollyon, but when the battle is over your arm will have no strength remaining. Your trials will be so many, that if you had only one trial more, it would be like the last ounce that breaks the camel's back, But, nevertheless, though God's love should thus try you all the journey through, your faith will bear the trying, for while God dashes you down to the earth with one hand in providence, he will lift you up with the other in grace. You will have consolation and affliction weighed out in equal degree, ounce for ounce, and grain for grain; you will be like the Israelite in the wilderness, if you gather much manna, you will have nothing over; while blessed be God, if you gather little you shall have no lack. You shall have daily grace for daily trials.

From this interesting topic, I turn to another that is not less so. Although the Lord's dealings with this woman of Sarepta were very trying, yet they were very wise. Ye ask me - Why did not God give her a granary full of meal at once, and a vat full of oil instanter? I will tell you. It was not merely because of God's intent to try her, but there was wisdom here.

Suppose he had given her a granary full of meal, how much of it would have been left by the next day? I question whether any would have remained, for in days of famine men are sharp of scent, and it would soon have been noised about the city, "The old widow woman who lives in such-and-such a street, has a great store of food." Why, they would have caused a riot, and robbed the house, and perhaps, have killed the woman and her son. She would have been despoiled of her treasure, and in four and twenty hours the barrel of meal would have been as empty as it was at first, and the cruse of oil would have been spilled upon the ground. What has that to do with us? Just this if the Lord should give us more grace than we want for the day, we should have all the devils in hell trying to rob us. We have enough to do, as it is, to fight with Satan. But what an uproar there would be! We should have tens of thousands of enemies pouncing upon our stock of grace, and we should have to defend our stock against all these assailants. Now, I think while it is good for us to have a little ready money on hand, to let our real sterling property remain in the hands of our great Banker above. Should thieves break in, as they often do, and steal my evidences and take away my comforts - they only take a few loose coppers, that I have in the house for convenience, they cannot steal my real treasure, for it is secured in a golden casket, the key of which swings at the girdle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Better for you to have an inheritance preserved in heaven for you, than to have it given to you to take care of for yourself; for you would soon lose it and become as poor as ever.

Besides, there was another reason why this woman had not her meal given to her all at once. Any meal-man knows that meal will not keep in great quantities. It soon breeds a peculiar kind of worm, and after a little while it grows musty, and no person would think of eating it. Now, grace is just of the same character. If you have a stock of grace, it breeds a worm called pride. Perhaps you may have seen that worm. It is a very prolific one. I find whenever I have a little extra stock of gifts, or grace, that this worm is sure to breed in the meal, and then soon it begins to smell musty, and is only fit for the dunghill. If we had more grace than we want, it would be like the manna of old, which when it was laid up, bred worms and stank. Besides, how much better it would be, even if it would keep, to have it fresh and fresh every day. Oh, to have the bread of heaven



hot from heaven's oven every day! To have the water out of the rock, not as sailors have it in the casks for a long sea voyage, where the sweetest water ferments, and passes through many stages of decay; but, oh, to have it every hour trickling through the divine rock! to have it fresh from the divine fountain every moment, this is to have a happy life indeed.

This woman need never regret having nothing but a handful on hand, for she had thus the greater inducement to be frequent in her pleadings with God. After she had taken out a handful of meal, I think I see her lifting up her streaming eyes and saying, "Great God, it is now two years since for the first time I put the hand of faith into this barrel, and now every morning, and every noon, and every night, I have done the same, and I have never lacked. Glory be unto the God of Israel!" I think I see her praying as she went: - "Oh, Lord, shut not up the bowels of thy compassion. Thou hast dealt well with thy poor servant, and fed her this many a year. Grant that the barrel may not fail me now, for I have no stock in hand; grant that there may be a handful still to spare - always enough, always all that my necessities can require." Do you not see that she was thus brought into constant contact with God. She had more reasons for prayer, and more reasons for gratitude, than if she had received the blessing at once. This is one, reason why God does not give you grace to spare. He will have you come to him every day, nay, every hour. "Are you not glad of the plea? You can say each time you come, "Lord, here's a needy beggar at the door, it is not an idle man that is giving a runaway knock at the door of prayer, but, Lord, I am a needy soul: I want a blessing and I come."

I repeat it, the daily journey to the well of mercy is good for us. The hand of faith is blessed by the exercise of knocking at the gate. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a right good prayer; O for grace to use it daily with our Father who is in heaven!

Now, what is the drift of all this? Just this: among the thousands of letters that I continually receive from my congregation, I meet with this very common question: - "Oh, Sir, I feel such little faith, such little life, such little grace in my heart, that I am inclined to think I shall never hold out to the end, and sometimes I am afraid I am not a child of God at all." Now, my dear friend, if you want an explanation of this it is to be found in

the text. You shall have just enough to carry you through your trials, but you shall have no faith to spare. You shall have just enough grace in your heart to keep you living day after day in the fear of God, but you shall have none to sacrifice to your boasting and yield to your own pride. I am glad to hear you say that you feel your spiritual poverty; for when we know ourselves to be poor, then we are rich, but when we think that we are rich and increased in goods, then we are naked, and poor, and miserable, and are in a sad plight indeed. Oh, I want you to remember for your comfort, that though you have never two handfuls of meal in the barrel at a time, yet there will never be less than one handful; that though you will never have a double quantity of oil at one time, yet there will always be the requisite quantity. There will be nothing over, but there shall be none lacking. So take this for your comfort, as your days so shall your strength be; as your needs so shall your grace be; as the demands of your necessity, such shall be the supply of God's mercy. The cup shall be full if it does not flow over, and the stream shall always run, even though it is not always brimming the banks.

III. I conclude by bringing you to the point upon which I shall dwell but briefly - for I pray that your life may be a far fuller sermon on this text than I can hope to preach - **THE FAITHFULNESS OF DIVINE LOVE.** "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord. which he spake by Elijah." You will observe that this woman had daily necessities. She had three mouths to feed; she had her herself, her son, and the prophet Elijah. But though the need was threefold, yet the supply of meal wasted not. Boys have large appetites, and no doubt her son very speedily devoured that first little cake. As for Elijah himself, he had walked no less a distance than one hundred miles; all weary with his journey, you may consider that he had a considerable appetite also; whilst she herself, having been long subjected to starvation, would doubtless feed to the full. But though their necessities were very great at the first, yet the barrel of meal wasted not. Each day she made calls upon it, but yet each day it remained the same. Now brethren, you have daily necessities. Because they come so frequently - because your trials are so many, your troubles so innumerable, you are apt to conceive that the barrel of meal will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will fail you. But rest assured that according to the Word of God this shall not be

the case. Each day, though it bring its trouble shall bring its help; though it bring its temptation it shall bring its succor; though it bring its need it shall bring its supply; and though day come after day, if you should live to outnumber the years of Methuselah, and though troubles come after troubles till your tribulations are like the waves of the sea, yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a lack. For three long years the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept the holy tears of dew upon the wicked earth; for three long years the women fainted in the streets, and devoured their own offspring for straitness of bread; for three long years the mourners went about the streets, wan, and weary, like skeletons following corpses to the tomb; but this woman never was hungry, never knew a lack; always supplied, always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you. You shall see the sinner die, for he trusts his native strength; you shall see the proud Pharisee totter, for he builds his hope upon the sand; you shall see even your own schemes blasted and withered, but you yourself shall find that your place of defense shall be the munition of rocks; your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure. The staff on which you lean shall never break; the arm on which you repose shall never be palsied; the eye that looks on you shall never wax dim; the heart that loves you shall never grow weary; and the hand that supplies you shall never be weak. Do you not remember a time in your experience, not long ago, when you came to your wits' end? You said, "I shall surely fall by the hands of the enemy." Have you fallen? Are you not still preserved? Look back I pray you. It is not many months ago since business was running so dead against you, that you said, "I must give it up; ever since I have known the Lord I have had more trials than ever I had before." Have you given it up? You have gone through fires; let me ask you, have you been burnt? has there been a hair of your head singed? You have walked through waters - and deep waters have they been - have you been drowned? You said you should be, but have you? Have the water floods overflowed you? When all God's waves and God's billows had rolled over you, were you destroyed? Did they wash out your hope? Did your confidence give way? You once went down, as it were, into a very sea of trouble, and you thought you would have been drowned therein like Egypt of old. Did not the water-floods divide before you? did not the depths stand upright as a heap, and were not the floods congealed in the heart of the sea? You have had high

mountains in your path, and you have said, "I can never traverse this road, the mountains are too steep." But have you not climbed them, and let me ask you have you not been benefited by the climb? When you have stood upon their hoary summit, has not the view of your knowledge become wider? has not the breath of your prayer become purer, and freer? Say ye, have not your visits to the cold mountains of affliction strengthened you, and braced you for more glorious efforts than before? Now, then, let the past console the future. Snatch a torch from the altars of the past, and re-ignite the dying embers of to-day. He that has been with you in time past, will not leave you in time to come. He is God; he changeth not, he will not forsake you. He is God; he lieth not, he cannot leave you. He has sworn by himself, because he can swear by no greater, so that by two immutable things - his oath and his promise - we might have strong consolation, who have fled to the refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. Though the barrel of meal hold but a scanty supply, though the cruse of oil contain but a drop, that meal shall last thee to the end, that cruse of oil, miraculously multiplied, hour by hour, shall be sufficient until thou shalt gather up thy feet in the bed, and with good old Jacob, end thy life with a song, praising and blessing the angel that hath redeemed thee out of all evil.

Now, having thus addressed myself to the children of God, I hope to their comfort, I wish to say just a word or two to those whom I have come here with the hope of blessing this morning - those of you who know nothing of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. What would you think of the condition of the man who can say, and say truly too, without a blush or stammer, "I know that I am the object of God's eternal love; I know that he has put all my sins behind his back, and that I stand before him as accepted and as much beloved as if I had never sinned." What would you say if that man could confidently add, "I know that this shall be my position in time and in eternity. God so loves me that he cannot cease to love me. He will preserve me whatever be my troubles or temptations, and I shall see his face, and shall rejoice in his love eternally." Why, you answer, "If I could say that, I would give all that I am worth; if I were worth a thousand worlds I would give them all to say that." Is it, then, an unattainable thing? Is it so high beyond your reach? I tell you, and the witness that I bear is true, there are tens of thousands of men on the face

of God's earth that enjoy this state. Not always can they say as much, but still they enjoy it year after year continually. There are some of us that know what it is to have no doubt as to our eternal state. At times we tremble, but at other times we can say "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him unto that day." Again I hear you say, "Would to God I could say that." Well, my dear hearer, it is possible that thou shalt say it ere long; nay, to-night it may be, ere sleep shall close thy eyelets thou mayest be among the happy men. "No," saith one, "but I am the chief of sinners." Yes, but Christ is the Savior of the chief of sinners. "Nay," says another, "but my character is so had, my disposition is so evil." The Holy Ghost can change your disposition, can renew your will, and make you a new man in Christ." "Well," says a third, "I can understand that I may be pardoned, but I cannot think that I shall ever know it." That is the glory of the religion of Christ, that he not only forgives, but he tells you so: he sheds abroad in your heart a sweet consciousness of acceptance in him; so that you know better than if an angel could tell you, that you are now one of the family of God, that all your sins are gone, and that every good thing is yours by an eternal covenant. Again, saith a fourth, "I would that I could have it." Well, sinner, it is in thy way. Dost thou feel and know thyself to be undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving? Then all that is asked of thee is that thou wouldst simply confess thy sin to God; acknowledge that thou hast been guilty, and then cast thyself flat on thy face before the cross of Christ. He is able to save thee, sinner, for he is able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him.

May God the Holy Spirit now send the word home, and may some who have been poor as the widow of Sarepta, now find a miraculous supply of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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## **The Infallibility Of God's Purpose**

But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. - Job 23:13

It is very advantageous to the Christian mind frequently to consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is palpable in two ways, exerting a sacred influence both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one, it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie at the basis of our faith. If we study man, and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator, preferring that knowledge which is to be found out by observation and reason to that divine truth which revelation alone could make known to us. The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man, and giving God rather the second place than the first. Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being, upon man, not so much as being under God's claims as having claims upon God, and you will soon find upspringing in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines, to support which the letter of some few isolated texts in Scripture may be speciously quoted, but which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenour of the Word of God. Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations, and your soul will be driven out to sea again without peace or joy. Brethren, I am not afraid that any man, who thinks worthily about the Creator, stands in awe of his adorable perfections and sees him sitting upon the throne, doing all things according to the counsel of his will, will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, "My heart is fixed, O God;" and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity indeed of him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from truth. Another happy result of such meditation is the steady peace, the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea, and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down because the floor rocks beneath your tread? With what delight do you put

your feet at last upon the shore and say, "Ah! this does not move; this is solid ground. What though the tempest howl, this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings; when I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet." Just so is it with us when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who hath been "our dwelling-place in all generations." The fleeting things of human life, and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men, are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep; but when we mount up, as it were, with eagles' wings to him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers, we nestle in the Rock of ages, which from its eternal socket never starts, and in its fixed immoveability never can be disturbed. Or to use another simile. You have seen little children running round, and round, and round till they get giddy, and they stand still and hold fast a moment and everything seems to be flying round about them, but by holding fast and still, and getting into the mind the fact that that to which they hold at least is firm, at last the dizziness grows still again, and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles, and everything has been moving with us, till perhaps as we came, to this place this morning we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if Providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away, and we came to look on everything as a floating mass—nothing firm, nothing fixed. Brethren, let us get a good grip to-day of the immutability of God. Let us stand still awhile, and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did: "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens." There is still a fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality, inasmuch as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof shall be his eternal glory. 'Twill cool your brain, 'twill calm your heart, my brother, 'twill make you go back to the world's fight quiet and composed, 'twill make you stand fast in the day of temptation if now through divine grace you can come near to God and offer him the tribute of our devotion, who is without variableness or shadow of a turning.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a

great general truth; and, secondly, out of that general truth, we shall fetch another upon which we shall enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH. We will take the first clause of the sentence, "He is in one mind." Now, the fact taught here is, that in all the acts of God in Providence, he has a fixed and a settled purpose. "He is in one mind." It is eminently consolatory to us who are God's creatures, to know that he did not make us without a purpose, and that now, in all his dealings with us he has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer, the head aches, the heart leaps with palpitations, the blood creeps sluggishly along where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident, some sense fails us; the eye is eclipsed in perpetual night; our mind is racked and disturbed; our fortunes vary; our goods disappear before our eyes; our children, portions of ourselves, sicken and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives, we are seldom long at ease; we are born to sorrow, and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived; we suffer continually. Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows, that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly we consider to be a disgrace, but to be scourged if our country were to be served we should consider an honor, because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies, because of some whim of a tyrant, would be a thing hard to bear, but if we administer thereby to the weal of our families, or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once but to be cut piece-meal away, that so his great purpose might be answered. O believer, ever look, then, on all thy sufferings as being parts of the divine plan, and say, as wave upon wave rolls over thee, "He is in one mind!" He is carrying out still his one great purpose; none of these cometh by chance, none of these happeneth to me out of order, but everything cometh to me according to the purpose of his own will, and answereth the purpose of his own great mind. We have to labor too. How hard do some men labor who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat; they wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labor, who have with their brain to serve their fellow-men or their God! How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves, and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted not simply the body, but



the mind! Their hilarity so natural to them has given place to despondency, and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into oneness of soul, through the desperateness of their ardor. Well, and sometimes this labor for God is unrequited. We plough, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain, and the devouring belies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith. We build, but the storm casts down the stones which we had quarried with Herculean efforts piling one on another. We sweat, we toil, we moil, we fail. How often do we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success! Yet, Christian man, thou hast not been without success, for "He is still in one mind." All this was necessary to the fulfillment of his one purpose. Thou art not lost; thy labor has not rotted under the clods. All, though thou seest it not, has been working together towards the desired end. Stand upon the sea-beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careening in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow, it dies, it dies. And now another, and it dies, and now another, and it dies. Oh! weep not, deep sea, be not thou sorrowful, for though each wave dieth, yet thou prevaiest! O thou mighty ocean! onward does the flood advance, till it has covered all the sand and washed the feet of the white cliffs. So its it with God's purpose. You and I are only waves of his great sea; we wash up, we seem to retire, as if there had been no advance; another wave comes still each wave must retire as though there had been no progress; but the great divine sea of his purpose is still moving on. He is still of one mind and carrying out his plan. How sorrowful it often seems to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth, and often before they come to years to use their learning, they are gone. The blade is made and annealed in many a fire, but ere the foeman useth it, it snaps! How many laborers, too, in the Master's vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever, have been taken away just when the Church wanteth them most! He that stood upright in the chariot, guiding the steeds, suddenly falls back, and we cry, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!" Still notwithstanding all, we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief with the blessed reflection that everything is a part of God's plan. He is still of one mind: nothing happeneth which is not a part of the divine scheme. To enlarge our thoughts a monument, have you never noticed, in reading history, how

nationals suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far that we thought it would produce men of the highest mould, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arm grows weak, the scepter falls, and the crown droops from the head, and we have said, "Is not the world gone back again?" The barbarian fall has sacked the city, and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction. Ah! but, my brethren, all those things were but the carrying out of the divine plan. Just so you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring. Soon as the lichen race grows grand, it dies. But wherefore? It is because its death prepares the moss, and the moss which is feebler compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But the moss decays. Yet weep not for its decaying, its ashes shall prepare a soil for some plants of a little higher growth, and as these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil upon which even the goodly cedar itself might stretch out its roots. So has it been with the race of men—Egypt, and Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, have crumbled, each and all, when their hour had come, to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed, if the Anglo Saxons' boasted pride should yet be stained, even then it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end his one mind shall be carried out, his one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations, but the apparent degeneration of some races of men, and even the total extinction of others, forms a part of the like fixed purpose. In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing. To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the extirpations of war, and all the terrible catastrophes of plague, have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time. From every evil good has come, and the more the evil has accumulated the more hath God glorified himself in bringing out at last his grand, his everlasting design. This, I take it, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of Providence, God has a purpose. "He is in one mind." Mark, not only a purpose, but only one purpose, for all history is but one. There are many scenes, but it is one drama; there are many pages, but it is one book; there are many leaves, but it is one tree, there are many provinces, yea, and there be lords many and rulers many, yet is there but one empire, and God the only Potentate.

"O come let us worship and bow down before him: for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods!"

2. "Who can turn him?" This is the second clause of the sentence, and here I think we are taught the doctrine that the purpose of God is unchanged. The first sentence shows that he has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. "Who can turn him?" There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the fall of man. The fall they consider all accidental circumstances, not intended in the divine plan, and so, God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice his justice or his mercy, used the plan of the atonement of Christ as a divine expedient Brethren, it may be lawful to use such terms, it may be lawful to you, it would not be to me, for well am I persuaded that the very fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely, was nevertheless contemplated in the divine scheme, and was by no means such a thing as to involve a digression from his primary plan. Then came the delude, and the race of man was swept away, but God's purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In after years his people Israel forsook him and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, but his purpose, was not changed any more by the defection of his chosen nation than by the destruction of his creatures. And when in after years the gospel was sent to the Jews and they resisted it, and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down his book and make an erasure or an amendment. No, the whole was written there from the beginning, he knew everything of it, he has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose. What he intended the great picture to be, that it shall be at the end, and where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down; and where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the sombre picture, these shall yet be brought into harmony; and when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, he shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while they say, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! Thou only art holy. All nations shall come and worship before Thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." Where we have thought his government wrong, there shall it prove most right, and where we

dreamed he had forgotten to be good, there shall his goodness be most clear. It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters, that God never has changed in any degree from his purpose; and the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle what he foreknew and fore-ordained it should be. Now then, wars, ye may rise, and other Alexanders and Caesars may spring up, but he will not change. Now, nations and peoples, lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees but he changeth not. Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil, but he changeth not for you. Oh! nations, and peoples, and tongues, and thou round earth, thou speedest on thy orbit still, and all the fury of thine inhabitants cannot make thee move from thy predestinated pathway. Creation is an arrow from the bow of God and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation, to the center of that target which God ordained that it should strike. Never varied is his plan; he is without variableness or shadow of a turning. Albert Barnes very justly says, "It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God has a plan—for who could honor a God who had no plan, but who did everything by haphazard? It is matter of rejoicing that he has one great purpose which extends through all ages, and embraces all things; for then everything falls into its proper place, and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God does execute all his purposes for as they were all good and wise, it is desirable that they should be executed. It could be a calamity if a good plan were not executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the decrees of God?"

3. The text also teaches a third general truth. While God had a purpose, and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that this purpose is sure to be effected. "What his soul desireth, that he doeth." He made the world out of nothing, there was no resistance there. "Light be," said he, and light was, there was no resistance there. "Providence be," said he, and Providence shall be, and when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning, you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects his purpose while still the creature is free. They who think that predestination and the fulfillment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free-agency of man, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It were no miracle for God to effect his own

purpose, if he were dealing with stocks and stones, with granite and with trees but this is the miracle of miracles, that the creatures are free, absolutely free, and joy the divine purpose stands! Herein is wisdom! This is a deep unsearchable. Man walks without a fetter, yet treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in, as certainly as though manacles had bound him to the spot. Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin, or guided by diving grace he chooses the right, and yet in his choice sits as sovereign, on the throne: not disturbing, but still over-ruling, and proving himself to be able to deal as with free creatures as with creatures without freedom, as well able to effect his purpose when he has endowed men with thought, and reason, and judgment, as when he had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea. O Christians! you shall never be able to fathom this, but you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep, either by denying predestination altogether or by denying free-agency altogether, but if you can hold the two, if you can say, "Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as he wills, and these two are not contrary the one to the other; and yet I cannot tell how it is, I cannot tell how God effects his end, I can only wonder and admire, and say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Every creature free and doing as it wills yet God more free still and doing as he wills, not only in heaven but among the inhabitants of this lower earth. I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours, for I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable it will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter:—"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." You shall have a draught of exceeding great thoughts and exceeding great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceeding deep sea, and let out the nets of your contemplation at the command of Christ. "Behold God is great." "O Lord! how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this."

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God. From the general doctrine that God has a

plan, that this plan is invariable, and that this plan is certain to be carried out, I drew the most precious doctrine that IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND,—and who can turn him?—and what his heart desireth, that he doeth. Now, mark, I address myself at this hour only to you who as the people of God. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart? Is the spirit of adoption given to thee whereby thou canst say, "Abba, Father?" If so draw nigh, for this truth is for thee.

Come then, my brethren, in the first place let us consider that God is of one mind. Of old, my soul, he determined to save thee. Thy calling proves thine election, and thine election teaches thee that God ordained to save thee. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent. He is of one mind. He saw thee ruined in the fall of thy father Adam, but his mind never changed from his purpose to save thee. He saw thee in thy nativity. Thou wast test astray from the woman speaking lies, 'thy youthful follies and disobedience he saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to thee. Then in thy manhood thou didst plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all on guilt, and let the night conceal it from our eyes for ever! Though he added sin to sin, and our pride waxed exceeding high and hot, yet he has of one mind.

"Determined to save, he watched o'er my path  
When Satan's blind slave, I spotted with death."

At last, when the happy hour arrived, he came to our door and knocked, and he said, "Open to me." And do you remember, O my brethren, how we said, "Get thee gone, O Jesu, we want thee not?" We scorned his grace, defied his love, but he was of one mind, and no hardness of heart could turn him. He had determined to have us for his spouse, and he would not take "No" for an answer. He said he would have us, and he persevered. He knocked again, and do you remember how we half opened the door? But then some strong temptation came and we shut it in his very face, and he said, "Open to me, my dove, my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night"—yet we bolted and barred the door, and would not let him in. But he was of one mind and none could turn him. Oh! my soul weeps now when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many movings of his Spirit that I rejected, and those many

times when conscience bade me repent, and urged me to flee to him, but I would not; of those seasons when a mother's tears united with all the intercession of the Saviour, yet the heart harder than adamant, and less apt to be melted than the granite itself, refused to move and would not yield. But he was of one mind. He had no fickleness in him. He said he would have us, and have us he would. He had written our names in his book, and he would not cross them out. It was his solemn purpose that we should yield. And O that hour when we yielded at the last! Then did he prove that in all our wanderings he had been of one mind. And O since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then, how often have you and I turned! We have backslidden, and if we had the Arminian's God to deal with, we should either have been in hell, or out of the covenant at this hour. I know I should be in the covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day if I had a God who put me out every time I sinned and then restored it when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, our forgetfulness of him, he was of one mind. And brethren, I know this, that though we shall wander still, though in dark hours you and I may slip, and often fall, yet his lovingkindness changes not. Thy strong arm, O God shall bear us on; thy loving heart will never fail; thou wilt not turn thy love away from us, or make it cease or pour upon us thy fierce anger, but having begun, thou wilt complete the triumphs of thy grace. Nothing shall make thee change thy mind. What joy is this to you, believers? for your mind changes every day, your experience varies like the wind, and if salvation were to be the result of any purpose on your part, certainly it never would be effected. But since it is God's work to save, and we have proved hitherto that he is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought that he will be of one thought even to the end, till all on glory's summit we shall sing of that fixed purpose and that immutable love which never turned aside until the deed of grace was triumphantly achieved.

Now, believer, listen to the second lesson: "Who can turn him?" While he is immutable from within, he is immovable from without. "Who can turn him?" That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. As the trees of lign aloes which the Lord had planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters, were their tents. Quietly and calmly they were resting

in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst, and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites, and Balaam the prophet of Pethor. They had builded seven altars and offered seven bullocks, and Balak said unto Balsam, "Come, curse me Jacob, come, defy Israel." Four times did the prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But I would have you mark that in each succeeding vision the mind God is brought out in deeper characters. First, he confesses his own impotence, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed, how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing. "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." A third audacious attempt is not with a heavier repulse, for the stifled curse recoils on themselves—"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Once again in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Scepter that shall rise out of Israel, with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel. And now transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies, and specially to that arch-fiend of hell. He comes before God to-day with the remembrance of your sins, and he desires that he may curse Israel, but he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel He took David into the sin of lust, and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement and with a deep repentance He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master, and he denied him with oaths and curses. But the Lord would not curse him even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have shivered him, but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly. He had taken you and me at divers times into positions of unbelief, and we have doubted God. Satan said—"Surely, surely God will curse him there," but never once has he done it. He has smitten, but the blow was full of love. He has chastised, but the chastisement was fraught with mercy. He has not cursed us, nor will he. Thou canst not turn God's mind, then, fiend of hell, thine enchantments cannot prosper, thine accusations shall not prevail. "He is



in one mind, who can turn him? "And brethren, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now who can advise with God. Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of his bosom, or persuade the Saviour to reject his spouse? Such counsel offered were blasphemy, and it would be not pugnacious to his soul. Or else men are turned by entreaties. But how shall God listen to the entreaties of the evil one? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray against us, let them entreat the Lord to curse us. But he is of one mind and no revengeful prayer should change the purpose of his love. Sometimes as men are changed by the ties of relationship: a another interposes and lose yields, but in our case, who can interpose? God's only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as his Father, and instead of interposing to change, he would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this,—

"Midst all our sin, and care, and woe,  
His Spirit will not let us go."

The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?"

I know not how it is, but I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I should like. But oh! the text itself is music to my ears. It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle, and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text, I would laugh at them all. "Who can turn him?"—I would shout—"Who can turn him?" Come on, earth and hell, come on, for "who can turn him?" Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, "who can turn him?" And since he cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I wish I could throw the text like a bombshell into the midst of the army of doubters, that that army might be routed at once, for when we get a text like this, it must be the text which takes effect, and not our explanation. This surely is a most marvellous death-blow to our doubts and fears.

"He is in one mind, and who can turn him?"

And now with a few words upon the last sentence I shall conclude:—God's purpose must be effected—"What his soul desireth, that he doeth." Beloved, what God's soul desireth is your salvation and mine, if we be his chosen. Well, that he doeth. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin, and as far as we can judge, we have not made much progress, for still is the Philistine in the land, and still doth the Canaanite invade us. We sin still, and our hearts still have in sheen unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without any tendency to sin? Does it not seem a dream that you should ever be without fault before the throne of God—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But yet you shall be; his heart desireth it, and that he doeth. He would have his spouse without any defilement he would have his chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as he spake and it was done, he has but to speak and it shall be done with you. You cannot rout your foes but he can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins, but he can do it. You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but he will drive out the last of them, till the whole land shall be without one enemy to disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be ere long! Oh! it will be so soon with some of us—such a few weeks, though we perhaps are reckoning on years of life! A few weeks, or a few days, and we shall have passed through Jordan's flood and stand complete in him, accepted in the Beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet even then we must not doubt that his purpose shall at last be fulfilled. We shall be spotless and faultless and unblameable in his sight ere long.

Another part of our salvation is, that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow, gathered with the Church of the first-born before the Father's face. Does it not seem, when you sit down to think of yourself as being in heaven, as a pretty dream that never will be true? What! shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! shalt thou one day wear a crown of glory that fadeth not away? O toil-worn body! shalt thou bathe thyself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not

heaven too good for us, brothers and sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates, or tread the golden streets? Oh shall we ever see his face? Will he ever kiss us with the kisses of his lips? Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour, take us to his bosom, and call us all his own? Oh! shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters and kill tears be wiped away from our eyes? Ah! that we shall be! for "he is in one mind and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doeth." "Father, I will that they whom thou hath given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." That is an immortal omnipotent desire. We shall be with him where he is; his purpose shall be effected, and we shall partake of his bliss. Now rise, ye who love the Saviour, and put your trust in him—rise like men who have God within you, and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, ye desponding ones; if salvation were to be your own work, ye might despair, but since it is his, and he changes not, you must not even doubt.

"Now let the feeble all be strong,  
And make Jehovah's power their song;  
His shield is spread o'er every saint.  
And thus supported, who can faint?"

If you perish—even the weakest of you—God's purpose cannot be effected. If you fall, his honor will be stained. If you perish, heaven itself will be dishonored; Christ will have lost one of his members; the Divine Husband will be disappointed in part of his well-beloved spouse; he will be a king whose regalia has been stolen; nay, he will not be complete himself, for the Church is his fullness, and how can he be full if a part of his fullness shall be cast away? Putting these things together, let us take courage, and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us hitherto will preserve us to the end, and we shall soon sing in the fruition of glory as we now recite in the confidence of faith, that his purpose is completed, and his love immutable.

This I say by way of close such a subject ought to inspire every man with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought; God's purpose will be subserved in you. You may hate him, but as he get

him honor upon Pharaoh and all his hosts, so will he upon you. You may think that you will spoil his designs: that shall be your idea, but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to sum serve his glory. Think of that! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist him is not only impertinence but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield him willing honor or unwilling honor, but either way his purpose in you shall most certainly be subserved. O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, "Great God, glorify thy mercy in me, for I have revolted; show that thou canst forgive. I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depths of thy mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died, and that he is set forth as a propitiator; I believe on him as such. O God! I trust him: I pray thee, glorify thyself in me by showing what thy grace can do in casting sin behind thy back, and blotting out iniquity, transgression, and sin." Sinner, he will do it, he will do it, if thus you plead and thus you pray, he will do it, for there was never a sinner rejected yet, that came to God with humble prayer and faith. Going to God to-day, confessing your sin, and taking hold of Christ, as upon the horns of the altar of mercy, and of sacrifice, you shall find that it was a part of the divine plan to bring you here to-day, to strike your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God, and to bring you perfect at last before his throne.

God add his blessing for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Infant Salvation**

Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well - 2 Kings 4:26

The subject of this morning's discourse will be "Infant Salvation." It may

not possibly be interesting to all present, but I do not remember to have preached upon this subject to this congregation, and I am anxious moreover that the printed series should contain sermons upon the whole range of theology. I think there is no one point which ought to be left out in our ministry, even though it may only yield comfort to a class. Perhaps the larger proportion of this audience have at some time or other had to shed the briny tear over the child's little coffin;—it may be that through this subject consolation may be afforded to them. This good Shunammite was asked by Gehazi, whether it was well with herself. She was mourning over a lost child, and yet she said, "It is well;" she felt that the trial would surely be blessed. "Is it well with thy husband?" He was old and stricken in years, and was ripening for death, yet she said, "Yes, it is well." Then came the question about her child, it was dead at home, and the enquiry would renew her griefs, "Is it well with the child?" Yet she said, "It is well," perhaps so answering because she had a faith that soon it should be restored to her, and that its temporary absence was well; or I think rather because she was persuaded that whatever might have become of its spirit, it was safe in the keeping of God, happy beneath the shadow of his wings. Therefore, not fearing that it was lost, having no suspicion whatever that it was cast away from the place of bliss—for that suspicion would have quite prevented her giving such answer—she said "Yes, the child is dead, but 'it is well.'"

Now, let every mother and father here present know assuredly that it is well with the child, if God hath taken it away from you in its infant days. You never heard its declaration of faith—it was not capable of such a thing—it was not baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, not buried with him in baptism; it was not capable of giving that "answer of a good conscience towards God;" nevertheless, you may rest assured that it is well with the child, well in a higher and a better sense than it is well with yourselves; well without limitation, well without exception, well infinitely, "well" eternally. Perhaps you will say, "What reasons have we for believing that it is well with the child?" Before I enter upon that I would make one observation. It has been wickedly, lyingly, and slanderously said of Calvinists, that we believe that some little children perish. Those who make the accusation know that their charge is false. I cannot even dare to hope, though I would wish to do so, that they ignorantly misrepresent us.

They wickedly repeat what has been denied a thousand times, what they know is not true. In Calvin's advice to Omit, he interprets the second commandment "shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me," as referring to generations, and hence he seems to teach that infants who have had pious ancestors, no matter how remotely, dying as infants are saved. This would certainly take in the whole race. As for modern Calvinists, I know of no exception, but we all hope and believe that all persons dying in infancy are elect. Dr. Gill, who has been looked upon in late times as being a very standard of Calvinism, not to say of ultra-Calvinism, himself never hints for a moment the supposition that any infant has perished, but affirms of it that it is a dark and mysterious subject, but that it is his belief, and he thinks he has Scripture to warrant it, that they who have fallen asleep in infancy have not perished, but have been numbered with the chosen of God, and so have entered into eternal rest. We have never taught the contrary, and when the charge is brought, I repudiate it and say, "You may have said so, we never did, and you know we never did. If you dare to repeat the slander again, let the lie stand in scarlet on your very cheek if you be capable of a blush." We have never dreamed of such a thing. With very few and rare exceptions, so rare that I never heard of them except from the lips of slanderers, we have never imagined that infants dying as infants have perished, but we have believed that they enter into the paradise of God.

First, then, this morning, I shall endeavor to explain the way in which we believed infants are saved; secondly, give reasons for do believing; and then, thirdly, seek to bring out a practical use of the subject.

#### I. First of all, THE WAY IN WHICH WE BELIEVE INFANTS TO BE SAVED.

Some ground the idea of the eternal blessedness of the infant upon its innocence. We do no such thing; we believe that the infant fell in the first Adam, "for in Adam all died." All Adam's posterity, whether infant or adult, were represented by him—he stood for them all, and when he fell, he fell for them all. There was no exception made at all in the covenant of works made with Adam as to infants dying; and inasmuch as they were included in Adam, though they have not sinned after the similitude of

Adam's transgression, they have original guilt. They are "born in sin and steepen in iniquity; in sin do their mothers conceive them;" so saith David of himself, and (by inference) of the whole human race. If they be saved, we believe it is not because of any natural innocence. They enter heaven by the very same way that we do; they are receives in the name of Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid," and I do not think nor dream that there is a different foundation for the infant than that which is laid for the adult. And equally is it far from our minds to believe that infants go to heaven through baptism—not to say, in the first place, that we believe infant sprinkling to be a human and carnal invention, an addition to the Word of God, and therefore wicked and injurious. When we reflect that it is rendered into some thing worse than superstition by being accompanied with falsehood, when children are taught that in their baptism they are made the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, which is as base a lie as ever was forged in hell, or uttered beneath the copes of heaven, our spirit sinks at the fearful errors which have crept into the Church, through the one little door of infant sprinkling. No; children are not saved because they are baptized, for if so, the Puseyite is quite right in refusing to bury our little children if they die unbaptized. Yes, the barbarian is quite right in driving the parent, as he does to this day, from the church yard of his own national Church, and telling him that his child may rot above-ground, and that it shall not be buried except it be at the dead of night, because the superstitious drops have never fallen on its brow. He is right enough if that baptism made the child a Christian, and if that child could not be saved without it. But a thing so revolting to feeling, is at once to be eschewed by Christian men. The child is saved, if snatched away by death as we are, on another ground than that of rites and ceremonies, and the will of man.

On what ground, then, do we believe the child to be saved? We believe it to be as lost on the rest of mankind, and as truly condemned by the sentence which said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It is saved because it is elect. In the compass of election, in the Lamb's Book of Life, we believe there shall be found written millions of souls who are only shown on earth, and then stretch their wings for heaven. They are saved, too, because they were redeemed by the precious

blood of Jesus Christ. He who shed his blood for all his people, bought them with the same price with which he redeemed their parents, and therefore are they saved because Christ was sponsor for them, and suffered in their room and stead. They are saved, again not without regeneration, for, "except a man"—the text does not mean an adult man but a person, a being of the human race—"except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No doubt, in some mysterious manner the Spirit of God regenerates the infant soul, and it enters into glory made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. That this is possible is proved from Scripture instances. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. We read of Jeremiah also, that the same had occurred to him; and of Samuel we find that while yet a babe the Lord called him. We believe, therefore, that even before the intellect can work, God, who worketh not by the will of man, nor by blood, but by the mysterious agency of his Holy Spirit, creates the infant soul a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then it enters into the "rest which remaineth for the people of God." By election, by redemption, by regeneration, the child enters into glory, by the selfsame door by which every believer in Christ Jesus hopes to enter, and in no other way. If we could not suppose that children could be saved in the same way as adults, if it would be necessary to suppose that God's justice must be infringe, or that his plan of salvation must be altered to suit their cases, then we should be in doubt; but we can see that with the same appliances, by the same plan, on precisely the same grounds, and through the same agencies, the infant soul can behold the Savior a face in glory everlasting, and therefore we are at ease upon the matter.

## II. This brings me now to note THE REASONS WHY WE THUS THINK INFANTS ARE SAVED.

First, we ground our conviction very much upon the goodness of the nature of God. We say that the opposite doctrine that some infants perish and are lost, is altogether repugnant to the idea which we have of Him whose name is love. If we had a God, whose name was Moloch, if God were an arbitrary tyrant, without benevolence or grace, we could suppose some infants being cast into hell; but our God, who heareth the young ravens when they cry, certainly will find no delight in the shrieks and



cries of infants cast away from his presence. We read of him that he is so tender, that he careth for oxen, that he would not have the mouth of the ox muzzled, that treadeth out the corn. Nay, he careth for the bird upon the nest, and would not have the mother bird killed while sitting upon its nest with its little ones. He made ordinances and commands even for irrational creatures. He finds food for the most loathsome animal, nor does he neglect the worm any more than the angel, and shall we believe with such universal goodness as this, that he would cast away the infant soul I say it would be clear contrary to all that we have ever read or ever believed of Him, that our faith would stagger before a revelation which should display a fact so singularly exceptional to the tenor of his other deeds. We have learned humbly to submit our judgments to his will, and we dare not criticise or accuse the Lord of All; we believe him to be just, let him do as he may, and? Therefore, whatever he might reveal we would accept; but he never has, and I think he never will require of us so desperate a stretch of faith as to see goodness in the eternal misery of an infinite cast into hell. You remember when Jonah—petulant, quick-tempered Jonah—would have Nineveh perish God gave it as the reason why Nineveh should not be destroyed, that there were in it more than six score thousand infants,—persons, he said, who knew not their light hand tram their left. If he spared Nineveh that their mortal life might be spared, think you that their immortal souls shall be needlessly cast away! I only put it to your own reason. It is not a case where we need much argument. Would your God cast away an infant? If yours could, I am happy to say he is not the God that I adore.

Again, we think it would be inconsistent utterly with the known character of our Lord Jesus Christ. When his disciples put away the little children whom their anxious mothers brought to him, Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven," by which he taught, as John Newton very properly says, that such as these made up a very great part of the kingdom of heaven. And when we consider that upon the best statistics it is calculated that more than one third of the human race die in infancy, and probably if we take into calculation those districts where infanticide prevails, as in heathen countries, such as China and the like, perhaps one half of the population of the world die before they reach adult years,—the saying of the Savior

derives great force indeed," Of such is the kingdom of heaven." If some remind me that the kingdom of heaven means the dispensation of grace on earth, I answer, yes, it does, and it means the same dispensation in heaven too, for while part of the kingdom of heaven is on earth in the Church, since the Church is always one, that other part of the Church which is above is also the kingdom of heaven. We know this text is constantly used as a proof of baptism, but in the first place, Christ did not baptize them, for "Jesus Christ baptized not;" in the second place, his disciples did not baptize them, for they withstood their coming, and would have driven them away. Then if Jesus did not, and his disciple did not, who did, ' It has no more to do with baptism than with circumcision. There is not the slightest allusion to baptism in the text, or in the context; and I can prove the circumcision of infants from it with quite as fair logic as others attempt to prove infant baptism. However, it does prove this, that infants compose a great part of the family of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is known to have had a love and amiableness towards the little ones. When they shouted in the temple, "Hosanna!" did he rebuke them? No; but rejoiced in their boyish shouts. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hath God ordained strength," and does not that text seem to say that in heaven there shall be "perfect praise" rendered to God by multitudes of cherubs who were here on earth—your little ones fondled in your bosom—and then suddenly snatched away to heaven. I could not believe it of Jesus, that he would say to little children, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire in hell!" I cannot conceive it possible of him as the loving and tender one, that when he shall sit to judge all nations, he should put the little ones on the left hand, and should banish them for ever from his presence. Could he address them, and say to them, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not? "How could they do it? And if the main reason of damnation lie in sins of omission like there which it was not possible for them to commit, for want of power to perform the duty how, then, shall he condemn and cast them away?

Furthermore, we think that the ways of grace, if we consider them, render it highly improbable, not to say impossible, that an infant soul should be destroyed. What saith Scripture? "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Such a thing as that could not be said of an infant cast

away. We know that God is so abundantly gracious that such expressions as the "unsearchable riches of Christ," "God who is rich in mercy," "A God full of compassion," "The exceeding riches of his grace," and the like are truly applicable without exaggeration or hyperbole. We know that he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, and that in grace he is able to do "exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think." The grace of God has sought out in the world the greatest sinners. It has not passed by the vilest of the vile. He who called himself the chief of sinners was a partaker of the love of Christ. All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been forgiven unto man. He has been able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ, and does it seem consistent with such grace as this that it should pass by the myriads upon myriads of little ones, who wear the image of the earthy Adam, and never stamp upon them the image of the heavenly? I cannot conceive such a thing. He that has tasted and felt, and handled the grace of God, will, I think, shrink instinctively from any other doctrine than this, that infants dying such, are most assuredly saved.

Once again one of the strongest inferential arguments is to be found in the fact that Scripture positively states that the number of saved souls at the last will be very great. In the Revelation we read of a number that no man can number. The Psalmist speaks of them as numerous as dew drops from the womb of the morning. Many passages give to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, a seed as many as the stars of heaven, or as the sand on the sea shore. Christ is to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; surely it is not a little that will satisfy him. The virtue of the precious redemption involves a great host who were redeemed. All Scripture seems to tenon that heaven will not be a narrow world, that its population will not be like a handful gleaned out of a vintage, but that Christ shall be glorified by ten thousand times ten thousand, whom he hath redeemed with his blood. Now where are they to come from? How small a part of the map could be called Christian! Look at it. Out of that part which could be called Christian, how small a portion of them would bear the name of believer! How few could be said to have even a nominal attachment to the Church of Christ? Out of this, how many are hypocrites, and know not the truth! I do not see it possible, unless indeed the millennium age should soon come, and then far exceed a thousand years, I do not see how it is

possible that so vast a number should enter heaven, unless it be on the supposition that infant souls constitute the great majority. It is a sweet belief to my own mind that there will be more saved than lost, for in all things Christ is to have the pre-eminence, and why not in this? It was the thought of a great divine that perhaps at the last the number of the lost would not bear a greater proportion to the number of the saved, than do the number of criminals in gaols to those who are abroad in a properly-conducted state. I hope it may be found to be so. At any rate, it is not my business to be asking, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" The gate is strait, but the Lord knows how to bring thousands through it without making it any wider, and we ought not to seek to shut any out by seeking to make it narrower. Oh! I do know that Christ will have the victory, and that as he is followed by streaming hosts, the black prince of hell will never be able to count so many followers in his dreary train as Christ in his resplendent triumph. And if so we must have the children saved; yea, brethren, if not so, we must have them, because we feel anyhow they must be numbered with the blessed, and dwell with Christ hereafter.

Now for one or two incidental matters which occur in Scripture, which seem to throw a little light also on the subject. You have not forgotten the case of David. His child by Bathsheba was to die as a punishment for the father's offense. David prayed, and fasted, and vexed his soul; at last they tell him the child is dead. He fasted no more, but he said, "I shall go to him, he shall not return to me." Now, where did David expect to go to? Why, to heaven surely. Then his child must have been there, for he said, "I shall go to him." I do not hear him say the same of Absalom. He did not stand over his corpse, and say, "I shall go to him;" he had no hope for that rebellious son. Over this child it was not—"O my son! would to God I had died for thee!" No, he could let this babe go with perfect confidence, for he said, "I shall go to him." "I know," he might have said, "that He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for he is with me, I shall go to my child, and in heaven we shall be reunited with each other." You remember, his, those instances which I have already quoted, where children are said to have been sanctified from the womb. It casts this light upon the subject, it shows it not to be impossible that a child should be a partaker of grace while yet a babe. Then you have

the passage, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath perfected praise." The coming out of Egypt was a type of the redemption of the chosen seed, and you know that in that case the little ones were to go forth, nay, not even a hoof was to be left behind. Why not children in the greater deliverance to join in the song of Moses and of the Lamb? And there is a passage in Ezekiel, for where we have but little, we must pick up even the crumbs, and do as our Master did—gather up the fragments that nothing be lost—there is a passage in Ezekiel, sixteenth chapter, twenty-first verse, where God is censuring his people for having given up their little infants to Moloch, having caused them to pass through the fire, and he says of these little ones, "Thou hast slain lay children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire," so, then, they were God's children those little ones who died in the red-hot arms of Moloch while babes, God calls "my children." We may, therefore, believe concerning all those who have fallen asleep in these early days of life, that Jesus said of them, "These are my children," and that he now to-day, while he leads his sheep unto loving fountains of water, does not forget still to carry out his own injunction, "Feed my lambs." Yea, to-day even he carrieth "the lambs in his bosom," and even before the eternal throne he is not ashamed to say, "Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me." There is another passage in Scripture which I think may be used. In the first chapter of Deuteronomy these ball been a threatening pronounced upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, they should never see the promised land; nevertheless, it is added. "Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it." To you, fathers and mothers who fear not God, who live and die unbelieving, I would say, your unbelief cannot shut your children out of heaven and I bless God for that. While you cannot lay hold on that text which says "The promise is unto us and our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet inasmuch as the sin of the generation in the wilderness did not shut the next generation out of Canaan but they did surely enter in, so the sin of unbelieving parents shall not necessarily be the ruin of their children, but they shall still, through God's sovereign grace and his overflowing mercy, be made partakers of the rest which he hath reserved for his people. Understand that this morning I have not

made a distinction between the children of godly and ungodly parents. If they die in infancy, I do not mind who is father nor who their mother, they are saved; I do not even endorse the theory of a good Presbyterian minister who supposes that the children of godly parents will have a better place in heaven than those who happen to be sprung from ungodly ones. I do not believe in any such thing. I am not certain that there are any degrees in heaven at an; and even if there were, I am not clear that even that would prove our children to have any higher rights than others. All of them without exception, from whosoever loins they may have sprung, will, we believe, not by baptism, not by their parents' faith, but simply as we are all saved through the election of God, through the precious blood "Christ, through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, attain to glory and Immortality, and wear the image of the heavenly as they have worn the image of the earthy.

### III. I now come to make a PRACTICAL USE OF THE DOCTRINE.

First, let it be a comfort to bereaved parents. You say it is a heavy cross that you have to carry. Remember, it is easier to carry a dead cross than a living one. To have a living cross is indeed a tribulation,—to have a child who is rebellious in his childhood, vicious in his youth, debauched in his manhood! Ah, would God that he had died from the birth; would God that he had never seen the light! Many a father's heirs have been brought with sorrow to the grave through his living childre, but I think never through his dead babes, certainly not if he were a Christian, and were able to take the comfort of the apostle's words—"We sorrow not as they that are without hope." So you would have your child live? Ah, if you could have drawn aside the veil of destiny, and have seen to what he might have lived! Would you have had him live to ripen for the gallows? Would you have him live to curse his father's God? Would you have him live to make your home wretched to make you wet your pillow with tears, and send you to your daily work with your hands upon your loins because of sorrow? Such might have been the case; it is not so now, for your little one sings before the throne of God. Do you know from what sorrows your little one has escaped? You have had enough yourself. It was born of woman, it would have been of few days and full of trouble as you are. It has escaped those sorrows, do you lament that? Remember, too your own

sins, and the deep sorrow of repentance. Had that child lived, it would have been a sinner, and it must have known the bitterness of conviction of sin. It has escaped that; it rejoices now in the glory of God. Then would you have it back again? Bereaved parents, could you for a moment see your own offspring above, I think you would very speedily wipe away your team. There among the sweet voices which sing the perpetual carol may be heard the voice of your own child—an angel now, and you the mother of a songster before the throne of God. You might not have murmured had you received the promise that your child should have been elevated to the peerage, it has been elevated higher than that—to the peerage of heaven. It has received the dignity of the immortals, it is robed in better than royal garments it is more rich and more blessed than it could have been if all the crowns of earth could have been put upon its head. Wherefore, then would you complain? An old poet has penned a verse well fitted for an infant's epitaph;—

"Short was my life, the longer is my rest,  
God takes those soonest whom he loveth best,  
Who's born today, and dies tomorrow,  
Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.  
Other diseases often come to grieve us,  
Death restrikes but once, and that stroke doth relieve us."

Your child has had that one stroke and has been relieved from all these pains, and you may say of it, this much we know, he is supremely blessed, has escaped from sin, and care, and woe, and with the Savior rests.

"Happy the babe," says Hervey, "who,

Privileged by faith, a shorter labor and a lighter weight,  
Received but yesterday the gift of breath,  
Ordered tomorrow to return to death."

While another says, looking upward to the skies,

"O blest exchange, O envied lot,  
Without a conflict crowned,  
Stranger to pain, in pleasure bless'd

And without fame, renowned."

So is it. It is well to fight and will, but to will as fairly without the fight! It is well to sing the song of triumph after we have passed the Red Sea with all its terrors, but to sing the song without the sea is glorious still! I do not know that I would prefer the lot of a child in heaven myself. I think it is nobler to have borne the storm, and to have struggled against the wind and the rain. I think it will be a subject of congratulation through eternity, for you and me, that we did not come so easy a way to heaven, for it is only a pin's prick after all, this mortal life; then there is exceeding great glory hereafter. But yet I think we may still thank God for those little ones that they have been spared our sins, and spared our infirmities, and spared our pains and are entered into the rest above. Thus saith the Lord unto thee, O Rachel, if thou weepst for thy children, and refuseth to be comforted because they are not: "Restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded with the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

The next and perhaps more useful and profitable inference to be drawn from the text is this: many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too? And yet have I not in these galleries and in this area some, perhaps many, who have no hope hereafter? In fact, you have left that which is beyond the grave to be thought of another day, you have given all your time and thoughts to the short, brief, and unsatisfactory pursuits of mortal life. Mother unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that one—looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, ere they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, "Father, must we be for ever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass? "Doth not nature itself put a kind of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children? Then stop and think. As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity I pray thee go to thy chamber this morning and think of thyself as being driven from thy little ones,



banished for ever from the presence of God, cast "where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched." If thou wilt think of these matters, perhaps the heart will begin to move, and the eyes may begin to flow, and then may the Holy Spirit put before thine eyes the cross of the Savior the holy child Jesus! And remember, if thou wilt turn thine eye to him thou shalt live: if thou believest on him with all thy heart thou shalt be with him where He is,—with all those whom the Father gave him who have gone before Thou needest not to be shut out. Wilt thou sign thine own doom, and write thine own death warrant? Neglect not this great salvation but may the grace of God work with thee to make thee seek, for thou shalt find—to make thee knock, for the door shall be opened—to make thee ask, for he that asketh shall receive! O might I take you by the hand—perhaps you have come from a newly-made grave, or left the child at home dead, and God has made me a messenger to you this morning; O might I take you by the hand and say, "We cannot bring him back again, the spirit is gone beyond recall, but you may follow!" Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of thyself the next step is faith, into, Christ, and when thou art there, thou art fairly and safely on thy way, and ere long thou shalt be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome thee when thou shouldest land upon the eternal chores.

Yet another lesson of instruction, and I will not detain you much longer. What shall we say to parent who have living children? We have spoken of those that are dead, what shall we say of the living? I think I might say, reserve your tears, bereaved parents, for the children that live. You may go to the little grave, you may look upon it and say, "This my child is saved; it resteth for ever beyond all fear of harm." You may come back to those who are sitting round your table, and you can look from one to the other and say, "These my children, many of them are unsaved." Out of God, out of Christ, some of them are just ripening into manhood and into womanhood, and you can plainly see that their heart is like every natural heart, desperately wicked. There is subject for weeping for you. I pray you never cease to weep for them until they have ceased to sin, never cease to hope for them until they have ceased to live; never cease to pray for them until you yourself cease to breathe. Carry them before God in the arms of faith, and do not be desponding because they are not what you want them

to be. They will be won yet if you have but faith in God. Do not think that it is hopeless. He that saved you can save them. Take them one by one constantly to God's mercy-seat and wrestle with Him, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The promise is unto you and to your child, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call. Pray, strive, wrestle, and it shall yet be your happy lot to see your household saved. This was the word which the apostle gave to the gaoler, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." We have had many proofs of it, for in this pool under here I have baptised not only the father and the mother, but in many cases all the children too, who one after another have been brought by grace even to put their trust in Jesus. It should be the longing of every parent's heart to see all his offspring Christ's, and all that have sprung from his loins numbered in the host of those who shall sing around the throne of God. We may pray in faith, for we have a promise about it; we may pray in faith, for we have many precedents in Scripture, the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, but for this good thing he will be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them. Inquire of Him, plead with Him, go before Him with the power of faith and earnestness, and He will surely hear you.

One word to all the congregation. A little child was saying the other day—and children will sometimes say strange things—"Papa, I cannot go back again." When he was asked what he meant, he explained that he was here, he had begun his life, and it seemed such a thought to him that he could not cease to be,—he could not go back again. You and I may say the same; here we are; we have grown up, we cannot go back again to that childhood in which we once were; we have therefore no door of escape there. Good John Bunyan used to wish that he had died when he was a child. Then again, he hoped he might be descended from some Jew, for he had a notion that the Hebrews might be saved. That door God has closed. Every door is closed to you and me except the one that is just in front of us, and that has the mark of the cross upon it. There is the golden knocker of prayer: do we choose to turn aside from that to find another,—a gate of ceremonies, or of blood, or of birth? We shall never enter that way. There is that knocker! By faith, great God, I will lift it now. "I, the chief of sinners am, have mercy upon me! "Jesus stands there. "Come in," saith he, "thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" He

receives me to his arms, washes, clothes, glorifies me, when I come to him. Am I such a fool that I do not knock? Yes, such I am by nature—then what a fool! O Spirit of God! make me wise to know my danger and my refuge! And now, sinner, in the name of him that liveth and was lead, and is alive for evermore, lay hold upon that knocker, lift it, give it a blow, and let your prayer be, ere thou leanest this sanctuary, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" May the Lord hear and bless, for his name's sake!

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## **Instability**

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel. - Genesis 49:4

Perfect stability has ceased from the world since the day when Adam fell. He was stable enough when in the garden he was obedient to his Master's will, but when he ate of the forbidden fruit he did not only slide himself, but he shook the standing places of all his posterity. Perfect stability belongs alone to God he alone, of all beings, is without variableness or shadow of a turning. He is immutable, he will not change. He is all-wise, he need not change. He is perfect; he cannot change. But men, the best of them are mutable, and therefore to a degree, they are unstable, and do not excel. Yet it is remarkable that, although man has lost perfect stability, he has not lost the admiration of it. Perhaps there is no virtue, or, rather, no compound of virtues, which the world more esteems than stability of mind. You will find that, although men have often misplaced their praise, and have called those great who were not great, morally, but were far below the level of morality, yet they have scarcely ever called a man great who has not been consistent, who has not had strength of mind enough to be stable in his principles. I know not how it is, but so it is, whenever a man is firm and consistent, we always admire him for it.

Though we feel certain that he is wrong, yet his consistency in his wrong still excites our admiration. We have known men whom we have thought to be insane, they have conceived a design so ridiculous that we could only laugh at them, and despise their idea; but they have stuck to it, and we have said, "Well, there is nothing like a man standing to a thing," and we have admired even the senseless, brainless idiot, as we have thought him, when we have seen him pertinaciously insisting that his idea would at last triumph, and persevering in futile endeavors to realize his wish. The weathercock man is never admired, as a politician or as anything else he will never succeed; he must be one thing or another, or the world will never respect him.

Now, my brethren, if it be so in earthly things, it is so also in spiritual. Instability in religion is a thing which every man despises, although every man has, to a degree, the evil in himself, but stability in the firm profession and practice of godliness, will always win respect, even from the worldly, and certainly will not be forgotten by him whose smile is honor and whose praise is glory, even the great Lord and Master, before whom we stand or fall. I have many characters here to-day whom I desire to address in the words of my text. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." I propose, first, briefly to notice, the common and unavoidable instabilities which necessarily attach themselves to the best of Christians. I shall then note the character of a Christian who is noted for glaring instability, but who, notwithstanding, has sufficient of godliness to bid us hope that he is a child of God, I shall then have to do with the mere professor, who is "unstable as water," and cannot excel in any way whatever; and then I must deal with the unstable sinner who, in any pretensions he may ever make to better feelings, is always like the early cloud and the morning dew.

I. First, then, to ALL Christians, permit me to address myself. Our father Adam, spoilt us all; and, although the second Adam has renewed us, he has not yet removed from us the infirmities, which the first Adam left us as a mournful legacy. We are none of us stable as we should be. We had a notion when we were first converted, that we should never know a change; our soul was so full of love that we could not imagine it possible we should ever flag in our devotion; our faith was so strong in our

Incarnate Master, that we smiled at older Christians who talked of doubts and fears; our faces were so stedfastly set Zionward that we never imagined Bye-path Meadow would ever be trodden by our feet. We felt sure that our course would certainly be "like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But, my brethren, have we found it so? Have we not this day to lament that we have been very changeable and inconstant, even unstable as water? How unstable have we been in our frames? To-day we have climbed the top of Pisgah, and have viewed the heavenly landscape over by the eye of faith; to-morrow we have been plunged in the dungeon of despair, and could not call a grain of hope our own; to-day we have feasted at the banquetting table of communion; to-morrow we have been exclaiming, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even unto his feet." At night I have said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," to-morrow has beheld my grasp loosened, and prayer neglected until God has said "I will return unto my rest, until thou hast acknowledged thy transgressions, which thou hast committed against me." High frames one day, low frames the next We have had more changes than even this variable climate of ours. It is a great mercy for us that frames and slings are not always the index of our security, for we are as safe when we are mourning as we are when we are singing; but verily, if our true state before God had changed as often as our experience of his presence, we must have been cast into the bottomless pit years ago.

And how variable have we been in our faith! In the midst of one trouble we have declared, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We have courted the jeer, we have laughed at the scorn of the world, and have stood like rocks in the midst of foaming billows, when all men were against us; another week has seen us flying away, after denying our Master, because, like Peter, we were afraid of some little maid, or of our own shadow. After coming out of a great trouble, we have resolutely declared "I can never doubt God again," but the next cloud that has swept the sky, has darkened all our faith. We have been variable in our faith.

And have you not also, at times, my friends, felt variable in your love? Sweet Master, King of heaven, fairest of a thousand fairs! my heart is knit to thee - my soul melteth at the mention of thy name; my heart bubbleth

up with a good matter, when I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.

The strings that bind around my heart,  
Tortures and racks may tear them off;  
But they can never, never part,  
The hold I have of Christ, my love."

Sure, I could die for thee, and think it better than to live, if so I might honor thee. This is the sweet manner of our spirit when our love is burning and fervent: but anon we neglect the fire, it becomes dim, and we have to rake among the ashes even for a spark, crying,

"'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I his, or am I not?"

How unstable we are! At one time we are quite certain we are the Lord's. though an angel from heaven should deny our election, or our adoption, we would reply that we have the witness of the Spirit that we are born of God, but perhaps within two minutes we shall not be able to say that we ever had one spiritual feeling. We shall perhaps think that we never repented aright, never fled to Christ aright, and did never believe to the saving of the soul. Oh! it is no wonder that we do not excel, when we are such unstable creatures. Alas! my brethren I might enlarge on the inconsistencies of the mass of Christians. How unfaithful we have been to our dedication vows! how negligent of close communion! How unlike we have been to holy Enoch! how much more like Peter, when he followed afar off! I might tell how one day, like the mariner, we mounted up to heaven, and how the next moment we have gone to the lowest depths when the waves of God's grace have ceased to lift us up. I wonder at David, at Jacob, and at every instance we have in Scripture of excellent men. Marvel! O ye angels, that God should ever make such bright stars out of such black blots as we are. How can it ever be that man, so fickle, so inconstant, should nevertheless be a pillar in the house of his God, and should be made to stand "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!" How is it, O our God, that thou couldst have steered a

vessel so safely to its port which was so easily driven by every wind and carried away by every wave! He is a good marksman who can shoot so crooked an arrow straight to its target. Marvel not that we do not excel - marvel that we do excel in anything unstable as we are.

II. And now leaving these general remarks I have to single out a certain class of persons. I believe them to be TRUE CHRISTIANS but they are Christians of a singular sort. I would not be so harsh as to condemn them, though I must certainly condemn the error with which I am about to find fault. I doubt not that they have been converted in a genuine manner, but still they are often a mystery to me, and I should think they are a mystery to themselves. How many Christians have we in our churches that are unstable as water! I suppose they were born so. They are just as unstable in business as they are in religion; they open a grocer's shop, and shut it in three months, and turn drapers, and when they have been drapers long enough to become almost bankrupts, they leave that and try something else. When they were boys they could never play a game through, they must always be having something fresh, and now they are just as childish as when they were children. Look at them in doctrine: you never know where to find them. You meet them one day, and they are very full of some super-lapsarian doctrine, they have been to some strong Calvinist place, and nothing will suit them except the very highest doctrine and that must be spiced with a little of the gall of bitterness, or they cannot think it is the genuine thing. Very likely next week they will be Arminians; they will give up all idea of a fixed fate, and talk of free-will, and man's responsibility like the most earnest Primitive Methodist. Then they steer another way. "Nothing is right but the Church of England. Is it not established by law? Ought not every Christian to go to his parish church?" Ah! ah, Let them alone, they will be at the most gross schismatical shop in the metropolis before long. Or if they do not change their denomination they are always changing their minister. A new minister starts up; there is no one, since the apostles, like him; they take a seat and join the church; he is everything to them. In three months they have done with him, another minister rises up some distance off, and these people are not particular how far they walk; so they go to hear him. He is the great man of the age; he will see every man's candle out, and his will burn on. But a little trouble comes on the church, and they leave him. They have no

attachment to anything; they are merely feathers in the wind or corks on the wave. They hear a sermon preached, and they say, "I think it did me good" but they do not venture to be sure till they speak to some great man who is a member of the church, and he says "Oh! there was nothing in it." "Ah! just so," they say, and cannot make up their minds whether it was a good sermon or not. They are unstable; they could easily be talked into anything or out of anything, they never had any brains in their head, I suppose, or if they ever had any they gave them to somebody else to muddle as he liked. They believe the last man they hear, and are easily guided and led by him.

Now, if the matter ended there it would not be so bad; but these poor people are just the same with regard to any religious enterprise they take in hand. There is a Sunday-school, they are enchanted with the thought. What a lovely thing it must be to sit on a form and try to teach half-a-dozen boys the way to heaven. They go to the Sunday-school and are alarmed the very first day, when they hear all the boys talking louder than the teachers. After about ten minutes they think it is not quite so nice as they thought. Perhaps they think it is that particular school they do not like, and they try another, and at last they give up all Sunday-school teaching, and make up their minds that it is not a good thing, at least not for them. Then there is a Ragged-school. What a divine enterprise! They will be Ragged-school teachers, and off they go with their hearts full of fire, and their eyes full of tears over these poor ragged-school children they are going to teach. Ah! how soon is their zeal withered and all their glory departed! Hear them talk about Ragged-schools a month afterwards: they shake their heads and say it is a very arduous enterprise. They do not think they had a call to it, they will try something else, and so they keep on to the end of the chapter, they are "everything by turns, and nothing long." There are some brethren in the ministry very much of the same sort. They never preach in one pulpit long, (though some say they preach there too long, for they ought never to have preached there at all) but I sometimes think that if they had had a little more courage, and bore a little more of the brunt of the battle, they might have done good to some of the villages where they were placed. But they are unstable as water, and everybody sees that they cannot excel. The same instability men will carry out in their friendships; they meet a person one day, and are as



friendly as possible with him; they meet him the next day, he does not know what he has done to offend them, but they turn their head another way. And some carry their instability a little farther, they carry it into their moral character. I shall not deny their Christianity, but they are a queer sort of Christians. For these people will sometimes, at least, stretch the cords of godliness a little too far, and though they certainly do act in the main conscientiously, yet their conscience is a large one, and it admits a great many things which tender-hearted people would think were wrong. We cannot find out any crime for which we could excommunicate them, yet in our hearts we often say, "Dear me! what a sad disgrace so-and-so is to the cause; we could do far better without him than with him, for he casts such a slur on the name of Christ."

Now, do not think I am drawing a fancy picture. I beg to inform you I am not; there are persons here who are furnishing me with the model; and if they choose to think me personal I shall be obliged to them, for I intend to be. These persons are to be found in all churches and among all denominations. You have met them everywhere. They are as unstable as water; they do not excel.

Now, let me address these persons very earnestly. My brother, I would be far from dealing in a censorious manner with thee, for I am inclined to think that thine instability is a little owing to some latent insanity. We are no doubt all of us insane to a degree; there is some little thing in us, which if we saw in another we should regard as being a little madness. I would therefore, my brother, deal very leniently with you, but at the same time let me very solemnly address you as a Christian minister speaking to a professedly Christian man. My brother, how much moral weight you lose in the church, and in the world by your perpetual instability. No one ever attaches any importance to your opinion, because your opinion has no importance in it, seeing that you yourself will contradict it in a very short time. You see many persons growing up in the church who have an influence over their neighbor for good; you sometimes wish that you too could strengthen the young convert, or reclaim and guide the wanderer. My brother you cannot do it, because of your inconsistency. Now is it not a fearful thing that you should be throwing away the whole force and weight of your character, simply because of this insane habit of yours of

being always unstable? I beseech thee, my brother, recollect that thou art responsible to God for thine influence; and if thou canst have influence and dost not get it thou art as sinful as if, having influence, thou hadst misused it. Do not, I beseech thee, suffer this instability to continue, lest thou shouldst become like the chaff which the wind driveth away - of no account to the world at all. Remember, my brother, how your instability ruins your usefulness. You never continue long enough in an enterprise to do good. What would you think of the farmer who should farm just long enough to plough his ground and sow his wheat, but not long enough to get a harvest? You would think him foolish; but just so foolish are you. You begin time enough to be overworked before you have well commenced. My brother, review your history, what have you done? You have made hundreds of futile attempts to do something, but a list of failures must be the only record of your labors. What do you think will be your distress of mind when you come to die, when you look back upon your life, and see it all the way through, a host of blunders? Do you not think it will stuff the pillow of your dying bed with thorns, to think that you were so wayward in disposition, so unstable in heart, that you were unable to accomplish anything for your Master, so that when you lay your crown at his feet you will have to say, "There is my crown, my Master but it has not a solitary star in it for I never worked long enough for thee in any enterprise to win a soul; I only did enough to fail and to be laughed at by all." And I would have thee think also, my brother, how canst thou be a growing Christian, and yet be so changeable as thou art? If a gardener should plant a tree to day, and take it up in the course of a month, and transfer it to another place, what crop would he have when autumn came? He would not have much to repay his toil. The continual changing of the tree would put it into such a weakly condition, that if it did not actually die, it would certainly produce nothing. And how can you expect to grow in knowledge when you have no steadfast principle? The man who espouses one form of doctrine, and does it honestly, will, though it be a mistaken form, at least understand it, but you do not know enough of Calvinism to defend it from its opponents, or enough of Arminianism to defend it from the Calvinists. You are not wise in anything, you are a rolling stone, you gather no moss. You stay in one school only long enough to read through the curriculum, but you learn nothing. You are smiling I see. And yet some of those who smiled are just the men we smile

at. They are here. But alas! I have noticed one sad thing respecting these people, they are generally the most conceited in all the world; they are excellent men they think; they are at home everywhere. If they are in error they know they can get right to-morrow, and then if some one else will again convince them they are in error, they know no difference between error and truth, except the difference which other people like to point out to them. O ye unstable Christians, hear ye the word of the Lord! "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." Your life shall have little of the cream of happiness upon it: you shall not walk in the midst of the king's highway, in which no lion shall be found, but you shall walk on the edge of the way, where you shall encounter every danger, feel every hardship and endure every ill. You shall have enough of God's comfort to keep you alive, but not enough to give you joy in your spirit and consolation in your heart. Oh, I beseech you ponder a little. Study the Word more, know what is right, and defend what is right. Study the Law more, know what is right, and do what is right. Study God's will more, know what he would have you do, and then do it. For an unstable Christian never can excel.

III. But now there is another class of persons whom we dare not, in the spirit of the widest charity admit to be true Christians. They are PROFESSORS they have been baptized, they receive the Lord's Supper, they attend prayer meetings church meetings, and everything else that belongs to the order of Christians with which they are connected. They are never behindhand in religious performances; they are the most devout hypocrites, they are the most pious formalists that could be discovered, range the wide world o'er. Their religion on the Sabbath day is of the most superfine order; their godliness when they are in their pews cannot be exceeded. They sing with the most eloquent praise, they pray the longest and most hypocritical prayer that man could utter; they are just up to the mark in every religious point of view, except on the point which looks to the heart As far as the externals of godliness go there is nothing to be desired. They tithe the anise, the mint, and the cummin; they fast twice in the week; or if they do not fast, they are quite as religious in not fasting, and are just as godly in not doing it, as if they did it.

But these people are unstable as water, in the worst sense; for whilst they

sing Watts's hymns on Sunday, they sing other songs on Monday, and whilst they drink sacramental cups on Sabbath evenings, there are other cups of which they drink too deep on other nights; and though they pray most marvellously, there is a pun on that word pray, and they know how to exercise it upon their customers in business. They have a great affection for everything that is pious and devout; but alas! like Balaam, they take the reward of wickedness, and they perish in the gainsaying of Core. "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." They bring a disgrace upon the cause which they profess: not the vilest profane swearer brings more dishonor on God's holy name than they do. They can find fault with everything in the church, whilst they commit all manner of wickedness, and are, as the apostle said, even weeping "enemies of the cross of Christ, for their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame." O hypocrite, thou thinkest that thou shalt excel, because the minister has been duped, and gives thee credit for a deep experience, because the deacons have been entrapped and think thee to be eminently godly, because the church members receive thee to their houses, and think thee a dear child of God too! Poor soul! mayhap thou mayest go to thy grave with the delusion in thy brain that all is right with thee; but remember, though like a sheep thou art laid in thy grave, Death will find thee out. He will say to thee, Off with thy mask, man! away with all thy robes! Up with that whitewashed sepulcher! Take off that green turf; let the worms be seen. Out with the body; let us see the reeking corruption! and what wilt thou say when thine abominably corrupt and filthy heart shall be opened before the sun, and men and angels hear thy lies and hypocrisies laid bare before them? Wilt thou play the hypocrite then? Soul, come and sing God's praises in the day of judgment with false lip! Tell him now, while a widow's house is in your throat, tell him that you love him! Come, now, thou that devourest the fatherless, thou that robbest, thou that dost uncleanness! tell him now that thou didst make thy boast in the Lord! tell him that thou didst preach his word, tell him that thou didst walk in his streets! tell him thou didst make it known that thou wert one of the excellent of the earth!

What! man, is thy babbling tongue silent for once? What is the matter with thee? Thou wast never slow to talk of thy godliness. Speak out, and say "I took the sacramental cup; I was a professor." Oh how changed! The whitewashed sepulcher has become white in another sense, he is white with horror. See now; the talkative has become dumb; the boaster is silent; the formalist's garb is rent to rags, the moth has devoured their beauty; their gold has become tarnished, and their silver cankered. Ah! it must be so with every man who has thus belied God and his own conscience. The stripping day of judgment will reveal him to God and to himself. And how awful shall be the damnation of the hypocrite! If I knew that I must be damned, one of my prayers should be, "Lord, let me not be damned with hypocrites," for surely to be damned with them is to be damned twice over. Conceive of a hypocrite going into hell. You know how one of the prophets depicted the advent of a great monarch into hell, when all the kings that had been his slaves rose up and said, "Art thou become like one of us?" Do you not think you see the godly Christian deacon, so godly that he was a liar all his life? Do you not think you see the eminent Christian member that kept a bank, took the chair at public meetings, swindled all he could, and died in despair? Do you not think you see him coming into the pit? There is one man there that was a drunkard all his life. Hear his speech, "Ah! you were a sober man! you used to talk to me, and tell me that drunkards could not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Aha! and art thou become like one of us?" Says another, "About a month ago, when we were on earth, you met me and rebuked me for profane swearing, and told me that all swearers should have their portion in the lake. Ah! there is not much to choose between thee and me now, is there?" And the profane man laughs as well as he can laugh in misery at his desperately religious adviser. "Oh!" says another - and they look round at one another with demoniac mirth; as much mockery of joy as hell can afford - "The parson here? Now preach us a sermon; now pray us a long prayer! Plenty of time to do it in!" "No!" says another, "there is no widow's house to eat, here, and he only prayed on the strength of the widow's house."

This is a hard scene for me to describe; but I doubt not of its truthfulness. It may be given to you in rough language, but it needs far rougher to make you know the dread reality. And what a solemn thought it is! there

is not one man nor one woman in this place who has not need to ask, "Is it so with me?" Many have been deceived - I may be - you may be, my hearer. "I am not deceived," says one, "I am a minister." My brethren, there are many of us who are preachers who are like Noah's carpenters; we may help to build an ark, and never get in it ourselves. Says another, "I shall not endure such language as that; I am a deacon." You may be all that, and yet, after having ministered, instead of earning to yourself a good degree, you may be cast from the presence of God. "No," says another, "but I have been a Christian professor these last forty years, and nobody has found fault with me." Ah! I have known many A rotten bough to have stopped on a tree forty years, and you may be rotten and yet stand all that time; but the winds of judgment will crack you at last, and down you will fall. "Nay," says another. "I know I am not insincere I am sure I am right." I am glad that you think so, but I would not like you to say it. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." There have been many great bubbles that have burst ere this, and your piety may be one of them. "Let not him that putteth on the harness boast as though he put it off." It will be time enough for you to be quite sure when you are quite safe. Yet blessed be God, we hope we can say, "O Lord, if not awfully deceived we have given our hearts to thee! Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee, and if we do not, Lord thou knowest we pray this prayer from our hearts: 'Search me, O God, and try my ways, prove me and know my heart, and see if there be any evil way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.'" May God the Holy Spirit strengthen and settle each of us.

IV. And now I have the last word to address to those who MAKE NO PRETENSION TO RELIGION whatever. I have heard hundreds of persons in my short life excuse their sin by saying, "Well, I make no profession," and I have always thought it one of the strangest excuses, one of the most wild vagaries of apology to which the human mind could ever make resort. Take an illustration, which I have used before. Tomorrow morning, when the Lord Mayor is sitting, there are two men brought up before him for robbery. One of them says he is not guilty, he declares that he is a good character, and he is an honest man in general though he was guilty in this case. He is punished. The other one says, "Well, your worship, I make no profession; I'm a down right thorough

thief, and I don't make any profession of being honest at all." Why you can suppose how much more severe the sentence would be upon such a man. Now, when you say I do not make any profession of being religious, what does that mean? It means that you are a despiser of God and of God's law; it means that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. You that boast of making no profession of religion, you are boasting you know not what of. You would think it a strange thing for a man to boast that he made no profession of being a gentleman, or no profession of being honest, or no profession of being sober, or no profession of being chaste. You would shun a man who did this, at once. And you who make no pretensions to religion, just make your trial the more easy for there will be no need for any dispute concerning you. When the scales of justice are lifted up at last you will be found to be light weight, and that upon your own confession. I cannot imagine you urging such a plea as that when God shall judge you. "My Lord, I made no profession." "What" saith the King, "did my subject make no profession of obedience?" "O Lord, I made no profession." "What!" saith the Creator, "make no profession of acknowledging my rights?" "I made no profession of religion." "What!" saith the Judge, "did I send my Son into the world to die, and did this man make no profession of casting his soul upon him? What! did he make no profession of his need of mercy? Then he shall have none. Does he dare tell me to my face that he never made any profession of faith in Christ, and never had anything to do with the Saviour? Then insomuch as he despised my Son, and despised his cross, and rejected his salvation, let him die the death;" and what that death is with its everlasting wailings and gnashing of teeth, eternity alone can tell.

O sinner! thou hast some part and lot in my text Thou art "unstable as water." Let me remind thee that though thou makest no profession of religion now, there was a time when thou didst. Strong man! you are laughing now: I repeat it, there was a time when you did talk about religion; it is not quite gone from your memory yet. You lay sick with fever for six weeks: do you recollect when the delirium came on, and they all thought that you must die? Do you recollect when your poor brain was right for a moment how you asked the physician whether there was any hope for you, and he would not exactly say "NO," but he looked so blank at you, that you understood what it meant? Do you recollect the agony

with which you looked forward to death? Do you recollect how you groaned in your spirit, and said, "O God, have mercy upon me?" Do you recollect that you got a little better, and you told your friends that if you lived you would serve God? "Oh! it is all over now," you say, you were a fool! Yes, you were a fool, that is true, you were a fool, to have said what you did not mean and to have lied before God. You do not profess religion! But you remember the last time the terrific thunder and lightning came. You were out in the storm. A flash came very near you. You are a bold man, but not so bold as you pretend to be. You shook from head to foot, and when the thunder clap succeeded, you were almost down on your knees, and before you knew it you were in prayer. "Please God I get home to-night," you said, "I shall not take his name in vain again!" But you have done it. You are unstable as water. You went sometime ago to a church or a chapel - I mind not which: the minister told you plainly where you were going. You stood there and trembled; tears ran down your cheeks, you did not knock your wife about that Sunday, you were a great deal more sober that week, and when your companion said you looked squeamish, you denied it, and said you had no such thoughts as he imagined. "Unstable as water." Oh! and there are some of you worse than that still: for not once, nor twice, but scores of times you have been driven under a faithful minister, to the very verge of what you thought repentance, and then, just when something said in your heart, "This is a turning point," you have started back, you have chosen the wages of unrighteousness, and have again wandered into the world. Soul! my heart yearns for thee! "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." No, but I pray the Lord to work in thee something that will be stable; for we all believe - and what I say is not a matter of fiction, but a thing that you believe in your own hearts to be true - we all believe that we must stand before the judgment bar of God, and ere long give account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Friend, what account wilt thou give of thy broken vows, of thy perjured soul? What wilt thou have to say why judgment should not be pronounced against thee? Ah! sinner, you will want Christ then! What would you give then for one drop of his blood? "Oh! for the hem of his garment! Oh, that I might but look to him and be lightened. Oh, would to God that I might hear the gospel once again!" I hear you wailing, when God has said, "Depart ye cursed!" And this is the burden of your song



"Fool that I was, to have despised Jesus, who was my only hope, to have broken my promise, and gone back to the poor vain world that deluded me, after all!" And now I hear him say "I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded; now I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." I always think those two last sentences the most awful in the Bible. "I will laugh at your calamity." The laugh of the Almighty over men that have rebelled against him, that have despised him, and trodden his gospel underfoot! "I also will laugh at your calamity I will mock when your fear cometh." Rail at that if you like, it is sure, sirs. Remember that all your kicking at God's laughter will not make him leave it off; remember that all your rebellious speeches against him shall be avenged in that day, unless ye repent, and that speak as ye will against him your blasphemy cannot quench the flames of hell, nor will your jeers slay the sword of vengeance: fall it must, and it will fall on you all the more heavily because you did despise it.

Hear the gospel, and then farewell. Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man, he lived on earth a life of holiness and suffering; at last he was nailed to the cross, and in deep woe he died. He was buried; he rose again from the deed, he ascended into heaven. And now God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent;" and he telleth them this - "Whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have eternal life." And this is his gospel. If you this day feel yourself to be a sinner, if that be a feeling wrought in you by the Holy Spirit and not a casual thought flashing across the soul, then Christ was punished for your sins; and you cannot be punished; for God will not punish twice for one offense. Believe in Christ; cast your soul on the atonement that he made; and although black as hell in sin, you may this day find yourself, through the efficacious blood of Christ, whiter than the snow. The Lord help thee, poor soul, to believe that the Man who died on Calvary was God, and that he took the sin of all believers upon himself - that thou, being a sinner and a believer, he has taken thy sins, and that therefore thou art free. Thus believe, and by faith thou wilt have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.

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## **An Instructive Truth**

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. - Jeremiah 10:23

This declaration follows after Jeremiah's lamentation over the Lord's ancient people, who were about to be carried captive into Babylon. The prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, brethren, to know the truth, and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people, who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard, who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not recollect it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know," and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this,—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a supreme authority to theirs, and a power which rules, and overrules, and works according to its own beneficent will, whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country; but the prophet consoled himself with the reflection that, whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was

working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation. This was Jeremiah's consolation, "I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do; but I do know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' I know that, in God's eternal purposes, every step of Judah's way is mapped out, and he will make it all work for his own glory and the good of his chosen people in the end."

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly, and what they do is done of their own free will, and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we never can forget, for the free agency of man is a self-evident truth; but, at the same time, God is omnipotent, and he is still working out his wise designs, as he did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin, and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny, all the while displaying his sovereign will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his will.

This truth ought to be remembered by us, because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why shouldst thou, O believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man, who is but a worm? Thou art, as a child of God, under divine protection; so, who is he that shall harm thee while thou art a follower of that which is good? Remember the ancient promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God's permission. He can put a bit in the mouth of a leviathan, and do with him as he pleaseth. The almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands. And while this truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that he gave to his people by covenant; it is God who permits it, therefore think not thou so much of the instrument employed by him as of the hand in which that instrument is held. Art thou afflicted, poor soul, by some hard unkind spirit? Remember that God permits thee to be so tried, and be not angry with

that which is only the second cause of thy trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to thee for thy good, and therefore submit thyself to him. A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick; if he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So, your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there be any contention, it is really against God; and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker. Rather, say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Let your back be bared to the rod, and look up to your Heavenly Father's face, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." This truth ought also to strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly; but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God's providence, and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a prophet to praise the Lord; but it was quite another matter to trust God when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities, and by-and-by, took them, and gave them up to utter destruction, and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God then, was not so easy; yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith; faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true; but wintry faith, that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep, and the North wind blows, is the faith of God's elect. It proves that it has divine vitality in it, because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood. It is a severe trial, to a child of God, when he is mocked at home,—when someone, who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite,—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of grace,—when Ishmael mocks Isaac, and grieves him continually. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this truth, that God has all things in his hand, and that this trial is only permitted, in his wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards his own child. It is still true that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" and that "no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly." If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." May the Holy Spirit help you so to do!

The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all.

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar, and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavor to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And, firstly, I will try to prove to you that these words are true; and, secondly, that these words are instructive.

I. First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps, because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount, and which he will change the whole course of his life. He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that, and that he will go here and there; but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him, and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life; there may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call accidents, which are really providence's, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do. Take the case of a young man, who is just beginning business life; though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct my own steps. I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt, the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me; but my first plans and purposes were not realized. I am not, to-day, where I hoped to have been; there were difficulties in the way, which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business, and he says, "I shall work my way up till I get to the top." Yet, how frequently it happens that something occurs, which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself, and he has to in quite a different direction. The path he had chosen was, apparently, a very proper one for him to choose; perhaps, he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter, and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer; yet he

finds, as many others have found, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account; but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances. He could not foresee what was going to happen, so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market; but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise, and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea; one may be much tossed about, and possibly may be wrecked, before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.

Another man fails in health. He might have prospered; but just when the full vigour of his physical strength was needed, and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit, as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid, and perhaps of a poor man; yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man, who soon would have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many, who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, "I will do this," or "I will do that," because something or other may occur, which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart, and he can find his way; he knows where the shoals are, and the quicksands, and the rocks, and where the deep channels run; but you do not know anything about your future life; you are sailing over a sea that no ship's keel has ever ploughed before. God knows all about it; everything is present to his all-seeing eye, but it is not present to your eye. It is not possible for a man to direct his own way absolutely, for he has not the power to do it; let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this.

Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle, and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God; but whether you should turn to the right

hand or to the left, you do not know.

Now, you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before, that is, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." You cannot direct your own way; you are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one be taken, it involves one form of trouble; and if the other course be chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord, and ask him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case; that ought to be the constant habit of your soul,—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless waste of life.

In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will, because his will is naturally evil. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, sirs! If you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction. He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusteth to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it for ever and ever. If a man, starting out in life, says, "I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, æYou shall be indulged;' and to my desires, æEat, drink, and be merry;' and to my soul, æTrouble not thyself with solemn and serious things; leave eternity till it comes, and make thou the best thou canst of time:' I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me,"—if you, sir, talk like that, I pray you to remember that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" and it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that, because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil,—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him, and to others also, and which will make him miss the chief end of his being, which is, to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone, who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause, and lift up his heart to heaven, and say, "Gracious Spirit, thou shalt be my Guide, from this time, and forever." For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks, ere long, if you take the tiller of your life's

vessel into your own hands. With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the grace of God. The doctrine of the depravity of the human race, is not merely an article in the creed; it is a matter of everyday experience. There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,—to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and though you may think that you may have a preference for good,—and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good,—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered, sooner or later, and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin. I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that, since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost paradise for us all, there is no hope that, in your fallen state, you can find your way back to paradise. Nay, but you will keep on wandering further, and further, and further from the way of peace and holiness, for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Let me give another meaning to the text, and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not, and it ought not to be in man that walketh to direct his steps, because, not only is he naturally inclined to evil, but even when grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way. Dear brother or sister in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you, and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you; and, now, the living and incorruptible seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right; but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows. Ah, my brother, you are an experienced Christian man, and others look up to you, and ask direction from you; but if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, "God helping me, I can direct you; but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God." Does not every man, who is truly wise, feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from divine guidance, and is it not a token of growth in wisdom and grace when a man's self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that. It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grosser mistakes. In what he



considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian man always has resort to God in prayer; but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear, and which he thinks he can himself decide; then his folly is speedily discovered. He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites; they said, in effect, if not words, "We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country, and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and clouted; they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread-did you notice that? It has the blue mold all over it; we should not like to eat a mouthful of it, yet they told us that it was quite new when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners, who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them, and make a covenant with them." And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel from God; and therein Israel made a great mistake. So, brothers and sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure then to say, "Let us pray about it." You know the old proverb, "When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like." So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying then, unless I say it in the spirit of the proverb, which would imply that you would be sure to pray then. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman, who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, "Reach down yon Bible;" and when that was brought down, and the Scripture read, and prayer offered, the good man felt that he could see his way, and could go with a firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," for his judgment is fallible.

I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps, because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from divine help. How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the grace of God for every step he takes? O brothers and sisters, if the Lord were to

help us, by his grace, until we got up to the doorstep of heaven, we should never be able to get in unless he gave us the grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps, for you are a cripple, and cannot even take one step except as strength is given you from on high. You are like a ship upon the sea; you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your barque. How can you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it, and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence, and not to talk of directing your own steps.

I must give you just one thought more under this head. He that walketh need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him. What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path, and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot; but we may bow before the Lord, and say, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." The choice is difficult for you, my brother; then do not choose your own way, but leave it to him who seeth the end from the beginning, and who is sure to make the wise choice. The burden of life is heavy, my sister, then do not try to carry it, but "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Let it not be your choice, but let it be God's choice. That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman, when she was asked whether she would choose to live or to die. She said she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. "But", said one, "suppose the Lord put it to your choice, which would you select? "Neither," she replied; "I would ask him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as he willed, not as I willed." Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosing, and say to the Lord, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," how much more happy we might be! We should not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we should be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, "Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not teach thou me."

II. Time fails me, and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that **THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE**. It seems to me that they are

instructive if we use them thus.

First, avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do, remembering that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Do not forget that the apostle James says about this matter, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil, and have your indiarubber handy, so that you can rub them out quickly. Much mischief comes of making them in ink, and regarding them as permanent, and saying, "This is what I am sure I shall do." Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast-iron regulations for your life. Do not say, "That is my plan, and I shall keep to it whatever happens." Be ready to alter your plan as God's providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change; I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." So, do not be in a hurry to wander. On the other hand I have known some persons, that resolve that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but recollect that, although "a rolling stone gathers no moss," it is equally true that "a sitting hen gets no barley;" and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind either that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what he would have you do.

The next thing is, never be too sanguine in your expectations. I suppose we must have expectations; that old fashioned benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed," is very difficult to gain. Expect that, if God has promised you anything, he will be true to his word; but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon; for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, that it is said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;" but if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came. As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed, "Having food and raiment, be therewith

content," and never cherish too sanguine expectations.

Next, avoid all security as to the present. If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word "mortal" plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert, and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour, and the light of life be gone from them. Your beloved one and you yourself are alike mortal, and either of you may soon be taken from the other. have you property? remember that wealth has wings, and that it flies away, like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvelous mercy it is that -

"A harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long;"—

and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring, and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose hand; but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip. Grasp Christ in the power of the spirit; grasp God, who is your everlasting portion, and your unfailing joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;... and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Of everything below, it is wise for us to say, This is not my abiding portion." It is very necessary to say this, and to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime, and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds; mind that you do not get bird-limed. There is nothing permanently for you here, after all. Your home is in heaven; your home is not here; and if you find your treasure here, your heart will be here also; but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart, and let Christ be your treasure, and let him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this,—Bow before the divine will in everything. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Why should it be? O Lord, thou art Master, thou art King; then why should we wish to

have our own way? It is right that the servant should take the master's place? There are some of you who are in trouble, and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord's will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God. If you had directed your own way, and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you had made, you might have cause to be distressed; but as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme; you must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, "Thy will, not mine, be done." You will have to say it sooner or later; and if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once. I heard one who, I thought, was a Christian, say, "I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me." I replied, "My sister, you must not talk like that." Perhaps someone else says, "I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me." Yes, my dear friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as he pleases, and he always does what is right; therefore, you must submit to his will, whatever he pleases to do.

My last observation is,—Pray about everything. Remember what Paul wrote to the Phillipians, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Pray about everything; I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning, and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jabbok; but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near, and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing, that is not prayed over, may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you, who love the Lord, may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do myself, saying, "My Master, here am I; take me, and do as thou wilt with me. Use me for thy glory in any way that thou pleasest. Deprive me of every comfort, if so I shall the more be able to honour thee. Let my choicest treasures be surrendered if thy sovereign will shall so ordain."

Let every child of God make a complete surrender here and now, and ask for grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord; so may you never prove untrue to it!

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## **Intercessory Prayer**

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends. -  
Job 42:10

The Lord turned the captivity of Job." So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown for ever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness for ever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath his wings,— "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job." Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten his end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan's challenge, had stretched forth his hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh, and yet the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job's faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew uprightly. The fire had been fierce enough, the gold was undiminished, and only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was his own glory. And God was glorified abundantly. Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had

gotten unto himself eternal renown through that grace by which he supported his poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others, which may have been in Job's temper had been at last removed, and any self-justification which once had lurked within, was fairly driven out. Now God's gracious designs are answered, he removed the rod from his servant's back, and takes the melted silver from the midst of the glowing coals. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought, and he shows this by the fact that he never afflicts them longer than there is a need for it, and never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of his wisdom and of his love. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job." Beloved brother in Christ, thou hast had a long captivity in affliction. God hath sold thee into the hand of thine adversaries, and thou hast wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging thy harp upon the willows. Despair not! He that turned the captivity of Job can turn thine as the streams in the south. He shall make again thy vineyard to blossom, and thy field to yield her fruit. Thou shalt again come forth with those that make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on thy lip. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about thy soul. Hope yet, for there is hope. Trust thou still, for there is ground of confidence. He shall bring thee up again rejoicing from the land of thy captivity, and thou shalt say of him, "He hath turned my mourning into dancing."

The circumstance which attended Job's restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Intercessory prayer was the omen of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within. Brethren, it is not fetching a laborious compass, when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job, and pray for our friends, and peradventure if we have

been in trouble, our captivity shall be turned.

Four things I would speak of this morning, and yet but one thing; I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus—first, by way of commending the exercise; secondly, by way of encouraging you to enlist in it; thirdly, by way of suggestion, as to the persons for whom you should especially pray; and fourthly, by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercession for others.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you that intercessory prayer has been practiced by all the best of God's saints. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint's name, but beyond a doubt, there has never been a man eminent for piety personally, who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others, and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" With what importunity did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with him again and again for Sodom; how frequently did he reduce the number, as though, to use the expression of the Puritan, "He were bidding and beating down the price at the market." "Peradventure there be fifty; peradventure there lack five of the fifty; peradventure there be twenty found there; peradventure there be ten righteous found there: wilt thou not spare the city for the sake of ten?" Well did he wrestle, and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city. Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned; how often did he intercede! How frequently do you meet with such a record as this—"Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God!" Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal disadvantage to intercede, and yet when God had said, "Let me alone, I will make of thee a great nation," yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of justice, and cried, "Spare them, Lord, and if not," (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) "blot my name out of the Book of Life." Never was there a mightier prophet than Moses, and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer. Or pass on, if you will, to the



days of Samuel. Remember his words, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you." Or bethink you of Solomon, and of his earnest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands he prayed for the assembled people; or if you want another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib's letter spread out before the Lord, when he prayed not only for himself, but for God's people of Israel in those times of straits. Think ye, too, of Elias, who for Israel's sake would bring down the rain that the land perish not; as for himself, miracles gave him his bread and his water, it was for others that he prayed, and said to his servant, "Go again seven times." Forget not Jeremy, whose tears were prayers—prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lip. He wept himself away, his life was one long shower, each drop a prayer, and the whole deluge a flood of intercession. And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and his apostles, remember how Peter prays on the top of the house, and Stephen amidst the falling stones. Or think you, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said, that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, "making mention of you daily in my prayers," stopping in the very midst of the epistle and saying, "For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion that there is not a single child of God who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the church at large, and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others.

But further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that Christ in His holy gospel has made it your duty and your privilege to intercede for others. When he taught us to pray, he said, "Our Father," and the expressions which follow are not in the singular but in the plural—"Give us this day our daily bread." "Forgive us our debts"; "Lead us not into temptation"; evidently intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone, that while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Saviour's own—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers, though offered in private; and even in

secret we should not forget the church of the living God. By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Ghost exhort us to pray for ministers! "Brethren," says Paul, "pray for us"; and then after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, "And for us also that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak." While James, who is ever a practical apostle, bids us pray for one another; in that same verse, where he says, "Confess your sins the one to the other," he says, "and pray one for another," and adds the privilege "that ye may be healed," as if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer; we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.

But, brethren, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of the high example of your Master; he is your pattern; follow ye his leadership. Was there even one who interceded as he did? Remember that golden prayer of his, where he cried for his own people, "Father, keep them, keep them from the evil!" Oh what a prayer was that! He seems to have thought of all their wants, of all their needs, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, he pours out his heart before his Father's throne. Bethink you how, even in the agonies of his crucifixion, he did not forget that he was still an intercessor for man. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, remember, brethren, it is your Saviour's example to you today, for there before the throne, with outstretched hands, he prays not for himself, for he has attained his glory; not for himself, for he rests from his labours, and has received his everlasting recompense; but for you, for the purchase of his blood, for as many as are called by his grace, yea, and for those who shall believe on him through our word—

"For all that come to God by him,  
Salvation he demands;  
Points to the wounds upon his heart,  
And spreads his bleeding hands."

Come, brethren, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others.

But I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was his will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ's practice to intercede, yet the very spirit of our holy religion would constrain us to plead for others. Dost thou go up into thy closet, and in the face and presence of God think of none but thyself? Surely the love of Christ cannot be in thee, for the spirit of Christ is not selfish. No man liveth unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if they hear the Word, if they be saved, if they get to heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, thou shalt not get there! It would need another heaven for thee, for the heaven of Christ is the heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the large-hearted, the bliss of living spirits, the heaven of those who, like Christ, are willing to become poor that others may be rich. I cannot believe—it were a libel upon the cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which he taught—if I could ever believe that the man whose prayers are selfish has anything of the spirit of Christ within him. Brethren, I commend intercessory prayer, because it opens man's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, constrains him to feel that he is not everybody, and that this wide world and this great universe were not after all made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet. It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not uplifted alone for him, for its far-reaching arms were meant to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race. Thou lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make another man of thee, a man more like the Son of Man, and less like Nabal the churl. But again; I commend the blessed privilege of intercession, because of its sweet brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard, and harsh, and unlovely of spirit, but praying much for others will remind us we have, indeed, a relationship to the saints, that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us the one to the other than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbour enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him. If he hath

done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy seat, and prayed over it, you must forgive. Surely you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God and then come forth to curse him in your own soul. When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother, it is generally the best way to say, "Let us pray before we enter into the matter." Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the brethren who contend, "Let us pray first," and it will often happen that through prayer the differences will soon be forgotten. They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the brethren rise from their knees they will say, "They are gone; we cannot contend now after having been one in heart before the throne of God." I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister, and his minister wisely said to him, "Well, don't talk to me in the street; come to my house, and let us hear it all." He went, and the minister said, "My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me; no doubt I have my imperfections as well as any other man, and I hope I shall never be above being told of them, but in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me let us kneel down and pray together." So our quarrelsome friend prayed first and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, "Now, my brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind; tell me what it is that you have to find fault with." The man blushed, and stammered, and stuttered, and said, he did not think there was anything at all, except in himself. "I have forgotten to pray for you, sir," said he, "and of course I cannot expect that God will feed my soul through you when I neglect to mention you at the throne of grace." Ah, well, brethren, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren you will forgive their tempers, you will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words; but knowing that you also may be tempted, and are men of like passions with them, you will cover their faults, and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except it be this, that it seems to me that when God gives any man much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family. I would compare you who have near communion with God to courtiers in the king's palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of

their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage which you ought to use right diligently. I ask you to use it on my behalf. When it is well with you, then think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing; when thou hast the King's ear, speak to him for us. When thou art permitted to come very near to his throne, and he saith to thee, "Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt"; when thy faith is strong, thine eye clear, thine access near, thine interest sure, and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in thy heart—then take the petitions of thy poor brethren who stand outside at the gate and say, "My Lord, I have a poor brother, a poor child of thine, who has desired me to ask of thee this favour. Grant it unto me; it shall be a favour shown unto myself; grant it unto him, for he is one of thine. Do it for Jesus' sake!" Nay, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace, unless it prompts you to use your influence for others. Soul, if thou hast grace at all, and art not a mighty intercessor, that grace must be but as a grain of mustard-seed—a shrivelled, uncomely, puny thing. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a rich cargo of the wants of others up to the throne of God, and thou wouldst bring back for them rich blessings which but for thee they might not have obtained. If thou be like an angel with thy foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to heaven, if thou art ascending and descending, know that thou wilt ascend with others' prayers and descend with others' blessings, for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone. Thus much on commendation.

II. We turn to our second point, and endeavour to say something BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.

First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censer,

there is not a single grain that is for himself. His work is done; his reward obtained. Now you do not doubt but that Christ's prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications. Very well, my brethren, the more like your prayer is to Christ's, the more sweet it will be; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness, they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of thy sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! Intercessory prayer has stayed plagues. It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt; it drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land; it scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoar; it removed the murrain, and the thunder, and the lightning; it stayed all the ravages which God's avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases; —we know it did in the early church. We have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king's arm was withered, he said to the prophet, "Pray for me," and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead, for Elias stretched himself upon the child seven times, and the child sneezed, and the child's soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, recording angel, thou canst tell! Eternity, thou shalt reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do. Oh! believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it now with faith, and thou shalt surely prevail. But perhaps you have a doubt about interceding for some one who has fallen far into sin. Brethren, did ye ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have ye never heard by the farmer's fire some old-fashioned story of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet he was but in a trance and not dead? And have ye not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you that spiritually there has been many a man given up for dead that was still within reach of grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet even by Christian people, given up to damnation even by the ministers of Christ, consigned to perdition even

by their own kinsfolk. But yet into perdition they did not come, but God found them, and took them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon his living rock. Oh! give up nobody; still pray, lay none out for spiritually dead until they are lain out for dead naturally. But perhaps you say, "I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless." You will get strength, my brethren, by the exertion. But besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses. Now, brethren, if you sow seed you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest,—it is the vitality in the seed. And so in the prayer of faith. When you can plead a promise and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God and bring down blessings from on high. Job! thou comest from thy dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness;—thou comest from thy poverty and thy desertion to intercede for others, and so may we. Elias was a man of like passions—sweet word!—of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed, and so shalt thou; only do thou see to it that thou be not negligent in these exercises, but that thou pray much for others even as Job prayed for his friends.

Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen, more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach. Now, that I may have your attention yet once again—and a change of posture may do you all good—will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer and then I will go on again. It shall be this one:

"Pity the nations, O our God,  
Constrain the earth to come;  
Send thy victorious word abroad,  
And bring the strangers home!"

(The congregation here rose, and sung the verse.)

III. The third head is A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY. It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. In the case of Job, he

prayed for his offending friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and though there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure—for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps, there is no greater offence which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face, to suspect his motives, and to accuse him of self-seeking. And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun forgets the darkness that has hidden its glory, and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy seat, and pleads. He is accepted himself, and he begs that his friends may be accepted too. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God; it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness. Do not do that, however, in a threatening way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threatening, he should pray for me. It was a horrid threat, for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord. Do not do it in that sense, as though like a supercilious hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain glory; but do it when you are alone before God, and in secret; not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story out again, for that were abominable indeed; but that you may remove from your erring brother any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.

Again: be sure you take there your controverting friends. These brethren had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to controvert. Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, "Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out." I say, "No! let the two good men meet and pray the matter out." He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy seat, I should suspect is wrong. I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my brethren who do not see "Believers' baptism" may be made to see it. If they think it is wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right; but I have never heard them do that; I have never heard them pray to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling—I wish they would, if they believe it to



be scriptural, and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test, the God that answereth by fire, let him be God, and whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand. Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion-room, or to the debating-club, but carry them before God, and let this be your cry, "Oh! Thou that teachest us to our profit, teach me if I be wrong, and teach my friend wherein he errs, and make him right."

This is the thing we ought also to do with haughty friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty—Oh! how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless they thought it very great condescension. Now, you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It will not make them humble for you to grumble about that. What if there be a Mrs. So-and-so who wears a very rustling dress, and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too! What if there be a brother who can afford to wear creaking boots, and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor! Tell your Father about it; that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a torpid liver, or a cataract in the eye; you would pity him. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride; go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it; it may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right. Pray him down, brother, pray him down; have duel with him, and have the choice of weapons yourself, and let that be the weapon of all—prayer; and if he be proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of his own child and make him humble as he should be. But particularly let me ask you to pray most for those who are disabled from praying for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said he would not accept them if they did. He said he was angry with them, but as for Job, said he, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even of God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer; he must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And there are

many poor Christians that cannot pray; doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence, and they are standing outside the gate with their petitions; they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, that are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith, and therefore they cannot prevail. Now, my dear brethren, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you, and when you have had your own hearing, then say, "But, my Lord, inasmuch as thou hast honoured me, and made me to eat of thy bread, and drink from thy cup, hear me for thy poor people who are just now denied the light of thy countenance." Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin and they cannot pray, pray for them; it is a blessed thing—that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith; which a saint may exert towards a sinner. "Lord, that sinner does not feel; help me to feel for him because he will not feel; Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ, he does not think that Christ can save him, but I know he can, and I will pray believingly for that sinner, and I will repent for him, and though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet it may come to pass that through me he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer."

IV. Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us thy strength now, that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience, and we may at once engage in this exercise! Brethren, I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighbourhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If you have, I have not. For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin; and while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.

I begin thus, by saying, Brethren, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you. I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God's Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries

when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you that were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants. Your mothers' liquid prayers fell hot upon your infant brows, and gave you what was a true christening while you were still but little ones. There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives' prayers; brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister's pleading; children who must confess that their sabbath-school teachers were wont to pray for them. Now, if by others' prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness, but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him may write himself down a hopeless character. During one of the revivals in America, a young man was going to see the minister, but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness. A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done, and he said, "Well, I did not want to see him; I knew he had only come to mock and scoff; what should I see him for; you do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done the same." A day or two after there was a public meeting, where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued. A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse, and as he was riding along he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, "Where are you going today, William?" "Well, I am going to the meeting, and I hear that you have been converted." "I thank God I have been brought to a knowledge of the truth," he answered. "Oh!" said the other, "I shall never be; I wish I might." His friend was surprised to hear him whom the minister thought to be so hard say that, and he said, "But why cannot you be converted?" "Why?" said the other, "you know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K—." "Yes, so I was." "Ah," said the other, "there is nobody to pray for me; they have all given me up long ago." "Why," said his friend, "it is very singular, but Mr. K—, who prayed for me, has been praying for you too; we were together last night, and I heard him." The other threw himself back in his saddle, and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise. "Is that true?" said he. "Yes, it is." "Then blessed be God, there is hope for me now, and if he has prayed for me, that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself." And he did so, and that meeting witnessed him confessing his

faith in Christ. Now, let no man of your acquaintance say that there is nobody to pray for him; but as you had somebody to plead for you, let poor souls of your acquaintance find in you a person to plead for them.

Then, again, permit me to say, how are you to prove your love to Christ or to his church if you refuse to pray for men? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If we do not love the brethren, we are still dead. I will aver no man loves the brethren who does not pray for them. What! It is the very least thing you can do, and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater. You do not love the brethren unless you pray for them, and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins. Let me ask you again how is it that you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, "Selfish wretch, thou art always knocking at my door, but it is always to cry for thine own welfare and never for another's; inasmuch as thou hast never asked for a blessing for one of the least of these my brethren, neither will I give a blessing to thee. Thou lovest not the saints, thou lovest not thy fellow men, how canst thou love me whom thou hast not seen, and how shall I love thee and give thee the blessing which thou askest at my hands?" Brethren, again I say I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests, but how priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world, even as Christ was sent into the world, but how sent unless they are sent to pray? Christians are meant not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, but how if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession, cast down, I pray you, the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense, renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out, make not a mock and sport of solemn things. And you must do so if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplications before the throne. O brethren, let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighbourhood! Let us carry "London" written on our breasts just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons and your daughters! Men and brethren, let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty! Let us cry

aloud and keep no silence, and give to the Lord no rest till he establish and make his Church a praise in the earth. Wake, ye watchmen upon Zion's walls, and renew your shouts! Wake, ye favourites of heaven, and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you, it is yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers. God hath put high up in the mountains of his promise springs of love, it is yours to bring them down by the divine channel of your intense supplications. Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your bowels of compassion and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, he should say in his wrath, "These are not my children. They have not my spirit. They are not partakers of my love, neither shall they enter into my rest." Why, there are some of you that have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it be at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayers are. It is, "Lord, take care of my family." You know how some farmers pray. "Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country. Lord, preserve the precious fruits of the field all round this neighbourhood. Never mind about their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up." And so there are some who make themselves special objects of supplication; and what care they for the perishing crowd. This is the drift of some men's wishes, "Lord, bless the Church, but don't send another minister into our neighbourhood lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send labourers into the vineyard, but do not send them into our corner lest they should take any of our glory from us." That is the kind of supplication. Let us have done with such. Let us be Christians; let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others. Let us weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice; and as a Church and as private persons, we shall find the Lord will turn our captivity when we pray for our friends. God help us to plead for others! And as for you that have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

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## Is God In The Camp?

And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore - 1 Samuel 4:7

Israel was out of gear with God. The people had forgotten the Most High, and had gone aside to the worship of Baal. They had neglected the things of God; therefore they were give up to their enemies. When Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, he instructed them how they were to live in the land to which he would bring them, and warned them that if they forsook him they would be chastened. His words were very plain: "If ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins." In fulfillment of this threatening, the Philistines had been divinely permitted to make great havoc of the idolatrous Israelites, and to hold them in cruel slavery.

The only way for them to get out of their trouble was to return to God, who, by his judgments, seemed to say. "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." The only cure for their hurt was to go back with repentance, and renew their faith and their covenant with God. Then all would have been right. But this is the last thing that men will do. Our minds, by nature, love not spiritual things. We will attend to any outward duty, or to any external rite; but to bring our hearts into subjection to the divine will, to bow our minds to the Most High, and to serve the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, the natural man abhors. Yet nothings less than this will suffice to turn our captivity.

Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions; but we neglect the one thing needful. I may be addressing some who, at this time, are passing through sore trial, and who therefore

think that they must have forgotten some little thing in connection with the external religion, instead of seeing that it matters little what outward observance they may neglect, so long as they do not possess the faith, without which it is impossible to please God. They forgot the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life, and to seek to do his will by faith in Christ Jesus. Get right with God; confess thy sin; believe in Jesus Christ, the appointed Saviour; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; then all will be right between thee and the Father in heaven. We cannot bring men to this, apart from the Spirit of God.

In this sermon I shall have to show you how often, and in how many ways, men seek other methods of cure than the only one, namely, to take the case to God. They heal their hurt slightly. They cry, "Peace! Peace!" where there is no peace, and adopt a thousand devious devices rather than accept the only remedy provided by the Great Physician for sin-sick souls. Instead of seeking to become right with God, these Israelites thought that, if they could get the ark of the covenant, which had been the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and bring it from the tent of Shiloh into the midst of their camp, they would then be certain of victory. So they sent and fetched the ark; and when it came into the camp, they were enthusiastic as if their banners already waved over a victorious; they lifted up their voices so loudly, that the earth rang again with their shouts, while the Philistines, hearing their exulting shout, and finding out the reason, were greatly afraid. With fearful hearts, and trembling lips, already counting that all was lost, their enemies turned to one another, and said, "God has come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore."

In considering this subject, we will think, first, of the great mistake which both Israel and the Philistines made. In the second place, we will consider the great truth of which their mistake was a caricature. God does come into the camp when his people go forth to fight in his name; and when he really comes, the tide of battle is turned. When I have spoken on these two things, I shall close, as God shall help me, by speaking upon the great lessons which lie almost upon the very surface of the narrative.

I. First, then, let us consider **THE GREAT MISTAKE** which both Israelites and Philistines made. The Israelites, instead of seeing to God

himself, went to Shiloh to fetch the ark of the covenant. The ark was the sacred place where God revealed himself in the days when his people truly served him; but it was devoid of power, without the presence of him who dwelt between the cherubim. The Israelites were mistaken, for they shouted long before they were "out of the wood." Before they had won any victory, the sight of the ark made them boastful and confident. The Philistines fell into an error of a different kind, for they were frightened without any real cause. They said, "God has come into the camp;" whereas God had not come at all. It was only the ark with the cherubim upon it; God was not there.

The mistake they made was just this: they mistook the visible for the invisible. It has pleased God, even in our holy faith, to give us some external symbols—water, and bread, and wine. They are so simple, that it does seem, at first sight, as if men could never have made them objects of worship, or used them as instruments of a kind of witchcraft. One would have thought that these symbols would only have been like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle. Through which men would behold the Saviour, and draw near to him. Instead thereof, some have neither looked through the windows nor passed through the gates, but have ascribed to the gates and the windows that which is only to be found in him who is behind them both. It is sad, indeed, when the symbol takes the place of the Saviour! Man is by nature both an atheist and an idolater. These are two shades of the same thing. We want, if we do worship at all, something that we can see. But a God that can be seen is no God; and so the idolater is first cousin to the atheist. He has a god which is no god, for he cannot be a god if he can be apprehended by human senses. This ark of the covenant, which was but a chest of wood covered with gold, with angelic figures on the lid, was simply a token of the presence of God with his people; and these Israelites transformed it into a sacred object, to be highly revered, to be worshipped, and, as it appears, to be trusted in. The elders said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." They ascribed to the ark what could only be done by God himself. This is the tendency of us all. Anything which we can see, we pine after. Hence we lean upon the arm of flesh: we trust in man, though it is written plainly enough, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in



man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Yet, still we want some symbol, some token, something before our eyes; and if it can be something artistic, so much the better. We lay hold of something beautiful, that will charm the eye, and produce a kind of sensuous feeling, and straightway we mistake our transient emotion for spiritual worship and true reverence. This is the great mistake that many still make; they think that God has come into the camp merely because some outward religious rite or ceremony has been observed, or because some sacred shrine has been set up among them.

These Israelites fell into another mistake, which is also often made today: they preferred office to character. In their distress, instead of calling upon God, they sent for Hophni and Phinehas. Why did their hearts turn to them? Simply because they were priests, and the people had come to hold the sacred office in such superstitious reverence that they thought that was everything. But these young men were sinners against the Lord exceedingly; they were not even moral men, much less were they spiritual men. They made the house of God to be abhorred, and dishonored the Lord before all Israel. Yet, because they happened to hold the office of the priesthood, they were put in the place of God. Dear friends, this is a kind of feeling which many indulge. They think they shall be saved if they have a Levite for their priest. They imagine that the worship of God must be conducted properly, because the man who conducts it is in the apostolic succession, and has been duly ordained. You shall see a man eminent for the holiness of his life, for the disinterestedness of his character, for the fidelity of his preaching, for his power in prayer, for the blessing that rests upon his ministry in the conversion of sinners; but he is counted a mere nobody, because he lacks the superstitious qualification which deluded men think is so necessary. Here are Hophni and Phinehas, two of the grossest sinners in all the land of Israel; but then, you see, they are in the line of Aaron, and so they are trusted, and indeed are put in the place of God. Now, God forbid that we should say a word against the house of Aaron, or against any who speak the name of the Lord, whom God has truly called unto his work! But, beloved, this work is not a mere matter of pedigree; it is a question of the abiding presence of God with man and in a man. Unless God be with the minister whom you hear, to what purpose do you listen? If the leader of the church be not one who walks with God,

where will he lead you? "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." The blind man may wear a badge on his arm to show that he is a certified guide; but will you be saved from the ditch simply because he belongs to the order of guides, and has his certification with him? Be not led away by any such vain notion. Yet this is the error into which many have fallen in all ages of the church.

But these people who faced the Philistines made another mistake; they confounded enthusiasm with faith. When they saw the ark, they shouted so that the earth rang again. "These are the kind of people I like," says one, "people that can shout." If that is all you want, why do you not go among the bulls of Bashan, and make your home in the midst of them? They can make more noise than any mortal men can make. These Israelites shouted, but there was nothing in their noise, any more than there is in their modern imitators. Anyone who has passed the camp of Israel, that day, might have said that they had "a bright, cheerful, happy service; just the kind of service the people like, you know, nothing dull about it." Hark! How the glad sound rises! Surely these people must have great faith! No, they had not a scrap of the real article. They were under a mistake all the time; and, shout as they might, they had very little to shout about; for in a short time their carcasses strewed the plain. The Philistines put an end to their shouting. Now, beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the ejaculation comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it floweth deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and shouting; and it is a happy thing when it does: but it also sit still before the Lord, and that perhaps is a happier thing still. Praise can sit silent on the lip, and yet be heard in heaven. There is a passion of the heart, too deep for words. There are feelings that break the backs of words; the mind staggers and trembles beneath the weight of them. Frost of the mouth often comes with thaw of the soul; and when the heart's great deeps are breaking up, it sometimes happens that the mouth is not large enough to let the torrents flow, and so it has to be comparatively silent. Do not, therefore, make the mistake of confounding enthusiasm with faith in judging the externals of worship, else you may fall into a

thousand blunders. He may worship God who shouts till the earth rings again, and God may accept him; but he may worship God as truly who sits in silence before the Most High, and says not even a word. It is the spiritual worship which is most acceptable to God, not the external in any form or shape. It is the heart that has fellowship with the Lord; and it needs little in the way of expressing itself, neither has God tied it down to this way or that. It may find its own methods of utterance so long as it is truly "moved by the Holy Ghost."

Another mistake these people made that day was this: they valued novelty above Scriptural order. "The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore." The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines, which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar; but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new. "There hath not been such a thing heretofore." There is a glamour about the novelty which misleads us, and we are liable to think the newer is the truer. If there has not such a thing heretofore, some people will take to it at once for that very reason. "Oh," says the man who is given up to change, "that is the thing for me!" But it is probably not the thing for a true-hearted and intelligent Christian, for if, "there hath not been such a thing heretofore," it is difficult to explain, if the thing be a good one, why the Holy Ghost, who has been with the people of God since Pentecost, and who came to lead us into all truth, has not led the Church of God to this before. If your new discovery is the mind of God, where has the Holy Scriptures been all these centuries? Believing in the infallible Word and the abiding Spirit, I rather suspect your novelty; at least I cannot say that I endorse it until I have tested it by the Word of God. "Oh, but we had such a meeting! There never was the like of it," you say. Probably you ought to pray that there may never be the like of it again, for, after all, the meetings in which hearts become broken before God, and in which men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Saviour who saved their forefathers, who have entered into glory, are no novelty. Those meetings in which men come and give themselves up to God, where "the great transaction" is done, where they

become the Lord's, and he becomes theirs, are very old-fashioned things; they have been heretofore. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old:" and if we could only see the like, we would not ask to be able to say, "There hath not been such a thing heretofore." Philistines may like a thing that has not been heretofore; but we like the thing that has been since the days of Pentecost, the things that come from him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever": the workings of that God who changes not, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Let him work his blessed will; and if he chooses to send a new thing on the earth, we will glorify his name; but because there are new things in the world, we will not ascribe them to him, for they may come from quite another quarter/ We remember that "Lo, here is Christ, or there!" was the cry against which our Lord warned his disciples. Concerning such a cry the Saviour said, "Believe it or not." To you, dear friends, I would say—Stand fast by your great Leader, the blessed, unchangeable Christ, and by the faith once for all delivered to the saints, or else you will be on the road to a thousand blunders.

The mistake made on that battle-field is a mistake which nowadays is frequently imitated. It assumes many forms. We fall into their error when we confound ritual and spirituality. Now, every form of religion has its ritual. The Quaker, who sits still, and does not say a word, has a ritual so far; and he that has a thousand rites and ceremonies has a ritual so much farther. But if I have gone through the general routine of the worship of my church, and then think that I have done something acceptable to God, while yet my heart has not communed with him in humble repentance, or faith, or love, or joy, or consecration, I make a great mistake. You may keep on with your religious performances for seventy years or more; you may never miss what our Scotch friends call "a diet of worship"; you may not neglect a single rubric in the whole ritual; but it is all nothing unless the soul has fellowship with God. Godliness is a spiritual thing; for "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." So far as our forms or worship help us towards this spiritual communion, they are good, but no farther. "Oh, well!" says one, "I never worship beneath a cathedral roof; I am quite content to meet with a few friends in a barn." Do not suppose, my friend, that the meagreness of

your accessories has necessarily secured true worship. I thou hast met God in the barn, it is well; and if thy brother has met God in the right spirit, I care but little for thy barn, and I care even less for his cathedral. What does signify how thou hast garnished thine offering if it be not a living sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ? A dead thing must not be brought to the altar of God. Remember that, under the Jewish law, they never offered fish upon the altar, because they could not bring it there alive. Everything brought to God as a sacrifice must be alive. Its blood must be poured out warm at the altar's foot. Oh that you and I might feel that lifting of the soul to God, and that buoyancy of heart, which true spiritual worship alone can bring to us! May our ritual, whether we have much or little, be our guide to God, and not our chain to hold us back from God!

We fall into the same blunder that the Israelites and the Philistines made is we consider orthodoxy to be salvation. We have secured much that is worth keeping when we have, intellectually and intelligently, laid hold on that divinely-revealed truth, "the gospel of the grace of God"; but we have not obtained everything even then. O sirs, if it were possible for you to believe every word of Christ's teaching, if it were possible to hold with only an intellectual faith the teaching of the apostles, rejecting all besides, and to hold it with an accuracy so great that in no joy or tittle you had made a mistake, it would profit you nothing; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He may understand these things so as to be a theologian, but he must have them wrought into his soul by the Holy Ghost so as to make him a saint, or else he has not really understood them at all. Unless these are thy meat and thy drink, they are nothing to thee; unless thou findest Christ in them, thou wilt find in them thy ruin, they shall be the "saviour of death" unto thee. Remember, it was a beautiful tomb in which the dead Christ was laid; but he left it, and there was nothing there but grave-clothes after he had gone; and, in like manner, the best-constructed system of theology, if it has not Christ in it, and if he who holds it be not himself spiritually alive, is nothing more than a tomb in which are trappings for the dead. It is nothing better than a gilded ark, without the presence of God; and although you may shout, and say, "God is come into the camp," it will not be so.

We fall into the same error if we regard routine as security, and think that, because we have often done a thing, and have not suffered for it, therefore it will always be well with us. We are all such creatures of habit that, at length, our repeated actions seem to be natural and right. Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But though Pompeii may slumber long at the foot of Vesuvius, at length it is overwhelmed. It behooves every one of us to try our ways and specially to call in question things which have become a sort of second nature to us. This is the fault of which Peter gives warning concerning the scoffers of the last days, who will say with regret to the blessed truth of Christ's second advent, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." The apostle says of such that, "they willingly are ignorant," and therefore are they willfully ignorant of the terrible and unalterable doom that awaits them at the coming of their Judge.

Thus, like the Israelites, we may shout as we see the ark of the covenant, although our sins have driven the Lord far from us; or, like the Philistines, we may say, "God has come into the camp," and yet he may not be there at all in the sense in which they meant. Thus I might continue to illustrate my text; but time would fail me, and I have yet to speak upon two other points.

II. Having considered the great mistake these people made, I will draw your attention, in the second place, to THE GREAT TRUTH of which their mistake is caricature. Though what the Philistines said, and what the Israelites thought, on this occasion, was false, it is often true. God does come to the camp of his people, and his presence is the great power of his church. O Brethren, what joy comes to us at such a time! I will briefly sketch the scene that takes place when God comes into the camp.

Then, the truth of the gospel becomes vital. The doctrines of grace have then with them the grace of the doctrines. Then is Christ not only to us the Truth, but he is also the Way and the Life. The gospel then becomes a sword with two edges, and it does marvelous execution. The Word of God then shows itself to be both a hammer and a fire, smiting and melting those upon whom its power is proved. Whoever preaches the gospel,

when God has come into the camp, speaks with power. He may have little eloquence, and less learning; but if God is with him, and if his heart is all aglow with divine love, he will speak with power, and the people will say, "Surely, God is in this place, and we know it."

When God comes into the camp, new life is put into prayer. Instead of the repetition of holy phrases in a cold, feeble, lifeless fashion, the soul empties itself out before the Lord, like water flowing from a fountain; and men and women cry mightily unto him, laying hold upon the horns of the altar; and they come away with both hands full of heaven's own blessing, for they have prevailed with God in mighty wrestling.

By the presence of God in the camp fresh energy is thrown into service. There is a way of serving the Lord in which men do the proper thing while they are fast asleep. I am afraid much of our service for God is done while we are asleep, and that it is accompanied by a kind of celestial snoring, instead of being performed when our spiritual faculties are all alert, and the whole man is wide awake. But when God comes into the camp, how he shakes men up, and awakens the slumberers from their dreams! What a quickening, what a vivifying, the presence of God gives! I remember a picture on the Continent that strangely represents the resurrection. Some of the people, who are pictured as being raised from the dead, have some of their bones coming together; others have their heads covered with flesh, but the rest of the body is a skeleton; and nothing seems complete in this strange, wild conception of a mad artist. But there are hundred of Christian people who seem to be spiritually in as incomplete a stage as those people were supposed to be, They are, I hope, quickened from the dead, but they are not yet fully alive into God. Some of them are still dead in their head; their intellect has not yet been sanctified: some of them are dead at their hands; they cannot get them into their pockets, or if they manage so much as that, they cannot get them out again: some of them are dead at heart, they seem to know things very well with the brain, but not to feel them in the soul. But when the Lord comes to us with power, he makes us alive all over; every part of the man is quickened with a divine energy; then men really work for Jesus, and work successfully, too.

When God comes into the camp, his presence convinces unbelievers. Sinners turn to the Lord on the right hand, and on the left, in so

marvellous a way that our weak faith is often quite astonished. The last persons in the world that we expected to be converted, come to our services, and there find Christ; and many have been hearers for years, but seem harder than the lower millstone, become soft as wax to the divine Word. When God comes into the camp, the Holy Ghost convinces men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment", the arrows of conviction fly fast and far, and pierce the hearts of the foemen of the King, and the slain of the Lord are many.

The presence of God, moreover, comforts mourners. When God comes into the camp, those who are troubled and tried begin to wipe away the tears of sorrow, and feel strengthened to bear their burdens; or, better still, they cast their care on him who is so manifestly near. Our hearts are also cheered by seeing anxious sinners turn their eyes towards the cross of Christ. Then Jesus reveals his love to them, and they perceive it; they fly into his arms, and find salvation there. Oh, what joyful times we have had of late in talking with many who have yielded themselves to Christ, and taken him to be all their salvation, and all their desire! May God stay in the camp with us till every sinner that comes within our ranks, and many also who are outside, shall come to Jesus, and be saved!

When God is in the camp, his presence infuses daring faith. Feeble men begin to grow vigorous, young men dream dreams and old men see visions. Many begin to plot and plan something for Jesus which, in their timid days, they would never have thought of attempting. Others reach a height of consecration that seems to verge on imprudence. Alabaster boxes get broken, and the precious ointment is poured out upon the Master's head, even though Judas shakes his money-bag, and cries, "To what purpose is this waste?" Adventurers for God are raised up—men like the Portuguese navigators, who passed the Cape of Storms, and called it afterwards the Cape of Good Hope. Men begin to mission the slums, the lodging-houses, the dark streets, and after a while those very places become happy hunting grounds for other Christian workers. Because God is in the camp, many take up the work which at first only the truly brave believer dared to try.

The fact of God being in the camp cannot be hidden, for in a delightful way it distills joy into worship. People do not think sermons dull when



God is in the camp; and prayer-meetings are not then called "stupid affairs." The saints enjoy fellowship with one another; and when Christian people meet each other, and God is in the camp, they have many a happy word to exchange concerning their Master. Many such seasons we have enjoyed. It has been with us as with the people mentioned by the prophet Malachi: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." They had such holy talk that God himself turned eaves-dropper to listen to what they had to say; he liked it so well that he put it down; and he thought so much of it that he said he would preserve it; and a book of remembrances was made for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. May there be many more such books of remembrance in our day!

I cannot tell you what innumerable blessings come to the camp of the spiritual Israel when God is there. I hope that we know a little of this even now; and I am sure we want to know a great deal more of it. It is hard work preaching when God is not in the camp. It must be slavery to teach in the Sunday-school when God is not in the camp. And any of you seeking souls must have a heavy drag on your spirits when the Lord is away. We might pray on Sabbath mornings, indeed, every day, and before every duty, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;" but if the Lord be in the camp, then the wheels no longer drag heavily, but, like the chariots of Amminadib, we fly before the wind. Everything is done gladly, happily, thankfully, believingly, when "God is come into the camp." May he abide in our midst, and may our eyes be opened to see him!

"Thrice blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is in the field, when he  
Is most invisible."

III. Now, in closing our meditations upon this passage, let us try to learn THE GREAT LESSONS which this incident teaches us.

The first lesson is that which I have been insisting upon all through: the

necessity of the divine presence. Dear friends, you acknowledge this. There is not one among us who does not know that the Holy Ghost is needful to effect any work. But I am afraid that it is something which we know so well, that we have put it up on a shelf, and there it lies unheeded. But it must not be so with thee, my brother, nor with me. We must pray in the Holy Ghost, or else we shall not pray at all; and we must preach under the influence of the Holy Ghost, or else we shall chatter like sparrows on the window-sill in the morning, and nothing will come of the chattering. Only the Holy Ghost can make anything we do to be effectual. Therefore never begin any work without the Holy Ghost, and do not dare go on with the impetus that you have gained, but cry again for the Holy Spirit. The "amen" of the sermon needs to be spoken in the power of the Holy Ghost just as much as the first word of the discourse, and every word between the first and the last. Let all your service for God be in the Spirit, or else it is all good for nothing.

Learn, next, that we should do all we can to obtain the presence of God in the camp. If there are any preparations which we can make for his coming, let us set about them at once. You who are out of Christ must not think that there is anything for you to do before you receive Christ. All the doing has been done.

"Jesus did it, did it all,  
Long, long ago."

But I am now addressing the people of God, and if we would have God to come very nigh to us, we must prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God. What can we do to obtain the presence of God in our midst? My time has so far gone that I can only give you a few hints as to what we ought to do if we want to secure that end.

We must confess our helplessness without God, and honestly mean the confession. The first thing that is required of us is to bemoan the fact that, by and of ourselves, we can do nothing; even as our Lord said to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." The sooner we recognize this truth, the better. Our half-doing is our undoing; but when we cease from self, then we make way for God.

We must, next, have a universal desire for the presence of God with us. I mean by that, that every Christian man and every Christian woman must agonize with God that he would come into the camp; not merely some few of us desiring it, but all of us vehemently crying unto the Lord, "Come, Lord, and tarry not."

We must also be very careful in our lives. God will not come to an unholy church. The sacred Dove will never come to a foul nest. There must be a purging and a cleansing, or else he will not come.

Moreover, there must be a conscientious obedience to his word, a strict adherence to his truth, his doctrine, his precepts, to the whole of Christ's rule and law. He will not prosper us unless we are careful to follow every step that he has taken. God help us to have this conscientious care, this coming out from those who may not be thus careful, according to his word. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

If we desire this special sense of God's presence, there must be unbroken union. The Spirit of God does not love fighting. He is a dove, and he will not come where there is constant strife. We must be as one man in our love to one another. It was when the disciples were "with one accord in one place" that the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost; and thus it is in all our Pentecostal seasons. Often a stone seems to lie at the well's-mouth of our choicest blessings; and it cannot be rolled away "until the flocks be gathered together."

To crown all, there must be a hearty reliance upon God, and a childlike confidence in him. I would recommend you either believe in God up to the hilt, or else not believe at all. Believe this Book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing-place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith, and is not good for much. Oh, I pray you, do believe in God, and his omnipotence!

Such are the conditions of obtaining the blessing of God's abiding presence. If these things be in us and abound, we shall be able to shout without making any mistake about the matter, "God has come into the camp."

When God does come to us, we should seek by all means to retain his presence. How can this boon be secured?

First, by humble walking with God. If we grow proud because we are honoured by our King's company, and begin to think that there must be, after all, something in us to attract God to us, and cause his face to shine upon us, we shall not long have the Lord among us. Seek, then, to be lowly in his presence.

Next, let much grateful praise be given to him from loyal hearts. If God is saving sinners, let us give him the glory of it. If he is at work among us, let us not go and talk about what we have been doing; but let us tell to men and angels, too, what HE has done. Let us never dare to handle God's jewels as if they were our own.

Moreover, there must be perpetual watchfulness. If God be with us, he may give us a great victory, and yet to-morrow we may be defeated because Achan has hidden the goodly Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold. Unless we are sober and vigilant, we may sadly have to mourn that the Lord has withdrawn his presence from us. There is a fierce light that beats around his throne. "Our God is a consuming fire." Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? The Scriptural answer is, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly." May God make us men of such calibre as can endure that heat!

And lastly, there must be an individual fellowship with God on the part of each one of us. It is hard work for the whole church to walk with God every day and all the day; but if each member will see to it that his own personal life is right, the church, as a whole, need fear nothing. Let us each one look after his own life, and see that all is right there; then the life of the church will soon be at flood-tide, and when we go forth to the battle, the Philistines will know of a truth that "God is come into the

camp." May God speedily raise us all up to this point of personal consecration!

Dear friends, we are having sinners saved in our midst; pray for them. Some are struggling towards the light; seek to help them. If you meet with any such, love them, and cherish them, as a father does his child. I cannot speak longer. Your hearts must tell you what to do. Go on serving the Lord. May he abide with us in power for evermore! Amen.

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## **Is The Spirit Of The Lord Straitened?**

O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? - Micah 2:7

There may be some who think they can convert the world by philosophy; that they can renew the heart by eloquence; or that, by some witchcraft of ceremonies, they can regenerate the soul; but we depend wholly and simply and alone on the Spirit of God. He alone worketh all our works in us; and in going forth to our holy service we take with us no strength, and we rely upon no power, except that of the Spirit of the Most High. When Asher's foot was dipped in oil, no wonder he left a foot-mark wherever he went; but if his foot had not first been anointed, there would have been small trace of him; and unless we have the unction of the Holy One, and are endued with power from on high, in vain shall we seek to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, or to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

We need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for our work. He first gives the desire to go forth to the field of service, and only he can equip us for the

fight. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Let us seek, then, to be charged with the Holy Ghost; to receive to the full the divine influence, and go to our labor thus amply prepared. There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God. Go up into the solitude with Christ, and then, when he calls you, you will be fit to go forth for him, and tell what you have seen with him in the Holy Mount.

When we get at the work our need remains; we long to see the people saved; but in order to that, they must be born again, and this we cannot accomplish ourselves. Change a stone into flesh! Try that at home with a piece of stone on your table, before you attempt it with the hard hearts of men. Create a soul between the ribs of death! Try that in a charnel-house before you pretend to create within a sinner, dead in sin, the spiritual life. Of regeneration we may say, "This is the finger of God." If our religion be not supernatural, it is a delusion. If the Holy Ghost be not with you, you are like Jannes and Jambres, attempting to work a miracle without Jehovah's aid; and you will be baffled, and detected for an impostor. You will fail, like the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out devils: the devils do not know you; they would know Jesus; they would know the Holy Spirit; but at your idle efforts they mockingly laugh. Only those people who never do any spiritual work talk about what they can accomplish. When you get into the sacred service, you find how great your weakness is; you feel out of your depth when you come to deal with souls, and you must have the Holy Spirit or fail.

We must not conclude that because so many good people give their time to God's work, that necessarily the work is done. No, there is nothing done unless the Holy Ghost does it. We never personally go a step towards heaven, and we never lead another one inch on the way, apart from the Holy Ghost. We must have the Holy Spirit, and if we have him not, all our machinery will stand still; or if it goes on, it will produce no effect whatever. I heard of a Christian man whose mill-wheel was noticed to be in motion on a certain Sunday. The people going to worship greatly wondered thereat; but one who went by set their minds at rest by pointing out that the wheel was only turning idly round, because the water, by accident, was allowed to flow over it. But the man said, "It is

very like our minister and his sermons. There is no work being done, but the wheel goes round, clickety click, clickety click, though it is not grinding anything." Therein it also greatly resembles many an organization for spiritual service: the water is passing over it, glittering as it flows; but the outside motion does not join on to any human need, nor produce any practical result, and nothing comes of the click and hum.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all thy quickening powers."

or else all our service for the Lord is in vain.

I. The text asks this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" As we try and dwell upon it a little while, we remark, first, that THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY THE COMMANDS OF MEN; for in a previous verse we find that the people said to their prophets, "Prophecy ye not." When men spoke in the name of God, these people had grown so besotted, through their evil doings, that they bade them hold their tongues. They did not want to hear any more about God; they had given him up; and they wished to have no more to do with him. What was said by the prophets was unpleasant. It provoked unhappy memories; it made them think of things that they would rather forget; so they said to the prophets, "Prophecy ye not." Here comes in the question of the text. These men speak under the impulse of the Spirit of God. What think you? Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened, shut up, put down, silenced, by the commands of men? They thought so; they thought that they had only to say to these men of God, "Be quiet. If you speak again, we will put you in prison, or we will banish you, or we will cut off your heads." By those means they thought to stifle the voice of the Spirit of God, and make him dumb in their midst. The question comes, "Have you done it? Can you do it? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Beloved friends, this can never be. The Spirit of God is not straitened; for any man in whom he dwells must speak. They may tell him to be quiet; and he may even, for a season, consent to be so. But one of old said, "His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing;" and he was obliged to speak out. If a man has made a message of his own, or if he has borrowed it from another, he may

or may not speak it; but if God has given it to him to speak, speak it he must, and nothing can silence him. Throughout long ages men have felt moved of God to speak, and they have had to speak in peril of their lives, but they have spoken all the same. When the light of the Reformation first came to England, those who received the gospel were mostly very feeble folk. They felt the force of the movement, and thought that it must have come from God; but they were not sure of their standing ground, and the major part of them recanted when they were brought in presence of the fire, or even laid in prison. Some of the best of them, during the early days of Henry the Eighth, having but a slight hold of the truth, drew back; and the enemy thought that they would all be of this kind; and so he hunted and persecuted them. But, after a very little time, the very men who had been cowards when first they learned the truth, were pricked in their conscience, and they came forward, saying that they found it to be more unbearable to live after having recanted than they could find it to die; and in the power of God they stood up boldly to declare Christ. There was little Bilney, of whom Latimer speaks so lovingly; a man grandly taught in many things, but at first a trembler. He thought that he might be mistaken, and he drew back, but afterwards he gave himself up to die; and when opportunities were given to him to escape, he would not embrace them. He felt that he must die for his Master. And there was Frith, who, when they brought him through Croydon, and he was desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury (I mean Cranmer, who was in an almost similar spiritual state himself, but then, by force of his position compelled to be a persecutor) to escape into the woods—the north wood or Norwood, and elsewhere—made the notable reply, "The moment that you let me alone, I will go up to Lambeth myself. I am to die for Christ, and if you make me fly away for a time, I will be back again; for I must own my Master." The persecutors began to be surprised at this; but the reason was that the men grew surer of the truth, and, as they grew surer of it, they grew bolder to confess it, and confess it they must when once they felt the power of it in their souls. God will not leave himself without a witness, be you sure of this; and if there should come a time of trembling, when even the brave hearts seem staggered, and begin to fail, there will again come a time of confidence, when men will step out, and say, "I was a coward once; but now, in the name of the Most High, I will avow his cause, and stand up for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." The



Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the commands of men. He will make his servants speak.

Know, again, that, if some of these servants are put to death, or silenced, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, for he will raise up others. He is never at a loss. They burned Huss, whose name was Goose, but he said that God would raise up a swan, a bigger bird than he; and that was Luther's motto, his coat-of-arms, and they could never roast the swan, though they would have liked to have done so. Luther lived on, for God wanted such a witness as he; and as long as God needed him, the hate of his enemies was vain. Thus it has been in all ages. Where did God find many of his first witnesses in the Reformation? In the places where you would have thought it least likely that there should have been any to bear testimony for him—in the monasteries. He laid his hand on priests, and monks, and nuns, and he said to these, "Go and preach the gospel of Christ;" and they did it, and did it faithfully, even to the death. They fell before their persecutors, the Romanists, like mowings in the month of June—one swathe of martyrs, and then another, and then another; but though their enemies reaped on, they never raped that field clear; for by the time they had got to one end, it was all green grass, up to their ankles again, at the other end. God made men who could bear witness to his Word to grow faster than they could kill them; and so he will while the world standeth. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. If the whole church of God were to apostatize—and I should not be surprised if almost the entire visible church were to do so, seeing that it has, to a great extent, done so already—it would make no difference whatever to the eternal purposes of God. Outside the professing church he would soon find his own people, and soon build up for himself a truer and better church, that would not be as the past, but would hold fast by the gospel of the grace of God with the energy and simplicity of faith. Wherefore, fear ye not, but answer this question with confidence and say, "The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened."

But if those who believe in God's name should die, and if no more were raised up, the Spirit of the Lord would not even then be straitened; he could find other ways of reaching men's minds. He could still speak by the Bible. Give us an open Bible, and we shall never be in the dark. And

he can speak by many a holy book that in the present evil age is despised. There are many good books, like the saints of old, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins—old Puritans, "destitute, afflicted, tormented," that will bear witness for Christ yet. You remember how Guthrie's "Saving Testimony," long forgotten in Scotland, was found by a shepherd lad, taken to a minister, and read, and how there broke out, from the reading of that old book that had well-nigh gone out of date and notice, a blessed revival of evangelical religion. And if all books were gone, the Spirit of God could act directly upon the hearts of men. He is not straitened. He can still call some Saul of Tarsus without a Bible and without a minister. And if the enemies of the Lord were so to conquer that the very name of Christian should be forgotten, still the Spirit of God could begin again, and, out of nothing, create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Despair? What have we who know the might of God to do with despair? What have we to do even with doubt or fear? The Lord liveth, and his eternal Spirit will work his divine purposes without fail.

II. Our second remark is equally emphatic. **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY ANY CONCEIVABLE CAUSE;** if not by the commands of men, certainly not by any other cause.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by any change in himself. The Holy Ghost, as very God of very God, might truly say of himself, "I am the Lord, I change not." He is to-day what he was at Pentecost, what he always was from that beginning which had no beginning. He is divine, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, all-wise, infinite. He doeth as he wills. Therefore he is not straitened.

He is not straitened by the spirit of the age, whatever that may be. I have heard a good deal about it, and I believe that "the spirit of the age" is the devil. That is short, and not very sweet; but that is the only spirit of the age that I know of. Ages have followed ages, but there has never been but one "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He has appeared in different forms—the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of intolerance, the spirit of superstition, the spirit of envy, the spirit of infidelity, the spirit of speculation. All those worketh one and the selfsame spirit, dividing unto his disciples severally as he

wills. And though the spirit of evil is mighty, he must fly before the Spirit of God, who is infinitely more powerful, and who is not to be hindered, hampered or straitened by the spirit of the age.

Certainly the Spirit of God is not to be straitened by the discoveries of science. Last night, I think, they found out something very fresh. They will probably be finding out something fresh to-night. With reference to my faith in Christ, it does not make the slightest difference what is discovered, nor should any true revelation of science unsettle any preacher of the gospel. The more that is known of God's works, the better; the more they are understood and rightly explained, the better. Let the Father's words be magnified. But the gospel that God's servants were bound to preach when our forefathers were in the utmost ignorance, is the same gospel that we are bound to preach now, amid the dazzling electric light. If we had gone into the catacombs of Rome, illuminated by a few flickering lamps, we should have had nothing to preach down there but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and when we come together now in this enlightened nineteenth century, we have still no other subject but Christ crucified, "the old, old story of Jesus and his love." Modern discoveries need not make us tremble; for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by his power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned; he has often done it; and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth, and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, he is not straitened in that way.

Neither is he straitened by the worldliness of the great masses in the midst of whom we live. As we look round about on the people, we are almost broken-hearted about them, and seem to think the world was never so hard as it is now, and that men were never so indifferent, never so wrapped up with worldly gain as they are now. Oh, yes they were! It is only another phase of the same evil. "the whole world lieth in wickedness," just where it always has lain. There is the same sin the same hardness of heart, the same blindness, the same callousness and the Word of God is as much able to work here in London as in old pagan Rome; as able to subdue our cities in England, as it was to subdue Athens

and Corinth and the other cities where Paul preached it. Let us have confidence that nothing about the people to-day, their poverty, their love of drink, their search after pleasure, their indifference, or anything else, has at all affected the power of the Holy Spirit over the minds of men.

And the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened even by the skill of his enemies. Certainly they are skillful now, beyond anything we have ever read of. We have those who pretend to preach the gospel but, all the while, they are trying to stab it. They appear to give it a kiss; but they smite it under the fifth rib. Many nowadays claim to be evangelical, when they know that the very essence of the evangelical system is abhorrent to them. But the Holy Ghost is not straitened to-day, any more than when he met the sophistries of the Greek philosophers, and overthrew them all. The simple truth of God will win its way. The fog may darken down, and become so thick that a man cannot see his hand; but the Holy Ghost knows the road, and he can see through the darkest midnight that the church of God will ever have to endure; and he will bring out the righteousness and truth of the gospel as the light, and the glory thereof as a lamp that burneth. He is not straitened by the skill of his enemies.

I do not know how to express all that I feel about this; but this I do know—that I cannot imagine anything that can really diminish the power of the Holy Ghost. If he be divine, he is omnipotent, and, if omnipotent, nothing can lay hands on him to bind him as the Philistines bound Samson. He would burst their bands asunder. He is the free Spirit of God, and no power can hold him.

"When he makes bare his arm,  
What shall his work withstand."

III. But now I come to a very practical part of my subject, which is this: **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD MUST NOT BE TREATED BY US AS THOUGH HE WERE STRAITENED.** How can we do this? In many ways; I mention nine.

If we act towards him as if his holy Word would not now convert and sanctify, comfort and conquer, as it used to do, we are in this horrible position of practical unbelief. His holy Book, in days gone by, did great

wonders. It was like Goliath's sword, of which David said, "There is none like that; give it me." It was double-edged, and even he that played with it, might wound himself to spiritual death. Many have wrested the Word to their own destruction. "But surely the Word has not the same power now?" Try it. Give the Bible still to the wicked, to the careless, and the thoughtless; read it to them; induce them to read it; and see if it does not still convert. When you are in great trouble, turn to the Book, and pray the Holy Ghost to bless it, and see if it does not comfort you. In your darkest hour you shall find light in it; when you are ready to give up in despair, you shall to be strengthened, and return to your labor with hope, if you do but search it, and believe its message. It is full of consolation. Never think that the Spirit cannot bless the Word to you, as he used to do. He is not straitened. When you hear and do not profit, it is your hearing that is wrong, not his power that has failed. When you read the Bible, and have not that enjoyment you once had, be you sure that it is your own fault. The meat is as rich; you have lost your appetite. The Spirit of God is not straitened. There is as much inspiration in this Book as when it was first penned. It is still inspired; and he that reads it aright, still feels its inspiring influence, as God comes into his heart through his own Word. The Spirit of God in the Book, and through the Book, is not straitened. Let us keep to it. Let us preach it more and more. Let us take care that our sermons are made out of the Bible, not out of our own heads; then, speaking God's Word, we shall see that the Spirit of God is not straitened.

We behave as if the Spirit of God were straitened, in the next place, if we conceive the present state of things to be hopeless. If you are ready to fold your arms, and say that nothing can be done, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The church to which you belong may be cold and dead, and the ministry powerless, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Your own works seem to have no good results following from them, and though you plod on, the service has become almost a monotony to you; but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Peradventure I address some man, so far ungodly that he has no hope of salvation, yet still is anxious to be saved. Perhaps he says, "How can I ever become a Christian? How can I have a new heart and a right spirit?" Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot he give you the tenderness you desire? Cannot he give you the desire that seems to be lacking? Cannot he give you faith in Christ, at this very

moment? Cannot he breathe into you now that breath of spiritual life that shall make you a living soul, looking up to the cross, and finding life in the Crucified? I pray you, dear friend, if you are under a horrible sense of sin, if you think yourself the worst wretch that ever poisoned the air, if you fool unfit to live as well as unfit to die; yet believe that the Holy Ghost can renew you, and can turn the sinner into a saint, and make you to glorify God even now, this instant. If not, you limit the power of the Holy Ghost; and I come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" The case is desperate, if it were not for the divine hand; it is beyond all hope, if there were no God. There is no balm in Gilead; there is no physician there; if there had been, the health of the daughter of my people would long ago have been recovered. Where, then, is the balm? Look upward for it. Where is the physician? Look upward for him. There is the Christ of God, "mighty to save," and there is the living Father himself, and there is the almighty Spirit. Oh, that you would no longer be filled with suspicions as to the power of God! for with God all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Trust thou that he can do all things, and do all things for thee whether thou art a saint or a sinner. I shall have to come to thee again with the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Do you not think, again, that we very much act as if the Spirit of the Lord were straitened when we only look for little blessings? I am very glad to see three hundred or four hundred persons in a year converted and added to this church, and this has long been the case; but if I ever imbibed the idea that this was all that might be done, I should be straitening the Spirit of God. If you have had a number of conversions in the Sunday-school—and I thank God that you have, and you have never been without them—yet if you conceive that you have reached the maximum of success, I must come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Dear friends, there is no reason that I know of, why the sermon that brings one sinner into the light, should not bring a thousand into the light, supposing a thousand sinners to be hearing it. The same power which saves one is precisely that power that would save a thousand.

"The very law which moulds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source;

That power preserves the earth a sphere,  
And guides the planets in their course."

The same law, the same power, operates to little and to gigantic ends. Oh, for a mighty belief in that God who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"; and that power is the Holy Ghost, who cannot be straitened!

Why, then, should we not come up to the house of God with the prayer, "O Lord, work mighty marvels"? Is he not the God that doeth great wonders? Should we not expect him to do large things? I know some will say, "Well, if I were to see a great many converted, I should be afraid that they would, many of them, go back." But my experience tells me that there is no reason to believe that when many are converted there are more mistaken persons in the number, in proportion, than when few are converted. In fact, I think that I have noticed that the more that are received into the church the better is the quality. And the reason is this—that, when few are coming, there is a strong temptation to accept them with less discretion; but, when there are a great many, we can afford to be somewhat more rigid; so that the more the merrier, and the more the sounder. I think that it is often the case. Let us believe that the Spirit of God can save a parish, can save a city, can shake London from end to end. Oh, that God would enlarge the capacity of our faith! "According to your faith be it unto you." But we have not more than sixpenny-worth of faith; and when we get as much as that represents, we think that we are getting rich; and yet there are mines of untold wealth of the grace of God to be had. Oh, that we had the faith wherewith to take possession of them!

Again, dear friends, do you not think that we also treat the Spirit of God as though he were straitened when we imagine that our weakness hinders his working by us. "Oh," says one, "I have no doubt that God can bless a great many by you!" Well, dear fiend, if you knew what I am often obliged to feel of myself, you would never talk so. I am the weakest of you all, in my own apprehension. Another says, "I know that I am inferior in ability, in knowledge, in opportunity." Just so, dear friend; and therefore you suppose that the Spirit of God cannot use you. Do you not see, that, though you think such a confession is an evidence of humility, you are straitening the Spirit of God? However weak and feeble you may be, he

can use you. If you think that he cannot, you deprive him of power in your apprehension. It is not yourself, you see, that you are lowering, you are really lowering the power of God. He can use a person who is very insignificant, very obscure, very unlearned, very feeble. Nay, he delights to do this; and he makes even those that are strong feel weak before he uses them, so that they say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." He will use empty vessels, and if you do not want emptying because you are empty already, then there is one little thing that needs not to be done, and God can begin with you at once. There is nothing in you—nothing. Now, if God will use you, he will manifestly have all the glory. Believe that he can use you, and get to work, and do something. Tell out his gospel. Tell it over and over again. Tell it where you have told it, or where you have never told it, and believe that God can use you; AND HE WILL. Else, if you say, "He cannot use me," I shall put the question to you again, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

But I hear another say, "I think, dear sir, you do not know where I live. If you did, you would not think there could be any very great blessing." Where do you live? In No-man's-ground? At the other end of the world? At Land's End, just over the edge of the universe? Here is a word for the little places, little churches, hamlets with scanty population, where only a few people come together for worship. Do not believe that the Spirit of the Lord is narrowed by the smallness of the place. Some of the greatest works for Christ have begun in hamlets and in small villages. The fire has commenced to burn there which has afterwards become a mighty conflagration, like the flames which are driven in terrible grandeur across the forests of America. It matters not how few begin, but where two or three are met together in Christ's name there is he; and if he be there, he will soon, by means of that little company, be somewhere else, and he will make the fire to fly abroad to the utmost ends of the earth. If you have only two or three souls committed to your charge, you have quite as many as you will give good account of. Do not hunger for big congregations; hunger to save those you have. If the Lord will but bless you to the Sunday-school class, or to the two or three children in your own family, you cannot tell what good will come of it, for the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the scantiness of the population.



A great many persons are guilty of thinking the Spirit of God to be straitened when they fancy that he must always work in one way. When I am seeing persons who come forward to confess their faith, I find they often begin by telling me how they were brought low under a sense of sin; and I like that old-fashioned way of conversion. But when I find one beginning by saying, "The Lord met me, and filled my heart with joy and gladness under a sense of pardon, almost before I had any sense of sin, and the sense of sin followed after," I say to myself, "Let the Lord do his work in his own way." I am not going to make a pattern, and lay them all on it, and say that they must all be just that length, or else be stretched out a bit, or be cut shorter. No; let the Lord save his own people in his own way; and if one is made to go down to the dark dungeon of law-work, and gets whipped till he has not a bit of whole skin in his soul, I hope that it will do him good. But if another is gently led to Christ, and does not know that there is a rod, but through love and kindness is led to rejoice in his Savior, I trust that he will remember it, and be glad all his days. Conversions are not run into moulds. You cannot get a gross of conversions like a gross of steel pens. Each living child is different from any other living child. A great painter never paints exactly the same picture twice. There is always a difference somewhere, be it ever so slight; and when there is a work for eternity done in a church, it is done in very varied ways. If we begin to tie the Lord down to one way of work, we shall make a great mistake.

"Oh," says one, "we meet together, a number of us, and anybody speaks who likes, and that is God's way of working. I do not believe in a one-man ministry." But we are in great danger of grieving the Spirit of God if we think that he only works with one set of men, with one order of government, or with only those who have none. Another man, who goes to hear one particular individual, says, "I am profited by Mr. So-and-so's preaching, and do not get so much good under anybody else. I do not like that other open way of worship." Brethren, let them worship as they like. God does bless a one-man ministry, and God does bless a twenty-man ministry. If the ministry be in the power of his Spirit, let it take what shape it likes. God is not bound by our rules and regulations: if you see God at work, bless his name that he is there, and let him work as he wills. You must not think that God works only on one set of lines. "Oh," says

one, "I always get a blessing from So-and-so." Yes, you expect it, and you pray God to send it. "But I do not expect a blessing from such-and-such a man. He has such a curious way of going to work." Very likely. God has some very queer servants, and, may I add, he has some very queer children? We have strange families ourselves sometimes. Some parents have very old boys; and a number of God's sons and daughters are the oddest children that ever were born. Yet he bears with them; and surely we may bear with them, too. Some of the most useful people one has ever known have also been very eccentric, and they have gone their own way to work. If you do not like their way, do not go with them; go your own way. They will not like your way; but they must not blame you, neither must you despise them. As the Lord directs you, and as you find the Word of God guides you, set to work for him, and believe that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. God blessed William Huntington, the coal-heaver, to many souls, though he preached a very strong Calvinism, while, at the same time, he was blessing some who preached a very weak Arminianism; but God blesses neither the Calvinism nor the Arminianism, but the Christ that is in the sermon. The true, eternal, evangelical verity that is brought out, God himself will bless to the souls of men. Let us not, therefore, speak of the Holy Ghost as tied to any set of men. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Once more: we act as if we did not believe in this divine truth concerning the Spirit of God, when we think that some men are beyond his reach. Let us never imagine that those who have been sitting under the sound of the Word for years are so gospel-hardened as to be past hope; or those who have gone deep into sin are too deeply-dyed ever to be cleansed; or those who have wandered from the fold are too far away ever to be recalled. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, that we should despair of any whom God has permitted still to remain on this side his judgment-bar? Have faith for the worst of men, and the worst of women too: great sinners, when saved, bring great glory to that God whose Spirit leads them to the truth.

And again, we may treat the Spirit of God as straitened if we cannot believe that he can bless us to-day. "I feel so gloomy," you say; "I hope that I shall be better to-morrow." Brother, why should you not be converted at this good hour? "Oh," says some sister, "I mean to serve the

Lord when I got a little older." Do you? Well, you are a little older since I began to speak to you; and I think that your best time is to begin now. Believe in God's nows. Believe that any moment is a good moment with God. "This day is a day of good tidings." Why should not I at this moment dedicate myself to God afresh? Why should I not come to Christ again, and ask him to give me more life, more faith, more hope, more joy, more likeness to himself now? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

IV. On the fourth and last point, our words must be few, though the truth affords much scope for instruction. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL PROVE THAT HE IS NOT STRAITENED; and at the last all men shall own his power, whether they have bowed to it or not: he will be magnified in those who are saved, and in those who are lost.

He will exact punishment for resistance. Those who now despise the messages which are sent to them will, at last, be left to their own devices. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," saith the Eternal God; and continual rejection will, at last, and in the total withdrawal of his presence, and the eternal ruin of all who have resisted him.

But notwithstanding the rejection of men, he will fulfill the divine decree. Man's obstinacy shall not frustrate the purpose of God; and the things which he hath foreordained shall surely come to pass. In this shall be clear evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened. Not one of God's chosen shall be suffered to continue in the way to ruin; they shall all be effectually called, and enabled to embrace Christ as he is freely preached to them in the gospel.

Thus, the third proof will be given, in that he will glorify Christ, and prepare a people to welcome his advent. The gospel shall be preached among all nations, and out of every tribe and people witnesses shall be gathered to await the glorious appearing of the victorious Christ, which cannot be long delayed. Then it shall be soon how grandly the Spirit, it of the Lord has perfected both the number and the character of the church, which, like a chaste virgin, shall be presented to the Lamb, as the reward of his agony and intercession.

You that are not converted, but are longing to be, what are you waiting

for, seeing that the Spirit of the Lord is thus over ready to work, and will never be more able at another time than he is now? The great point with many is to precipitate decision, to bring them across the border line. You are almost over it. You have often been so. You are almost persuaded. O Spirit of God, make them believe in Jesus now! May they turn their eyes to him who hung upon the tree; and look now, and live! What reason should there be why tomorrow should be better for repenting than today? In what way can 1892 be better than 1891? I am at a loss to think; but I can easily find a great many reasons why delays are dangerous, why delays are expensive, why delays will end in rejections. May God the Holy Spirit come and turn you to God now, lest, at last, you should share in that awful judicial blindness which falls on those who spurn his entreaties; lest the gospel should be hid to you because you are lost; lest standing in the way of God's purpose, you should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground; lest, at last, you should miss being numbered with that glorious throng who are now being called away from their idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven! Has he not said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? When may they come? Whenever they come, he will not cast them out. What sort of people will he receive? "Him that cometh"—any "him" that cometh, be he who he may. How do they come? They must just trust—trust Jesus. May the Holy Spirit enable you to trust him now! The Lord bless you, for his name's sake! Amen.

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## **Israel At The Red Sea**

He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. - Psalm 106:9

Several Sabbaths ago we preached upon the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt, by the blood of the passover: and we told you then,

that we believed that event to be typical of the coming forth of God's people from that spiritual house of bondage, that furnace of mental suffering whence they are delivered by the omnipotent grace of God, at the time of their conversion. This morning we pursue the narrative. No doubt the children of Israel supposed that now all was over; the Egyptians has sent them away, entreating them to depart, and loading them with riches. Terror had smitten the heart of Egypt, for from the king on the throne to the prisoner in the dungeon, all was dismay and fear on account of Israel. Egypt was glad for them when they departed. Therefore the children of Israel said within themselves, "We shall now march to Canaan at once; there will be no more dangers, no more troubles, no more trials; the Egyptians themselves have sent us away, and they are too much afraid of us ever to molest us again. Now shall we tread the desert through with hasty footsteps; and when a few more days have passed, we shall enter into the land of our possession - the land that floweth with milk and honey." "Not quite so speedily," says God; "the time is not arrived yet for you to rest. It is true I have delivered you from Egypt; but there is much you have to learn before you will be prepared to dwell in Canaan. Therefore I shall lead you about, and instruct you, and teach you." And it came to pass that the Lord led the children of Israel about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, till they arrived over against Baalzephon, where on either side the craggy mountains shut them in. Pharaoh hears of it; he comes upon them, to overcome them; and they stand in terrible fright and jeopardy of their lives, to overcome them; and they stand in terrible fright and jeopardy of their lives. Now, beloved, it is usually so with the believer: he marches out of Egypt spiritually at the time of his conversion, and he says within himself, "Now I shall always be happy." He has a bright eye, and a light heart, for his fetters have been dashed to the ground, and he feels no longer the lash of conscience upon his shoulder. "Now," says he, "I may have a short life, but it will be a happy one."

"A few more rolling years at most,  
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast.'

And then I shall have no more warfare, no more fighting, no more disturbance; but I shall be at peace." "Not quite as thou desirest," says

God. "Oh! thou little one; I have more to teach thee ere thou art prepared for my palace." Then he commences to lead us about, and bring us into straits and perils. The sins which we thought had utterly left us are hunting us behind, while impassible floods block up the way. Even trembling Israel halting by the Red Sea is but a faint emblem of that terrible position into which the child of God usually falls, within a few weeks or months after he has come out of the land of Egypt.

I shall preach this morning a sermon, which I hope will be useful to such of you as have lately come to know the Lord. You were expecting to build tabernacles, in which to dwell on the summit of the mountains of joy for ever; but you find, on the contrary, that you have very great troubles and conflicts; and perhaps now you have a more terrible trial than you ever experienced in all your life before. I will endeavour to show you, that this is just what you might have expected; that there will be a Red Sea very soon after you come out of your house of bondage. Others of you, my dear friends, have passed through all these things many years ago. You can say, -

"Many days have passed since then,  
Many changes I have seen,  
Yet have been upheld till now;  
Who could hold me up but thou?"

But I am sure you will be glad to re-visit the spot, where God delivered you from your distresses. We find it very pleasant to look upon the place where we were taught in our school-boy days, or to visit the haunts of our childhood. So you who are grey-headed in the cause of your Master, will not find it very tedious work to go back a little way, and look to that Red Sea which God rebuked and dried up, that you might be led through it even as through the wilderness.

Coming, then, to the subject; the children of Israel had their difficulties, and so generally the child of God has his very soon after he comes out of Egypt. But then they had their refuges; and moreover, God had a great and grand design to answer in all the troubles into which they were brought.

I. Taking the first point, the children of Israel just now had THREE DIFFICULTIES - three exceeding great dangers. And so I believe that every heir of heaven, within a very short period after the time of his deliverance, will meet with the same.

The first they had was a great trial sent by God himself. There was the Red Sea in the front of them. Now, it was not an enemy that put the sea there; it was God himself. We may therefore think, that the Red Sea represents some great and trying providence, which the Lord will be sure to place in the path of every new-born child; in order to try his faith, and to test the sincerity of his trust in God. I do not know, beloved, whether your experience will back up mine: but I can say this, that the worst difficulty I ever met with, or I think I can ever meet with, happened a little time after my conversion to God. And you must generally expect, very soon after you have been brought to know and love him, that you will have some great, broad, deep Red Sea straight before your path, which you will scarcely know how to pass. Sometimes it will occur in the family. The husband says, for instance - if he is an ungodly man - "You shall not attend such-and-such a place of worship; I positively forbid you to be baptized, or to join that church;" there is a Red Sea before you. You had done nothing wrong; it is God himself who places that Red Sea before your path. Or perhaps before that time, you were carrying on a business which now you cannot conscientiously continue; and there is a Red Sea which you have to cross in renouncing your means of livelihood. You don't see how it is to be done; how you are to maintain yourself, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Or perhaps your employment calls you amongst men with whom you lived before on amicable terms, and now on a sudden, they say, "Come! won't you do as you used to do?" There, again, is a Red Sea before you. It is a hard struggle; you do not like to come out and say, "I cannot, I shall not, for I am a Christian." You stand still, half afraid to go forward. Or perhaps it is something proceeding more immediately from God. You find that just when he plants a vine in your heart, he blasts all the vines in your vineyard; and when he plants you in his own garden, then it is that he uproots all your comforts and your joys. Just when the Sun of Righteousness is rising upon you, your own little candle is blown out; just when you seem to need it most, your gourd is withered, your prosperity

departs, and your flood becomes an ebb. I say again, it may not be so with all of you, but I think that most of God's people have not long escaped the bondage of Egypt, before they find some terrible, rolling sea, lashed perhaps by tempestuous winds directly in their path; they stand aghast, and say, "O God, how can I bear this? I thought I could give up all for thee; but now I feel as if I could do nothing! I thought I should be in heaven, and all would be easy; but here is a sea I cannot ford - there is no squadron of ships to carry me across: it is not bridged even by thy mercy; I must swim it, or else I fear I must perish."

Then the children of Israel had a second difficulty. They would not have cared about the Red Sea a single atom, if they had not been terrified by the Egyptians who were behind them. These Egyptians, I think may be interpreted this morning, by way of parable, as the representatives of those sins of ours, which we thought were clean dead and gone. For a little while after conversion sin does not trouble a Christian; he is very happy and cheerful, in a sense of pardon; but before many days are past, he will understand what Paul said, "I find another law in my members, so that when I would do good, evil is present with me." The first moment when he wins his liberty he laughs and leaps in an ecstasy of joy. He thinks, "Oh! I shall soon be in heaven; as for sin, I can trample that beneath my feet!" But mark you, scarce has another Sabbath gladdened his spirit, ere he finds that sin is too much for him; the old corruptions which he fancied were laid in their graves get a resurrection and start up afresh, and he begins to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees all his old sins galloping behind him: like Pharoah and his host pursuing him to the borders of the Red Sea. There is a great trial before him. Oh! he thinks he could bear that; he thinks he could walk through the Red Sea; oh! those Egyptian - they are behind him! He thought he should never have seen them any more for ever; they were the plague and torment of his life when they made him work in the brick-kiln. He sees his old master, the very man who was wont to lay the lash on his shoulders, riding post haste after him; and there are the eyes of that black Pharoah, flashing like fire in the distance; he sees the horrid scowling face of the tyrant, and how he trembles! Satan is after him, and all the legions of hell seem to be let loose, if possible, utterly to destroy his soul. At such a time, moreover,



our sins are more formidable to us than they were before they were forgiven; because, when we were in Egypt, we never saw the Egyptians mounted on horses, or in chariots; they only appeared as our task-masters, with their whips; but now these people see the Egyptians on horseback, clad in armour; they behold all the mighty men of valour come out with their warlike instruments to slay them. So did I find, speaking for myself, that when I first knew the weight of sin, it was as a burden, as a labour, as a trouble; but when the second time

"I asked the Lord that I might grow,  
In faith, and love, and every grace;  
Might more of his salvation know,  
And seek more earnestly his face;"

and when he answered me by letting all my sins loose upon me they appeared more frightful than before. I thought the Egyptians in Egypt were not half so bad as the Egyptians out of Egypt; I thought the sins I knew before, though they were cruel task-masters, were not half so much to be dreaded as those soldier-sins, armed with spears and axes, with chariots of iron with scythes upon their axles, hastening to assault me. It is true they did not come so near to me as heretofore; nevertheless they occasioned more fright than when I was their slave. It may be, poor child of God, thou art astonished and amazed to find, that thy sins are more black now than they were when thou wast under conviction; that thou hast less hope than thou hadst even then; and that thy condition is possibly far worse than when the law was beating thee from head to foot, and rubbing brine into the wounds of thy conscience. Thou mayest be saying, "Ah! well, I never thought of this; if I be a child of God, if I were really pardoned and forgiven, how could it be that I should be so vexed and tormented with a sense of my guilt? And if all my transgressions have been cast into the depths of the sea, how is it that I hear the armies of my sins, rattling their horse-hoofs and chariot-wheels behind me?" I tell thee, beloved, in the name of the Lord, that is just what you ought to have expected. The pangs after we come out of Egypt are at times even more painful than those we feel in the house of bondage; and there is usually a time of trial a little while after the new birth, which is even more terrible and awful than the previous agony of the soul, though not usually so

protracted. This was the second difficulty.

But there was a third difficulty, which perhaps wrought them more misery than either of the other two: these poor children of Israel had such faint hearts. They no sooner saw the Egyptians than they began to cry out; and when they beheld the Red Sea before them, they murmured against their deliverer. A faint heart is the worst foe a Christian can have; whilst he keeps his faith firm, whilst the anchor is fixed deep in the rock, he never need fear the storm; but when the hand of faith is palsied, or the eye of faith is dim, it will go hard with us. As for the Egyptian, he may throw his spear; while we can catch it on the shield of faith, we are not terrified by the weapon, but if we lose our faith, the spear becomes a deadly dart. While we have faith, the Red Sea may flow before us, as deep and dark as it pleases: for like Leviathan, we trust we can snuff up Jordan at a draught. But if we have no faith, then at the most insignificant streamlet, which Faith could take up in her hands in a single moment, and drink like Gideon's men, poor Unbelief stands quivering and crying, "Ah! I shall be drowned in the floods, or I shall be slain by the foe; there is no hope for me; I am driven to despair. It would have been better for me that I had died in Egypt, than that I should come hither to be slain by the hand of the enemy." The child of God, when he is first born, has but very little faith, because he has had but little experience; he has not tried the promise, and therefore he does not know its faithfulness. He has not used the arm of his faith, and therefore the sinews of it have not become strong. Let him live a little longer, and become confirmed in the faith, and he will not care for Red Seas, nor yet for the Egyptians; but just then his little heart beats against the walls of his body, and he laments, "Ah, me! ah, me! O wretched man that I am! How shall I ever find deliverance?" This description of spiritual geography may be uninteresting to some, because they may not have travelled through this part of the wilderness, but others will view it with attention. Who cared about maps of the Crimea till there was war there? But as soon as our soldiers were engaged in that particular spot, every man bought a map of the Crimea and studied the boundaries of Russia. So if you have been in these straits, you will be very glad of my map this morning, that you may see the way in which God leads his family. These are the three dangers - a great trial, sins pursuing us behind, and an exceedingly faint heart.

II. But, thanks be to God! the children of Israel had THREE HELPS.

Oh! child of God? dost thou discern this mystery? Whenever thou hast three trials, thou wilt always have three promises; and if thou hadst forty afflictions, thou wouldst have forty measures of grace. Yes, and if thou hadst a million troubles, thou wouldst have a million measures of mercy. The Israelites had three difficulties, and they had three helps; and as the difficulty was put in the way by providence, so providence did also furnish a relief.

The first help they had was Providence. Providence put the Red Sea there, and piled the rocks on either hand, while providence represented by the fiery cloudy pillar, had led them to its shore, and conducted them into the defile, and now the same pillar of providence came to their assistance. They had not come thither undirected, and therefore they should not be left unprotected, for the same cloudy pillar which led them there, came behind them to protect them.

Cheer up, then, heir of grace! What is thy trial? Has providence brought it upon thee? If so, unerring wisdom will deliver thee from it. What is it thou art now exercised upon? As truly as thou art alive, God will remove it. Dost thou think God's cloudy pillar would ever lead thee to a place where God's right arm would fail thee? Dost thou imagine that he would ever guide thee into such a defile that he could not conduct thee out again? The providence which apparently misleads, will in verity befriend thee. That which leads thee into difficulties guards thee against thy foes; it casts darkness on thy sins, whilst it giveth light to thee. How sweet is providence to a child of God, when he can reflect upon it! He can look out into this world, and say, "However great my troubles, they are not so great as my Father's power; however difficult may be my circumstances, yet all things around me are working together for good. He who holds up yon unpillared arch of the starry heavens can also support my soul without a single apparent prop; he who guides the stars in the well-ordered courses, even when they seem to move in hazy dances, surely he can overrule my trials in such a way that out of confusion he will bring order; and from seeming evil produce lasting good. He who bridles the storm, and puts the bit in the mouth of the tempest, surely he can restrain my trial, and keep my sorrows in subjection. I need not fear while the

lightnings are in his hands and the thunders sleep within his lips; while the oceans gurgle from his fist, and the clouds are in the hollow of his hands; while the rivers are turned by his foot, and while he diggeth the channels of the sea. Surely he whose might wings an angel, can furnish a worm with strength; he who guides a cherub will not be overcome by the trials of an emmet like myself. He who makes the most ponderous orb roll in dignity, and keeps its predestined orbit, can make a little atom like myself move in my proper course, and conduct me as he pleaseth. Christian! there is no sweeter pillow than providence; and when providence seemeth adverse, believe it still, lay it under thy head, for depend upon it there is comfort in its bosom. There is hope for thee thou child of God! The great trouble which is to come in thy way in the early part of thy pilgrimage, is planned by love, the same love which shall interpose as thy protector.

Again: the children of Israel had another refuge, in the fact, that they knew that they were the covenant people of God, and that, though they were in difficulties, God had brought them there, and therefore God, (with reverence let me say it,) was bound in honor to bring them out of that trouble into which he had brought them. "Well," says the child of God, "I know I am in a strait, but this one thing I also know, that I did not come out of Egypt by myself - I know that he brought me out; I know that I did not escape by my own power, or slay my first-born sins myself - I know that he did it; and though I fled from the tyrant - I know that he made my feet mighty for travel, for there was not one feeble in all our tribes; I know that though I am at the Red sea, I did not run there uncalled, but he bade me go there, and therefore I give to the winds my fears; for it he hath led me here into this difficulty, he will lead me out, and lead me through.

But the point to which I want to direct your attention most of all is this. The third refuge which the children of Israel had, was in a man; and neither of the two others, without that, would have been of any avail. It was the man Moses. He did everything for them. Thy greatest refuge, O child of God! in all thy trials, is in a man: not in Moses, but in Jesus; not in the servant, but in the master. he is interceding for thee, unseen and unheard by thee, even as Moses did for the children of Israel. If thou

couldst but, in the dim distance, catch the sweet syllables of his voice as they distil from his lips, and see his heart as it speaks for thee, thou wouldst take comfort; for God hears that man when he pleads. He can overcome every difficulty. He has not a rod, but a cross, which can divide the Red sea; he has not only a cloudy pillar of forgiving grace, which can dim the eyes of your foes and keep them at a distance; but he has a cross, which can open the Red sea and drown thy sins in the very midst. He will not leave thee. Look! on yonder rock of heaven he stands, cross in hand, even as Moses with his rod. Cry to him, for with that uplifted cross he will cleave a path for thee, and guide thee through the sea; he will make those hoary floods, which had been friends for ever, and stand asunder like foes. Call to him, and he will make thee a way in the midst of the ocean, and a path through the pathless sea. Cry to him, and there shall not a sin of thine be left alive; he will sweep them all away; and the king of sin, the devil, he too shall be overwhelmed beneath the Saviour's blood, whilst thou shalt sing -

"Hell and my sins obstruct my path,  
But hell and sin are conquer'd foes;  
My Jesus nailed them to his cross,  
And sang the triumph as he rose."

Still look thou to that man who once on Calvary died!

III. GOD HAD A DESIGN IN IT. And here, also, we wish you to regard with attention what God's design is, in leading the Christian into exceeding great trials in the early part of his life. This is explained to us by the Apostle Paul. A reference Bible is the best commentator in the world; and the most heavenly exposition is the searching out of kindred, texts, and comparing their meaning. "They were all baptized," says the Apostle, "unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." God's design in bringing his people into trouble, and raising all their sins at their heels, is to give them a thorough baptism into his service, consecrating them for ever to himself. I mean by baptism this morning, not the rite, but what baptism represents. Baptism signifies dedication to God - initiation into God's service. It is not when we are first converted that we so fully dedicate ourselves to God, as afterwards, when some great Red sea rolls before us. I should be delighted to see some of you get into trouble. Am I

unkind to utter such a wish? Well I repeat it, I should; for I shall never get you into the church unless you do; you will never come forward and make a thorough dedication of yourselves to God, till you have had a sharp trial. Rest assured of this, that sharp trials were no slight cause of the heroic devotion of the martyrs, confessors, and missionaries, who so thoroughly consecrated themselves to their Master's service. The great purpose of all our affliction is the promotion of an entire dedication to Christ in all our hearts. It is only in the font of sorrow that we are baptized with Christ's baptism. No holy chrism hath efficacy to baptize; it is the Spirit, who alone can dedicate us in the waters of the sea of tribulation. You are brought into these straits, young believer, that you may at such a time receive the baptism for God. Do not, I beseech you, let the time pass by; for there are some who neglect it, who, afterwards, never perfectly know what it is to be "baptized unto Jesus, in the cloud and in the sea." They say, "they will wait a little while," but the consequence is, they wait a very long while. They say they will do to-morrow what they ought to do to-day. Beware how you let slip the opportunity which God presents you, that you may devote yourself publicly to him. The very first time after conversion, when we come into straits and difficulties, is intended that we should then be dedicated to Jesus, and come out openly as the children of the living God.

Now, beloved, let these thoughts rest with you. You may think them unimportant, but I am sure they are not. Believe me, you ought, indeed, to own yourselves on the Lord's side. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him. There is nothing which I would more earnestly and ardently press upon you, than the great duty of decision for Jesus Christ. How many of you have a faint and indistinct hope, that when you die you will be Christ's people; and yet you must confess that you are not decided for Christ. You think you are his, but you often neglect duty, and frequently allow what you think a little sin to stain your conscience. You are not godly in worldly affairs. But I beseech you, put truth and righteousness into one scale, and put your own worldly gain into the other, and see which is the most important, and if you think that prudence dictates attention to this world instead of God, then remember, that is hellish prudence, and cometh of the devil, and, therefore, reject it. If ye were Egyptians, I might tell you to serve another master; but since

you are God's people, or profess to be, I charge home upon you; and I beg of you, if you make a profession, to be out-and-out with it. How we do loathe those hot and cold people, who are neither one thing nor the other! You, who hold with the hare and run with the hounds - you, who are first one thing and then another - you, who are half horse, half alligator, and neither of them - you, who are something between the two, who are neither Christians nor worldlings in your own opinions. We know which you are. I have often thought what a consistent religion the Roman Catholic would be for some of you go-between people. You are not exactly children of God; but you would not like to be called the children of the devil. Where should we put you at last? It would be a very convenient thing to have a purgatory for you, to place you somewhere between the two. But as we have no such place, we do not wish to have any such characters, and we believe there are none such; you are either servants of God, or servants of the devil. Don't stand halting between two opinions, but just say, once for all, whom you will serve. If you choose the devil, choose him, love him, serve him, and rejoice in your choice. If you choose hell, go there, rush madly there; it's a fearful dwelling place for eternity - an awful home for ever! But if you choose God, I beseech you be in downright earnest about it. The religion of the present day, what mockery it is to call it religion at all! I protest, I believe the common religion of this age will not carry half those who profess it to heaven. It is a religion which they might easily carry to heaven, for it is too light to burden them, but it is too fragile to carry them there. They have a godliness which has not eaten up their soul. I heart a minister say once to his people, that "it would be a long time before the zeal of God's house would eat them up." Take the churches all round: what a slumbering brotherhood they are! There might almost be a controversy between the prince of this world, and the prince of heaven to whom they belonged. But I beseech you, let there be a marked and decided difference between you and the world. Let your heart be steeped in godliness; let your life be saturated with religion. Take care that, "whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, you do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." So shall God see his great design subserved of making you to be baptized unto Jesus, "in the cloud and in the sea."

In concluding, there is one sad aspect of this picture, which I wish you to

regard. It is this. Some of you are journeying in an unconverted state to that bourne from which there is no return. At death you will find a Red Sea in your way - the sea of death staring you in the face. When you come before it, you will find no bridge, no ships; but you must wade that sea alone. And, mark you, if you are living now in an ungodly condition, and are doing so when you die, as certainly as you are here, just when that great sea of death is rolling before you, all the Egyptian hosts of your sins will harass you in the rear. All your sins will come bellowing after you; you will have your iniquities like wild winter wolves pursuing you, athrist for blood, and swift to slay. You will hear fiends howling in your ears. And when already the raging flood of Jordan hath made your bones shake, and your marrow quiver, just then you will see the red eyes of your sins peering through the darkness of your despair, and hear the howlings of your former transgressions, as they hound you to the pit, seeking after your soul's blood. Ah, then, my hearer, thou wilt have no cloudy pillar to give thee light; thou wilt have no pillar of darkness to confound thy foes; but thou wilt have behind thee all thy sins, and before thee that black sea of death, which thou art compelled to cross. But mark thee, those sins will swim that sea with thee; they will not be like the Egyptians which were drowned; but when thou art wading through the sea, thou wilt find thy sins like hounds fixing on a stag, drinking thy heart's blood. Ay, when thou hast landed in eternity, thou wilt find there was not a single one drowned in the sea, but that they are all alive; every sin grown into a giant, every lust brandishing a thousand arms, each arm bearing a thousand horrid fingers of flame, and each finger a claw of iron, which shall tear thy soul. Oh! I warn thee against these Egyptians of thy sins, for unless the blood be sprinkled on thy door-post and on thy lintel, and unless the destroying angel smite those sins for thee, they will assuredly follow thee across the sea. Methinks I see thee there! Thou art just in the midst of the Jordan. Poor soul! the river itself is work enough for a man to wade through it; for dying is not easy labour. The waters are rushing into his lips, and gurgling in his throat, like a whirlpool. See how he shakes. White as the floods around him, he quivers, like the very waves themselves. And, ah! just when in his fell despair, he shrieks - see, the harpies feed him with black fruits of hell; and when he quivers most, see there the scalding brimstone of Almighty God rained upon his body. Just when he is shrieking in death's torments, then is it that Satan takes the



opportunity to howl in his face, and show him his glaring eyes of fire, to terrify his poor soul, worse than death itself. Sinner! when thou diest, remember that thou wilt have to die two deaths, one death which we shall see, another death which we only know of by the shrieks, and groans, and anguish, which even we may hear on this side of the grave. But what thou wilt experience in the next world, I cannot picture to thee, I cannot tell thee; those dim shapes of horror I cannot paint to thee; those fierce flames of misery I cannot now describe; that doleful miserere of desolation, and that awful lament of eternity, I cannot endure to hear; I dare not lift the veil that conceals the dread scenes, which haunt the spirits of the ungodly departed.

Well, then, what shalt thou do to escape this death? What canst thou do to be saved? Why, sinner, in the first place, of thyself thou canst do nothing at all. But, in the second place, there is one - a Man, who can do all for thee. He is the Man Christ Jesus; if thou believest on him, filthy as thou art, and wretched, and outcast, and vile, thou shalt never see the second death, but shalt have eternal life abiding in thee; and when thou diest in this world, instead of black fiends to hound thee through the river, thou wilt have sweet angels playing o'er the stream, waiting to waft thee unto glory; thou wilt feel bright spirits fanning thy hot brow with their soft wings; thou wilt hear songs, sweet as the music of paradise, and when thy troubles are the strongest, thou wilt have a peace with God "which passeth all understanding;" a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," which shall enable thee to "swallow up death in victory." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Poor, trembling, penitent sinner, put thine hand inside the hand of Christ; now fall on his mercy; "to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart." I beseech you for Christ's sake, "be ye reconciled to God." And if ye be penitents, may God give you faith that ye may be believers! As for the rest of you, remember, ere you go, I have told you no fable, but the truth. You may go away and say, "There is no hell." Well, suppose there is none, believers will be as well off as you are. But suppose there is - and there is for a certainty - suppose yourselves in it, you cannot then suppose yourselves out of it any more. May God grant his blessing, for Jesus' sake; turning many of you to righteousness.

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## **Israel In Egypt**

And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. - Revelation 15:3

At the outset, let us remark the carefulness of the Holy Spirit in guarding the honor of our blessed Lord. This verse is often quoted as if it runs thus—"They sang the song of Moses and the Lamb." This mistake has led many weak minds to wonder at the expression, for they have imagined that it divided the honor of the song of heaven between Moses and the Redeemer. The clause—"the servant of God"—is doubtless inserted by the Holy Spirit to prevent any error upon this point, and therefore it should be carefully included in the quotation. I take it that the song of Moses is here united with the song of the Lamb, because the one was a type and picture of the other. The glorious overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea shadowed forth the total destruction of Satan and all his host in the day of the great battle of the Lord; and there was in the song of Moses the expression of the same feelings of triumph which will pervade the breasts of the redeemed when they shall triumph with their Captain.

May God the Holy Spirit enable me to exhibit the parallel which exists between the condition of Israel when passing through the sea, and the position of the church of Christ at the present day. Next, we shall compare the triumph of the Lord at the Red Sea with the victory of the Lamb in the great and terrible day of the Lord. And lastly, I shall point out certain prominent features of the song of Moses, which will doubtless

be as prominent in the song of the Lamb.

I. First, it is our business to regard THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that, like the church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. We, my brethren, who constitute a part of the Israel of God, were once the slaves of sin and Satan; we served with hard bondage and rigor while in our natural state; no bondage was ever more terrible than ours; we indeed made bricks without straw, and labored in the very fire; but by the strong hand of God we have been delivered. We have come forth from the prison-house; with joy we beheld ourselves emancipated—the Lord's free men. The iron yoke is taken from our necks; we no longer serve our lusts, and pay obedience to the tyrant sin. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, our God has led us forth from the place of our captivity, and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness.

But with the children of Israel it was not all joy; they were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh was loth to lose so valuable a nation of servants; and therefore with his chosen captains, his horsemen, and his chariots, he pursued them in angry haste. Affrighted Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear, and trembled for the issue—the hearts of the people failed them while they saw their hopes blighted and their joys ended by the approach of the oppressor; even so it is with some of you; you think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle, into Egypt, and once more become what you were. "Surely," you say, "I can not hold on my way with such a host seeking to drive me back; I must again become the slave of my iniquities." And thus dreading apostacy, and feeling that you would rather die than become what you were, you this morning are filled with trepidation. You are saying, "Alas for me! Better that I had died in Egypt than that I should have come out into this wilderness to be again captured." You have tasted for a moment the joys of holiness and the sweets of liberty; and now again to go back to endure the bondage of a spiritual Egypt, would be worse than before. This is the position of the sacramental host of God's elect; they have come out of Egypt, and they are pursuing their way to Canaan. But the world is against them; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel

together against the Lord and against his people, saying, "Let us scatter them; let us utterly destroy them." From the fiery days of the stakes of Smithfield even until now, the world's black heart has hated the church, and the world's cruel hand and laughing lip have been for ever against us. The host of the mighty are pursuing us, and are thirsty for our blood, and anxious to cut us off from the earth. Such is our position unto this hour, and such must it be until we are landed on the other side of Jordan, and until our Maker comes to reign on the earth.

But once more: the children of Israel were in a position more wonderful than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea; they feared their enemies behind; they could not fly on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks; one course only was open to them, and that course was through the sea. God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched, and the affrighted waters divide; a channel is left while the floods stand up right, and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea. The priests, bearing the ark, march forward; the whole host of Israel follow. And now behold the wondrous pilgrimage. A wall of alabaster is on either side, and myriads are in the pebbly depths. Like a wall of glass the sea stands on either side of them, frowning with beetling cliffs of foam; but still on they march; and until the last of God's Israel is safe the water stands still and firm, frozen by the lips of God. Such, my hearers, is the position of God's church now. You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God. This world is a world which is suddenly to be destroyed; and our position in it is just the position of the children of Israel, for whose sake the floods refused to meet until they were safely landed. O church of God! thou art the salt of the earth: when thou art removed this earth must putrify and decay. O living army of the living God! ye, like Israel, keep the floods of providence still standing fast; but when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God's fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing, and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely. Let me put my thoughts as plainly as I can. Naturally, according to the common order, the Red Sea should have flowed on in a level and even manner, constant in its waves, and unbroken in its surface. By the might of God the Red Sea was divided into

two parts, and the floods stood back. Now mark. Naturally, according to the common course of justice, this world, which groaneth and travaileth until now, ought, if we only consider the wicked, to be utterly destroyed. The only reason why the Red Sea afforded a safe passage for the host was this—that Israel marched through it; and the only reason why this world stands, and the only reason why it is not destroyed by fire, as it is to be at the last great day, is because God's Israel are in it; but when once they shall have passed through, the parted floods shall meet their hands, and embrace with eager joy to clasp the adverse host within their arms. The day is coming when this world shall reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. Every Christian may say, with due reverence to God, "The earth is dissolved; I bear up the pillars thereof." Let all the Christians that are in the world die, and the pillars of the earth would fall, and like a wreck and a vision all this universe of ours would pass away, never to be seen again. We are to-day, I say, passing through the floods, with enemies behind, pursuing us who are going out of Egypt up to Canaan.

III. And now the TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Moses sang a song unto the Lord by the sea of Egypt. If you will turn to holy Scripture you will find that my text was sung by the holy spirits who had been preserved from sin and from the contamination of the beast; and it is said that they sung this song upon "a sea of glass mingled with fire." Now the song of Moses was sung by the side of a sea, which was glassy, and still; for a little season the floods had been disturbed, divided, separated, congealed, but in a few moments afterward, when Israel had safely passed the flood, they became as glassy as ever, for the enemy had sunken to the bottom like a stone, and the sea re. turned to its strength when the morning appeared. Is there ever a time, then, when this great sea of Providence, which now stands parted to give a passage to God's saints shall become a level surface? Is there a day when the now divided dispensations of God, which are kept from following out their legitimate tendency to do justice upon sin—when the two seas of justice shall commingle, and the one sea of God's providence shall be "a sea of glass mingled with fire?" Yes, the day is drawing nigh when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save his people, when the great designs of God shall be accomplished, and therefore when the walls of

water shall roll together, while in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked. O, the sea shall be calm upon the surface; the sea upon which God's people shall walk shall seem to be a sea that is clear, without a weed, without an impurity; while down in its hollow bosom, far beyond all mortal ken, shall be the horrid depths where the wicked must for ever dwell in the fire which is mingled with the glass.

Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed, and why it is that by-and-by we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because all Israel were safe. They were all safely across the sea. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "Thou hast led thy people like a flock through the wilderness." Now, in the last time, when Christ shall come upon earth, the great song will be—"Lord, thou hast saved thy people; thou hast led them all safely through the paths of providence, and not one of them has fallen into the hands of the enemy." O, it is my strong belief, that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that all who love the Lord below, must at last attain to heaven. I do not believe with some that men may start on the road to heaven, and be saved, and yet fall by the hand of the enemy. God forbid, my friends!

"All the chosen race  
Shall meet around the throne,  
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,  
And make his glories known."

Part of the triumph of heaven will be, that there is not one throne that is unoccupied. As many as God hath chosen, as many as Christ hath redeemed, as many as the Spirit hath called, as many as believe, shall arrive safe across the stream. We are not all safely landed yet:

"Part of the host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now."

The vanguard of the army have already reached the shore. I see them yonder;

"I greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
Upon th' eternal shore."

And you and I, my brethren, are marching through the depths. We are at this day following hard after Christ, and walking through the wilderness. Let us be of good cheer: the rearguard shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen shall soon have landed; the last of God's elect shall have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure. But O! if one were absent—oh! if one of his chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of Paradise, so that music could never be distilled from them again.

But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. He looked upon his people the day before.

"He looked upon his people,  
And the tear was in his eye;  
He looked upon the foeman  
And his glance was stern and high."

And now to-day he looks upon his people, and he says, "Blessed art thou, O Israel, safely landed on the shore;" and he looks not upon the foeman, but upon the foeman's tomb; he looks where the living were protected by the shield of God from all their enemies; and he sees—what? A mighty sepulcher of water; a mighty tomb in which were engulfed princes, monarchs, potentates. "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Pharaoh's chariots also are drowned therein. And soon, my hearers, you and I shall do the same. I say that now we have to look abroad on hosts of enemies. What with the wild beasts of Rome, what with the antichrist of Mohammed, what with the thousands of idolatries and false gods, what with infidelity in all its myriad shapes, many are the enemies of God, and mighty are the hosts of hell. Lo, you see them gathered together this day; horseman upon horseman, chariot upon chariot, gathered together against the Most High. I see the trembling church, fearing to be over-thrown; I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer, and crying, "Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage." But mine eye looks through the future with telescopic glance,

and I see the happy period of the latter days, when Christ shall reign triumphant. I shall ask them where is Babel? where is Rome? where is Mohammed? and the answer shall come—where? Why they have sunk into the depths; they have sunk to the bottom as a stone. Down there the horrid fire devours them, for the sea of glass is mingled with the fire of judgment. To-day I see a battle-field; the whole earth is torn by the hoofs of horses; there is the rumble of cannon and the roll of drum. "To arms! to arms!" both hosts are shouting. But you wait awhile, and you shall walk across this plain of battle, and say, "Seest thou that colossal system of error dead? There lies another, all frozen, in ghastly death, in motionless stupor. There lieth infidelity; there sleepeth secularism and the secularist; there lie those who defied God. I see all this vast host of rebels lying scattered upon the earth. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; Jehovah has gotten unto himself the victory, and the last of his enemies are destroyed." Then shall be the time when shall be sung "the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

III. Now, turning to the song of Moses, I shall conclude my address to you by noticing some interesting particulars in the song which will doubtless have a place in the everlasting orchestra of the redeemed, when they shall praise the Most High. O! my brethren, I could but wish that I had stood by the Red Sea, to have heard that mighty shout, and that tremendous roar of acclamation! Methinks one might well have borne a servitude in Egypt, to have stood in that mighty host who sung such mighty praise. Music hath charms; but never had it such charms as it had that day when fair Miriam led the women, and Moses led the men, like some mighty leader, beating time with his hand. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done gloriously." Methinks I see the scene; and I anticipate the greater day, when the song shall be sung again, "as the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

Now, just notice this song. In the 15th chapter of Exodus you find it, and in divers of the Psalms you will see it amplified. The first thing I would have you notice in it is, that from beginning to end it is a praise of God, and of nobody else but God. Moses, thou hast said nothing of thyself. O great lawgiver, mightiest of men, did not thine hand grasp the mighty rod that split the sea—that burned its fair breast, and left a sear for awhile



upon its bosom? Didst not thou lead the hosts of Israel? Didst not thou marshal their thousands for battle, and like a mighty commander led them through the depths? Is there not a word for thee? Not one. The whole strain of the song is, "I will sing unto the Lord," from beginning to end. It is all praise of Jehovah; there is not one word about Moses, nor a single word in praise of the children of Israel. Dear friends, the last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God, and of no one else. Here you praise the instrument; to-day you look on this man and on that, and you say, "Thank God for this minister, and for this man?" To-day you say, "Blessed be God for Luther, who shook the Vatican, and thank God for Whitefield, who stirred up a slumbering church;" but in that day you shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitefield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts; forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to shine when the sun himself appeareth. The song shall be unto Jehovah, and Jehovah only; we shall not have a word to say for preachers nor bishops, not a syllable to say for good men and true; but the whole song from first to last shall be, "unto him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And next will you please to note, that this song celebrated something of the fierceness of the enemy! Do you observe how, when the songster describes the attack of Pharaoh, he says, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." A song is made out of the wrath of Pharaoh. And it shall be so at the last. "The wrath of man shall praise God. I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight; and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now, to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury, and wrath, and hatred, and strife, shall all be woven into a song; and the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God. Rail on, rail on, blasphemers! Smite on, smite on, tyrant! Lift thy heavy hand, O despot; crush the truth, which yet thou canst not

crush; knock from his head the crown—the crown that is far above thy reach—poor puny impotent mortal as thou art! Go on, go on! But all thou doest shall but increase his glories. For aught we care, we bid you still proceed with all your wrath and malice. Though it shall be worse for you, it shall be more glorious for our Master; the greater your preparations for war, the more splendid shall be his triumphal chariot, when he shall ride through the streets of heaven in pompous array. The more mighty your preparations for battle, the more rich the spoil which he shall divide with the strong. O! Christian, fear not the foe! Remember the harder his blows, the sweeter thy song; the greater his wrath, the more splendid thy triumph; the more he rages, the more shall Christ be honored in the day of his appearing. They sung the song of 'Moses and the Lamb.

And then will ye note, in the next place, how they sang the total overthrow of the enemy. There is one expression in this song, which ought to be and I believe is, when set to music, very frequently repeated. It is that part of the song, as recorded in the Psalms, where it is declared that the whole host of Pharaoh were utterly destroyed, and there was not one of them left. When that great song was sung by the side of the Red Sea, there was, no doubt, a special emphasis laid upon that expression, "not one." I think I hear the hosts of Israel. When the words were known by them, they began and they proceeded thus—"There is not one of them left;" and then in various parts the words were repeated, "Not one, not one." And then the women with their sweet voices sang, "Not one, not one." I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact, that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth, and see it all a level sea; and not one foeman pursuing us—"not one, not one!" Raise thyself never so high, O thou deceiver, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. Lift thy head never so proudly, O despot, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after thee; not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake thee; but this shall be the summit of thy triumph—"Not one, not one! not one of them is left."

Just let us note again, and I will not detain you too long, lest I weary you. One part of the song of Moses consisted in praising the ease with which God destroyed his enemies. "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea

covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." If we had gone to work to destroy the hosts of Pharaoh, what a multitude of engines of death should we have required. If the work had been committed to us, to cut off the hosts, what marvelous preparations, what thunder, what noise, what great activity there would have been. But mark the grandeur of the expression. God did not even lift himself from his throne to do it: he saw Pharaoh coming; he seemed to look upon him with a placid smile; he did just blow with his lips, and the sea covered them. You and I will marvel at the last how easy it has been to over-throw the enemies of the Lord.. We have been tugging and toiling all our life-time to be the means of overthrowing systems of error; it will astonish the church, when her Master shall come, to see how, as the ice dissolveth before the fire, all error and sin shall be utterly destroyed in the coming of the Most High. We must have our societies and our machinery, our preachings and our gatherings, and rightly too; but God will not require them at the last. The destruction of his enemies shall be as easy to him as the making of a world. In passive silence unmoved he sat; and he did but break the silence with "Let there be light; and light was." So shall he at the last, when his enemies are raging furiously, blow with his winds, and they shall be scattered; they shall melt even as wax, and shall be burned like tow; they shall be as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

Furthermore, in this song of Moses, you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—"The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone." O! I think I hear them singing that too, sweetly and softly—"as still as a stone." How would the words come full, like gentle thunder heard in the distance—"as still as a stone!" And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the triumph over our enemies, and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of our song, that they must henceforth be "as still as a stone." There will be a hell, but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be "as still as a stone." There will be legions of fallen angels, but they shall no longer have courage to attack us or defy God: they shall be "as still as a stone." O how grand will that sound, when the hosts of God's redeemed,

looking down on the demons chained, bound, silenced, struck dumb with terror, shall sing exultingly over them! They must be "as still as a stone;" and there they must lie, and bite their iron bands. The fierce despiser of Christ can no more spit in his face; the proud tyrant can no more lift his hands to oppress the saints; even Satan can no more attempt to destroy. They shall be "as still as a stone."

And last of all, the song concludes by noticing the eternity of God's reign; and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strain of music. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Part of the melody of heaven will be—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." That song has cheered us here—"The Lord reigneth; blessed be my Rock!" And that song shall be our exultation there. "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever." When we shall see the placid sea of providence, when we shall behold the world all fair and lovely, when we shall mark our enemies destroyed, and God Almighty triumphant, then we shall shout the song -

"Hallelujah! for the Lord  
God Omnipotent shall reign;  
Hallelujah! let the word  
Echo round the earth and main."

O! may we be there to sing it!

I have one remark to make, and I have done. You know, my friends, that as there is something in the song of Moses which is typical of the song of the Lamb, there was another song sung by the waters of the Red Sea which is typical of the song of hell. "What mean you, sir, by that dread thought?" O! shall I use the word music? Shall I profane the heavenly word so much as to say, It was doleful music which came from the lips of Pharaoh and his host? Boldly and pompously, with roll of drum and blast of trumpet they had entered into the sea. On a sudden their martial music ceased ; and ah! ye heavens and ye floods what was it? The sea was coming down upon them, utterly to devour them. O! may we never hear that shriek, that awful yell of hideous agony, that seemed to rend the sky, and then was hushed again, when Pharaoh and his mighty men were

swallowed up, and went down quick into hell! Ah! stars, if ye had heard it, if the black pall of waters had not shut out the sound from you, ye might have continued trembling unto this hour, and mayhap ye are trembling now; mayhap your twinklings by night are on account of that terrible shriek ye heard; for sure it were enough to make you tremble on for ever. That dreadful shriek, that hideous moan, that horrible howl, when a whole army sank into hell at once when the waters swallowed them up!

Take heed, my friends, take heed, lest you should have to join in that terrible miserere; take heed, lest that horrible howl should be yours, instead of the song of the redeemed. And remember, so must it be, unless ye be born again, unless ye believe in Christ, unless ye repent of sin and renounce it wholly, and with trembling hearts put your confidence in the man of sorrows, who is soon to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords. May God bless you, and give you all to taste of his salvation, that you may stand upon the sea of glass, and not have to feel the terrors of the mingled fire in the lower depths thereof! God Almighty bless this vast assembly, for Jesus' sake.

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## **Israel's Hope; Or, The Centre Of The Target**

Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. - Psalm 130:7

When he penned this psalm, the writer, David, was in deep distress, if not of circumstances, yet of conscience. He constantly mentions iniquities, and begs forgiveness. He felt like a shipwrecked mariner, carried

overboard into the raging sea. Thus he reviews the situation—"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Yet he lived to tell the tale of deliverance. His prayer from among the waves was a memory worth preserving, and he does preserve it. The mercy of God to him he weaves into a song for us; and in this our text is found.

Two things the rescued sufferer tells us. First, that, as God delivered him from the power of sin, so he will deliver all his praying, wrestling, believing people. That is the last verse of the psalm—He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." The argument is—He delivered me. What am I more than others? The gracious Lord who saved me will save all those who call upon him in truth. He delivered me, though laden with iniquities, and his pardoning mercy is unfailing; and therefore he can and will rescue others from their uttermost distresses. This is a good line of reasoning, for the Lord's ways are constant, and he will do for all believers what he has done for one of them.

The other thing which the Psalmist sets before us is this: we are wise if we apply to God alone for help. He says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." He incidentally tells us that it is vain to wait upon man, and put our trust in any human support, for the way of deliverance lies alone in reliance upon God, immediately and alone. We are not to depend upon outward means, but upon the God who lends efficacy to all means. Why is it that we need to be told of this? Why is faith in God so rare? To go first to the Lord is to save time. Straightforward always makes the best runner; and to go straight to God is not only our duty, but it will be our happiest course. The psalm encourages us to this by the assurance that the Lord can and will help all that seek him; and it urges us to let that seeking be distinctly and directly turned to the Most High, to him alone, and to none other. To join another ground of confidence with the Lord is a sort of practical idolatry which is to the wounding of faith.

May we learn well the lesson of this psalm! When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble, and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass, in order that, if we are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. You meet with

a man that has long been sorely afflicted, and to find him full of joy at his relief is a pleasure and a personal comfort. You heard him lamenting for years, and now you hear him rejoicing; and this excites your wonder and your hope. It is as though a cripple saw another lame man leaping and running. He very naturally enquires, "How is this?" The other day you saw a man blind, begging in the street, and now he has an eye bright as that which sparkles on the face of a gazelle, and you cry in astonishment—"Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes; for I may be in a like case, and I should be glad to know where to go." Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. The Psalmist found salvation and deliverance in going direct to God, and trusting in him; let us follow his example, and in all times of distress, caused by our own iniquity, or by anything else, let us repair to the throne of grace; for the Most High will deal with us also even as he dealt with his servant of old time, to whose cries, out of the depths, he lent an attentive ear. This psalm is called "De Profundis"; its teaching is not only profound but practical.

Let me freely speak with you as concerning the great salvation which, as fallen creatures, we all need. In that matter our sole resort must be to God alone, for "salvation is of the Lord." God has been pleased, in these last days, to reveal himself in a glorious manner, suitable to our salvation. He was always to be seen in creation by those whose sight was not darkened by moral evil; and doubtless angelic eyes always beheld Jehovah in all the works of his hands. He was to be seen under the old law in types and shadows; and believing men and women were enabled, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to behold the Lord in his temple. But in these last days the Lord has spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is the Father most clearly to be seen: and now, if we read that Israel is to hope in the Lord, and if we see that the way of salvation lies in relying upon "the Lord," we must read between the lines, and understand that the glorious Lord must ever be the object of faith according as he at this time reveals himself. It is written, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee:" that is to say, they trust, as they know how he reveals himself. At this moment the manifestation of God standeth thus: his dear Son has descended from the highest heavens, and taken upon himself our human nature, so that he is God and man in one

sacred and mysterious Person. In that complex form, the Word made flesh dwelt among men on earth some thirty years and more; and then he took upon himself the weight of human sin, and bare it upon his shoulders up to the cross. He was arrested by the hand of divine justice, and treated by justice as if he had been a sinner, though sinner he could never be. He was numbered with the transgressors, and given over to wicked men, who, in their wilful malice, scourged him, spit upon him, crowned him with thorns, and condemned him to a felon's death. He died, not for any iniquity of his own; but for the transgression of his people was he smitten. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; yea, "he was made a curse for us;" and even more: "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "He died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." If, then, we would trust God for our personal salvation, we must confide in him as he manifests himself for that purpose; and as we perceive that God sets forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sin, we must accept that ordained way of putting away our sin. This is the way in which "with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption;" and thus it is that "he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." We trust in the Lord God as he reveals himself in the person of his Son Christ Jesus, who has displayed in his own self the love and the justice of God, and has shown how these were equally glorified by the way of redemption through the substitution, and sacrifice of One who is the fellow of the Highest, and yet next-of-kin to man. Our Lord has buried our sin in his sepulcher, and has gone up into heaven to plead there with God for transgressors, and at the same time to prepare a place for as many as believe in him, and so are saved by his plenteous redemption. Understand, then, that if we read in the text, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption," we now, to-day, in the light of the gospel, reedit thus—"Let the seeking sinner, who would be redeemed from all his iniquities trust in God as he is seen in and through Jesus Christ, for there forgiveness is freely given through plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer marked or imputed to the believer, because the sacrifice of Jesus has blotted it out, and removed it for ever."

This is the introduction of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit now grant his anointing both to preacher and hearers!



I. The chief point to which I desire you to give earnest heed is this: in obtaining gospel blessings THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS, and not towards the blessings themselves. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." We do not read, "Let Israel hope" for mercy; but we read, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy." Neither does it say, "Let Israel hope for plenteous redemption;" but it is worded thus, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption." To me this has the look of a very encouraging truth: the sinner is not to hasten with his first thoughts to the mercy that he wants, nor even to the promise of God to which he may look; but he is to go to the Lord Jesus' Christ himself, as the Lord of mercy, and fountain of redemption. The first exercise of our faith is to deal immediately with the Lord God as he meets us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here let me say that this is the most natural order which faith can follow. Look first to the Giver, and then to the gift. Look for the Helper, and then for the help. Do not be saying, "I long to be forgiven. I labor to believe that I am forgiven. I desire to be saved. I want to know that I am saved." This is looking for the fruit, when you have need first to find the tree. Your first business, as a seeker of pardon and salvation, is to believe in Jesus Christ, that is, to trust yourself with the divine Savior. The natural order is, believe in the Promiser, and then you will believe the promise. You never say to yourself, "I should like to be able to take that man's word. I will sit down and try to make my mind confident of the truth of what he says." This would be a foolish and futile method of procedure. You follow a much more reasonable course: you enquire about the individual's character and standing: you find out who he is, and what he is, and what he has done; and thus you gather arguments for confidence and faith. You cannot help believing the promise when once you believe in the Promiser. If you find a merchant to be an eminently upright and substantial man, you do not hesitate to take his cheques; in fact, you would be glad to have your purse full of them. Faith prizes the promises of her faithful God, and calls them precious.

Apply this rule, and deal with heavenly things in due order. You seek pardon. Do not look continually at this priceless mercy at first, but look to

the pardoning God. You will soon believe in forgiveness if you cause the first exercise of your faith to refer to the Forgiver, even Christ Jesus himself. When you have believed in him, as able to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," then you will believe in sins being forgiven. This is the natural order of things. So, also, if you desire to believe for salvation, and to be assured that you have it, or may have it at once, the simple course—the natural course—is to believe in the Savior. To be healed, you believe first in the Healer. When you have believed in the Savior, then you will believe in the salvation. If you know that Jesus can save you, if you desire to be saved, you will trust him to save you. You will be readily able to believe that you can be saved when you trust in Jesus as able to save to the uttermost. Poor trembling heart, do not look at the blessing, and say, "Alas, it is too great!" Look at the Savior himself! Is anything too great for him to give who gave his heart's blood to redeem? Do not say, "My heart is so hard, it cannot be changed." Look at the Savior; is anything impossible to him to whom the Father has committed all power? Is he not mighty to save? Fix your eye, first and foremost, upon him who is both God and man, and has therefore power and sympathy, majesty and mercy, omnipotence and brotherliness. I pray you, do not consider so much the greatness of the effect as the unlimited power of the Cause. I may doubt my washing, but not when I believe in the cleansing virtue of the precious blood. It may be difficult to believe in my salvation, but not to believe in my Savior. It may be hard to hope for heaven; but the text sets me an easier task—"Let Israel hope in the Lord." When I open my window Godwards, and look towards the Lord Jesus, I see glorious things in the light of the rising sun, even things which I could not have seen if I had not first turned towards the light. "In the beginning God": this, according to the first chapter of Genesis, is the natural order of all divine work; do not attempt to alter it.

To this I would add, this is the necessary order. It must be so: the Savior first, and then the salvation. Suppose for a moment that it were possible for you to obtain pardon without Christ, what good would it do you? I would remind you that no blessing is a covenant blessing, or a blessing at all, except as it is connected with Christ Jesus, and so with the Lord God. No comfort is worth having if Jesus does not comfort us. No forgiveness is worth the words which utter it if Jesus does not forgive. There is no

coming to the Father except by Christ. If, therefore, I imagine that I have come to the Father without Christ, it is clear that I have not come. If I fancy that I have saving blessings apart from the appointed Savior, I am a deceived man. Beloved, do not seek after mercy, pardon, holiness, heaven, except through Christ Jesus our Lord, for you will be seeking counterfeits, shadows, delusions. Begin at the cross. See how Jesus puts it:—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does not first say, "Take my yoke upon you;" but first "Come unto me." He first gives us rest, and then afterwards we find it; but we begin with coming to him. First Christ, and then his yoke. First Christ, and then rest. Do not ask for rest first, and then say, "I will come to Christ afterwards." This is an impossible order. Do not even say, "I must get a broken heart, and then come to Christ." No, come to Christ for a broken heart. I preach to-night to you a Savior who wants nothing of you, but who is ready to begin with you at the beginning, just where you are, in all your unworthiness and ill desert—in all your depravity and vileness. He is ready to take you up from the mire of the pit wherein you lie, and to look on you with love in all the pollution with which you are disgraced. Come ye, then, and begin with Jesus. It is the necessary order of your coming: first to Christ, and then to his yoke, and to his peace. Let your faith exercise itself, not so much on what you ought to be, or on what you hope to be, as on what Christ is, and on his ability to make you all that your heart pings after. Hear ye the good word of my text, and give good heed thereto. Note well the permission of heavenly love—"Let Israel hope in the Lord."

Observe, also, that, as it is the natural order, and the necessary order, so it is evidently the easiest order. Sometimes it seems to a burdened heart to be more than difficult to believe in the pardon of innumerable sins: it appears impossible. Guilty one, do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but believe in Jesus the Sacrifice and Savior, who has once for all appeared to put away sin. Believe in the divine Substitute, and then you will believe that the forgiveness of your sins is a thing provided for by him. Do not even say, "I can never be sanctified; such a wretched sinner as I am could never be made into a saint. "Do not try to believe in sanctification, but rely upon the boundless power of Jesus to "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is

well pleasing in his sight." For all parts of salvation, hope in the Lord, and look to his hand for the working thereof. Forget yourself now, and only think of him who worketh all things according to the good pleasure of his will. Cease looking for the water, and look for the well. You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for he is lifted up, even he who is God, and beside him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eye on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing. When the work seems hard, look to his hand: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" You may fix your eye upon a covenant promise till it dazzles you; but if you see Jesus, the sight will strengthen your eyes, and you will see the promise in him, and perceive it to be yea and amen to the glory of God. It is easier to believe in a personal Christ than in impersonal promises. That poor woman who was sick, in Jesus Christ's day, might have said to herself, "It is impossible that I should be healed;" but then she thought not so much of the healing as of the Healer, and when she saw Jesus walking about among the crowds, healing all manner of diseases, and when she believed that God was in him, why, then she inferred that he could heal her disease, and she came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. She sought him, and so sought healing. Do keep in this line, let not the devil take you off it—that the first object of your faith should be the Lord Jesus; for by him, as the ladder which God has set up, you can climb to the highest place of privilege, and lay hold upon the choicest gift of grace. This is the way even to God himself, and the only way which our human feet can tread. Consider well who Christ was, and what he has done, and then you will conclude that he can save even you. By looking to him you will be saved; and what is easier than to look? To hope in God is a far more simple matter than to search for signs and evidences in yourself, or to labor to force yourself up into certain states of mind. Answer the question, "Will he save me?" by looking to see what kind of a Savior Jesus is; and when you perceive the glory of his person, the perfection of his obedience, and the merit of his blood, you will be convinced that you may safely trust in him according to his command; for he commands you to believe. Jesus declares, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Let us come at once, for it is the nearest and best road to peace.

To come first of all to God in Christ Jesus is the wisest course. You are too

bewildered to know which blessing to seek, therefore seek Jesus himself, and he will be unto you wisdom. It is easier to come to the cross than to the separate blessings which come of it. Take the straight road, which lies plain before your face.

In faintness and trembling of heart we dare not appropriate a mercy; our palsied hand cannot grasp a favor; and therefore it is our wisdom to fall at Jesus' feet, and let him give us what seemeth good to him. Through our ignorance we know not what to ask, and through our doubt we are afraid to ask; therefore, let us leave all with our Lord. We need the wine and oil; but we are sore wounded, and shall do well to lie still, and let him pour them in. When the good Samaritan is come, all is come. Let us, therefore, neither cry for wine nor oil, but for HIM,—we know his name. The wisdom of the prayer is seen in its completeness. At first, sinners, conscious of their ill desert, cry to be saved from hell; and this is the most of their prayer: but suppose the Lord should give them this, and not change their natures, would they be one whit the better? If there were no fires of Tophet, so long as a man has sin within him, he creates his own hell. In seeking the Lord Jesus, a man finds escape from punishment, and much more. No man knows enough to be able to ask for an all-round salvation: he will only seek this or that which seems to him most pressingly needful. We are too ignorant, too much the creatures of feeling, too partial, too childish, to make a catalogue of what we need; but we can ask for Jesus, and he is all in one. How excellent is that hymn of ours with the refrain,

"Give me Christ, or else I die!

We have asked all when we have asked for the Savior anointed of the Lord. When our hope is in God, through the Mediator whom he has appointed, we hope in him in a way which renders our hope sure and steadfast; and this is the highest wisdom. In laying hold upon Jesus, you have obtained not only something, but everything. In looking first to Jesus, you have sought for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and you know the promise that all other things shall be added. If you need strength, comfort, guidance, fruitfulness, and aught also that makes up eternal salvation, behold, you have it in your Lord. Nothing that is wanted for a soul between this present state of trial and the perfection of

heaven, is omitted from Christ: "ye are complete in him." If, therefore, you make him the first object of your faith, and lay hold upon him, rather than upon any or all blessings, you are delivered from anxiety as to whether your ignorant prayers have comprehended all you need; and this must be a wise course to follow.

It is therefore the most profitable course for needy souls like ourselves. By grasping our Lord, and hoping in him, we fill our hands, not with brass or silver, but with gold of Ophir. Let others hope where they may, but let Israel, the prince, hope in the Lord, from whom he has already won such royal favors. I see at times, in the newspaper, "Principals only will be dealt with," and in our heavenly business we had better keep to this rule. Go not to the servants; make all your applications to the Master; and in your dealings with him seek not so much his gifts as himself; for the Giver is ever greater than what he gives. The bottle of water which Hagar carried for Ishmael is a poor thing compared with that well of God beside which Isaac abode. Fruit from a choice tree is well, apples of gold in baskets of silver are not to be despised; but, if one can have the tree planted in his own garden, he is richer far. Our Lord is the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and to possess HIM is to have the best of the best, yea, all things that can be desired. Covenant blessings are streams, but our Lord Jesus is the well-head. Believe for the infinite, immutable, inexhaustible "deep which lieth under," and you may sink as many wells as you please.

I believe that, in every cave wherein the soul finds peace, this is the actual order. We may go about after pardon, renewal, and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto HIM and are lightened, and not by any other means. If, by aiming even at repentance, we are taken off from the Lord, we are taken off the right road. It is possible even to look to faith in such a manner as to forget the object of faith. It is not my hand, but what my hand grasps that saves me when I lay hold on Christ. It is not my eye, but what my eye sees which saves me when I look to Jesus. In very deed no heart can find salvation in that which comes forth from itself: its hope lies alone in the Lord, to whom it must trust for everything. Beware of trusting to an anchor which lies on your own deck, or to a confidence which depends in

the least degree on yourself. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." Now the Lord is not self, nor will he be joined with self. The Lord is beyond and outside of all that the criteria can find within, or hope to produce from itself. Mercy and redemption are with the Lord, not with self. Why, then, should we look where, in the very nature of things, those are not, and cannot be? Why not look to the Lord, in whom along all heavenly treasures abide?

This, then, is my message to every man who desires salvation, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Do not let him begin by hoping in mercy and redemption, for these are not to be found apart from the Lord—but let him go at once to that divine Person with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption, then both of those will be granted him. I wish I knew how to put this so plainly that every bewildered and cast-down spirit would catch my meaning, and accept its counsel. I would also have preachers learn a lesson from the point I have been driving at. Let them not so much preach sinners to Christ as preach Christ to sinners. I am persuaded that a full and clear declaration of what Jesus is, as to his person, offices, character, work, and authority, would do more to produce faith than all our exhortations. "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life;" but how shall they believe unless they hear of him?

The very best topic for the immediate conversion of men is Christ crucified—the doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. I know one that came in here full of evil, living an unchaste life, and the text was, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." There would not seem to be anything about the sermon to convince of sin but the charming mercy of God won that heart, and that heart, being won by love, learned at once to hate evil, and to serve the Lord Jesus in all that is pure, and lovely, and of good report. There sat in this very house, not long ago, side by side with one who still is in the service of Satan, a woman, who had not attended the house of God for years. Nothing was heard but the simple proclamation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus to the guilty, but she was shot down by the side of her companion: the thought of the amazing mercy and infinite love of God, in giving his Son to die, touched her heart, and she began to weep, whereat her companion upbraided her; but she

answered, "I have found mercy." That was enough for her: she made no other excuse for her emotion. I pray that like effects may follow this sermon. I bid you hope in the Lord. Look not to abstract mercy; look not to any feelings or resolves in yourselves; look not even to the hearing of the word, or to promises alone; but look to Jesus, who still lives, and who is in the midst of his people at this time, waiting to receive all who are willing to come to him. While I tell you this, I am praying the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to your souls, so that, at once, without delay, you may look only to the Lord, and may trust in him, and be saved. You are allowed to do so, for the text says, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." If the Scripture permits, who shall forbid?

II. Another form of the same truth now invites our attention—ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. I began with our first exercise of faith, but I would not end there. As the stars called "the Pointers" always point to the pole-star, so must our faith ever look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. Let Israel always hope in the Lord, for with him is what she still requires. What want you to-night, dear friend? Ask, and you shall receive; but ask only of the Lord. Knock, but knock still at the same door. Plead, but when you are pleading, still plead the name of Jesus. Whenever you are expecting a heavenly favor, expect it from the Father, through his dear Son, by the Holy Ghost. Whenever you are longing, long for nothing more than there is in Christ; and whenever you obtain a mercy, remember that you have received it only because you have by faith received Jesus, and so have become a child of God. Whenever you rejoice in a mercy, take care that you do not so much glory in it as in the Lord from whom it came. Hope still in the Lord, and never have any hope in yourself, for that would be a fruitless, groundless, rootless, sapless hope. You are still to find mercy and plenteous redemption in the Lord alone.

I am afraid that sometimes we seek mercies apart from God the Giver, or apart from Christ, the channel of their bestowal: and this is always ill of us. Avoid such dangerous error. I read in the papers, frequently, allusions to "Providence." I know what I intend by Providence; but I do not know what the newspapers mean by it. I fear it is only a convenient phrase, a



conventional expression, which is not to be too carefully examined. They do not mean a living, foreseeing, providing, working Personality: that would be too much like religion. They admit a certain something, "a power which makes for righteousness," a nonentity called "Providence." I have too often heard Christian people talk about thanking Providence. What is that? Do you mean, "thank God"? If so, say it boldly! It is God that provides. God arranges, God overrules, God worketh out his gracious designs. Again, how often do we hear of "Nature" doing this, and "Nature" being that, and "Nature" producing the other! What do you mean? An infidel, some time ago, was speaking in the open-air, and he orated very eloquently about the elevating influences of nature, and what a blessing it was to study nature. A friend in the crowd said to him, "That is very pretty; but would you have the goodness to tell me what Nature is, which does all this?" The orator answered tartly, "Every fool knows what Nature is." "Well," said the questioner, "then it will be easy to tell us." "Nature," said the speaker, "Well: Nature is Nature." Just so. That is where it ended And so it is with very many people when they talk about Providence or Nature. Let us not speak without knowing what we mean, or without declaring our meaning. We do not erect an altar, and inscribe it TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. We know the Lord, and are known of him, and therefore we would speak of him as our hope, our trust, our joy. We know no providence apart from Jehovah-Jireh, the God who foresees and provides. To us there is no fickle chance, but the Lord reigneth. Equally to us is there no blind, inexorable fate, but the Most High decrees and works out his wise and sovereign will. Therefore do not let God's Israel talk as if they hoped in luck or fate, but let them "hope in the Lord," and avow their reliance upon a personal God, who is working for them evermore; "for with him is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

Now, dear brother, do you want mercy? In your prayers for pardoning mercy, quote the Savior's sacrifice. Do you want sparing mercy? Mention him whom God did not spare in the great atoning day. Do you want restoring mercy? Plead him whom God brought again from the dead. Do you want to behold the light of Jehovah's countenance? Plead him who said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" In hoping for mercy, set the eye of your hope upon the Lord Jesus, and let no mercy be hoped for by you apart from him. Recollect what happened to Uzziah. He was a man of

God, and a king; but when he had grown very great, he thought that he would act as priest for himself, and go into the sanctuary of the Lord, and burn incense on his own account, without the Lord's appointed priest; but he was struck with leprosy, and not only was he thrust out, but he, himself, hastened to go out of the temple. I tremble for those in whom I see any sign of going before God in right of their own character. I fear that among God's own professing people there are some who are so conscious of their own knowledge, and growth, that they pray without Christ, praise without Christ, and talk of being no longer in need of confessing sin. They dare to act without humbly depending upon the presence of the great high priest; and then they fall into sin, and thus they are struck with leprosy, and, perhaps, to their dying day they can never enter into such fellowship with God as once they knew. I would do nothing without Jesus. I would not even wish to repent except my eye were upon the cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my all. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it be mercy received through Jesus, for he alone is full of grace, and of his fullness must we receive. I would bind you, brethren, if I could, to the cross as your one hope. I pray the Lord bind me for ever to the cross: the wounds my only founts of hope, the blood and water my only cleansing. Go you who have a righteousness of your own, and hope elsewhere; but the long hope of my soul is the bleeding, dying, buried, risen, coming Savior. "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy," and with him alone: all the exercises of faith about mercy must ever be tethered to the cross. Mercy flows through Christ alone.

So is it with "plenteous redemption." What a grand utterance that is—"plenteous redemption"! I would like to dwell upon it. Is there not rare music in the sound? It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. In Christ only can you find this. "With him" is plenteous redemption." Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and person of the Son of God. "With him is plenteous redemption." A great price he has paid, and therefore a great debt is blotted out. Great offenses are forgiven, but only through the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer.

"Plenteous redemption." Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters. My God, I long to be so delivered, and redeemed, and there is with thee all grace and power, and provision for plenteous deliverance by redemption; but this is found in Christ alone. I charge you, my hearers, do not look for escape from the slavery of sin apart from the redemption of Christ. Do not expect to overcome the smallest sin except by the blood of the Lamb. There is nothing, I believe, more deceiving than the notion of the unregenerate heart that it is seeking after holiness, though it is destitute of the power of the Holy Ghost, and takes no thought of the merit of Jesus Christ. We need grace plenteously, plenteous redemption, in fact: but all of all that we receive must come to us from the Lord, by Jesus Christ the Mediator.

"Plenteous redemption" includes in its range of meaning great growth in grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality, and perfect preparedness for heaven: for all these we must hope in the Lord, for they are with him. Never think to have redemption in the least or in the highest degree apart from your hope in the Lord—your trusting in Christ Jesus.

The pith and marrow of what I have said is this: hope distinctly in the Lord. There are many stars, but let one alone of all the train be the object of your believing eye. Lay the foundation of your hope in the Lord; go on building up your comfort in the Lord Jesus; and in him bring forth the topstone. Begin with Christ, and end with Christ. As Christ grows more to you, take care that self grows less and less. If your Christianity puffs you up, it is not Christ's Christianity. I spoke just now of King Uzziah, let me refer to him once more. Read in the Second of Chronicles, chapter twenty-six, at the fifteenth verse—"He was marvellously helped, till he was strong." When he became strong, he went off the lines, and we read, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Mind that. God will always help us while we are weak. When we are strong: what shall I say? Then are we weak, and have need to fear, for we are being lifted up already, or we should not count ourselves strong—poor, puny creatures that we are! God will always bless us as long as we confess our dependence upon his blessing. He will always fill us as long as we are empty. He will always feed us as long as we are hungry. He will be your all

in all so long as you are nothing. But the moment you boast in yourself, and say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," you will be left to learn that you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Woe worth the day in which dust and ashes set up somebody! Nebuchadnezzar is proud, and soon finds a rapid descent from the throne to eating grass like the cattle. Worms, in the presence of the Lord, do all they may do when they hope, they do all they can do when they hope in him. They have nothing but sin, and he has mercy upon them. They are slaves to evil, but he has plenteous redemption wherewith to set them free. The poorest, weakest, saddest among us may hope in the Lord, for he can do all things: wherefore, let us end our meeting with each one of us hoping in the Lord, and let us continue in our faith in "the God of hope," till we receive the heaven we hope for through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **Jacob And Doubting Souls - A Parallel**

And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. - Genesis 45:28

I think that the patriarch Jacob may well serve as the type and emblem of a doubting soul, one who has been told the good news of salvation, the gospel of God's grace, but who cannot bring his mind to believe it.

Let us think for a few minutes of old Jacob. First of all, he was a man who was very ready to believe evil tidings. When his sons held up before him a coat dipped in the blood of a kid, and asked him if it was not the coat he had given to Joseph, the patriarch answered, "It is my son's goat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." He had no doubt about it, yet it was not true; and we have many hearers who will believe anything that is very terrible, even though it may not be true. If

there is something in the sermon which seems to condemn them, even though it may not be meant to condemn them, they are sure to take home that part of the discourse. If they see any passage of Scripture that appears to frown upon them, they retain that in their memory, and they keep on stinging themselves with it, often making themselves unhappy with that which was never intended to apply to them. I wish that readiness to believe the dark sayings could be turned to an equal readiness to receive the consolations of the Word of God. Surely, we ought not to be so prejudiced against ourselves as to accept every evil thing and to reject every good thing. No, let us fairly weigh the evidence for either form of teaching, and believe, or reject either, according as the evidence for it may be strong or weak.

Jacob would, all the while, have willingly believed that which was good, if he could have believed it. If you could have asked him if he had any objection to believe that Joseph was alive, the old man would have answered, "Oh, no! it would be the joy of my heart if I could but think it to be true." There are some whom I am now addressing who are in similar case. Ask them whether they have any objection to believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior, that he loved them, and gave himself for them, and they would every one reply, "Object to believe this? Why, I would give my eyes,—I would give my life,—if I could but think it to be true." Such an unbeliever as that is a ye hopeful one, because it is evident that he is not a wilful unbeliever; he does not desire to be so. His heart longs to grasp the truth which, for the moment, his mind dares not accept. Jacob in this respect is the type of very many who hear the gospel, but dare not receive it; and yet oh, how they wish they could! Their very soul hungers and thirsts after it, but they are afraid to take it lest they should be taking that which is not truly theirs.

So far, the parallel between Jacob and the doubting soul runs very properly. Next notice that, to the patriarch, the truth about his son Joseph seemed altogether incredible. Joseph was alive, and governor over all the land of Egypt; but the old man had so long believed the contrary, that he could not readily get out of the rut. He had sorrowfully said, "Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces;" and this idea, though it was most painful to him, had, nevertheless, eaten its way into his belief,

and he could not get it out of him. So do I know some who have written bitter things against themselves. "I shall be lost, I know I shall; it is not possible that Christ will save me. He will certainly reject me." And, although that is quite untrue,—as untrue as Jacob's belief that Joseph was dead,—yet they have hugged their despair so long that they cannot give it up. They are like the man who refused to be comforted, or those afflicted ones of whom we read, "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death." Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come upon these poor unwilling doubters, and help them to know that a falsehood, however long it is believed, is not the truth! Though we may be in despondency of spirit for years, yet, if there is no real cause for that despondency, it is a pity that we should continue in it. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would enable us to break those bands asunder, and joyfully to believe what is true,—that there is a Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, that all power is committed into his hands, and that he will rejoice this very hour to save and bless our souls!

The news appeared incredible to Jacob because it seemed "too good to be true." His eyes flashed for the moment with a joyful light. "Joseph alive? Joseph—my Joseph—ruler over all the land of Egypt?" And then the very brightness of the thought seemed to blind the eye of his faith. "It cannot be true," said he; "it is too good to be true." Suppose that one of you had lost a son many years ago, and that a person met you outside the Tabernacle, and said to you, "That boy of yours, who was reported dead twenty years ago, is not dead; he is in Australia, alive and well," you would be staggered, would you not? And I have no doubt you would say to yourself, "It must be somebody like him, or somebody else of the same name; it cannot be my son; it is impossible, do I not know that he is dead?" You would hardly believe it; therefore, do not blame poor old Jacob for his doubts. There are many who are, spiritually, just in that state. They say, "What! you say that Jesus died for me, that I have been redeemed with his most precious blood, that I can have my sins forgiven? It cannot be. What! that I can be taken up to dwell with Christ in heaven? Oh, that it were true! It cannot be true. I did sing, just now,—

"Even me, even me,  
Let thy mercy light on me;"

"but oh, surely, it cannot come to me! I must be left out; when the showers of blessing are falling, I cannot hope that there will be even a drop for me." Well, then, you and old Jacob are very much alike; I think you must be first cousins. Yet Jacob was wrong and so are you; the news is not "too good to be true."

Through not believing his sons, Jacob began to faint in spirit. When they told him that Joseph was yet alive we read that "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." There is nothing that so stops the action of the heart, and brings on faintness of the spirit, as unbelief. As soon as the old man began to believe the good tidings that his sons brought, "the spirit of Jacob their father revived." Faith makes our spirits revive, but unbelief seems to strike us dead. I do not wonder that some of you are sad, and dull, and unhappy; as long as you cherish your unbelief, you must be so. O Holy Spirit, deliver them from this unbelief! Revive them by enabling them to believe what is true, that there is a Savior, a Savior yet alive, a Savior who is Lord of all, able and willing to save them.

There, then, is the parallel between Jacob and a doubting soul.

But, at last, Jacob rose out of his despondency and doubt; according to our text, "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." I think the time has come for some others to say, "It is enough." After having been attendants on the means of grace, perhaps for thirty years or more, they ought to be able to say, "It is enough." There came in here, last Lord's-day, from a distant part of the country, an aged man, a farmer. He came up on Saturday for no other reason but to find the Savior. He heard me say that I would see enquirers on Tuesday, so he was here then. He said, "I left my farm, though it is a large one, "and then he told me something about himself, and he added, "I want to find the Savior. I thought, sir, I would come and see if I could find Christ on the Sabbath day, and I waited on that I might go to the prayermeeting on Monday night, and then come and speak to you about my soul." I thought, "Yes, and it is worth while to leave your farm to find a Savior, it is worth while to come from a distant county of England, it would be worth while to come from the ends of the earth if one might but find the Savior." Ere I left him, I think he could say, "It is enough; Jesus is yet alive, I will trust him even now;" and he went on his way rejoicing.

Oh, that some others might be able to say with him, "It is enough"!

There are two points upon which I think Jacob could say, "It is enough." First, the evidence was enough to convince him: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." Secondly, the conviction was enough to move him: "I will go and see him before I die." The second point is quite as important as the first; indeed, it is that to which the first ought practically to lead us.

I. The first point is, that Jacob had ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVINCCE HIM: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive."

The question for us to consider concerns, not Joseph, but Jesus. He is yet alive. He died upon the cross, but he has risen from the dead, and gone into the glory; "wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The evidence that good old Jacob had received was personal testimony. His sons said concerning Joseph, "We have been to Egypt, and we have seen him." There have been many witnesses to testify that Christ is yet alive. Not only did the eleven apostles see him many times, but over five hundred brethren at once saw the Son of God after he had risen from the dead. There is no fact in history that is better attested than the fact that he was crucified, and that he rose again. The resurrection is as true after nearly nineteen hundred years as it was the day it happened; the distance of time does not alter the fact. Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died on Calvary, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, the third day rose from the dead, no more to die, and ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of God. To this fact, his disciples bore unflinching witness; they were honest, simple minded men, without enough imagination to make up the story. They were so sure of this truth that they died rather than deny it; most of them died by the most painful forms of death, yet nothing could ever make one of them speak a word to the contrary. They declared that they had seen him, that they had eaten with him, some of them could say that they had touched him, and one had put his finger into the print of the nails. Yes, brethren, Jesus Christ is yet alive, and I pray that each one here may say, "The testimony of these many witnesses is true, I believe it. It is enough; Jesus is yet alive."



Moreover, the Holy Ghost bore witness to this fact, for after the ascension of the Savior, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and their companions, and they began to speak with other tongues. They went into all the countries of the world, and wherever they went, they were able to speak the language without having to learn it. At the same time, the Holy Ghost enabled them to work miracles by which the sick were healed; and these two things together were the witness of the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ the Son of God still lived, and that in his name salvation was to be preached to the sons of men. To me, this is evidence enough,—the witness of faithful men, and the works of the Holy Ghost.

Beside that, there are many of us who are witnesses that, in answer to prayer, we have received pardon through the living Christ. We have also received, through that living Christ, a new life into our soul; we have passed from death unto life, and those who knew us before our conversion must notice a very remarkable change in us. They may not all admire it, but they must all admit it, and bear witness that we are now other than we used to be. The Lord Jesus, in whom we have trusted, has given us new motives, new desires, in fact, a new nature, and a new life, and we are witnesses to this truth that he is a living Savior, still mighty to save. I wish you could all say, with regard to these witnesses, "It is enough." I do not know what more witnesses we can give you, and I may say of the apostles, and of all those who bear witness by the Holy Spirit, "If ye receive not their witness, neither will ye believe though men should rise from the dead and bear testimony to the fact that Jesus lives to save the sons of men."

But then, Jacob had, in addition to this personal testimony of witnesses, the testimony of accurate reports, for we find that Jacob's sons told their father "all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them." Those words of Joseph were remarkable words, for he traced God's providence in all that had happened. He said to his brethren, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Jacob knew that those words were after the manner of Joseph, for Joseph always lived in the fear and love of

God. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, he has come to teach us of the Father. He reveals God to us; that which he speaks to us, he speaks not of himself, but in the power and in the name of God, and we know that his word is true, because it is a word which glorifies God and not man.

Joseph also spoke somewhat about his own position and power. "Tell my father," he said, "thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt." So, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and therefore we are to go and teach all nations, and bring them as disciples to his feet. The words he speaks concerning himself are not boastful or false; but they are the utterance of a humble, meek, and lowly Savior who never said a word more or less than the truth.

Joseph had also spoken to them very tenderly and kindly about their father. He would do everything for his father and his brethren, giving them the best of the land; and our Lord Jesus has spoken very tenderly to us. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you hear them or read them, are their own witness. There is a certain distinct unique majesty about the language of Jesus Christ which somehow penetrates to the hearts of men, and carries its own convincing witness into the mind. I pray you, then,—you who have for years heard his words,—say, "It is enough; we have heard quite sufficient from him to compel us to believe that he liveth, and that he is able to save." How long must he continue to speak to you who are now getting old hearers of the gospel, and yet have not believed it? How much longer must we persuade, entreat, exhort in the name of the Lord Jesus? How much longer must his words be read and quoted in your hearing? May God the Holy Ghost speedily end your indecision, and bring you each one to say, "It is enough; Jesus is alive, there is a living Savior, I will take him to be my Savior"!

There were also abundant tokens which greatly helped to convince old Jacob: "When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him," he said, "It is enough." To what shall I liken these wagons? It seems to me that some of you, who are doubting whether Christ will save you, ought to think to yourselves, "Well, there is the Sabbath day, which is a special token of God's love." As I came here this evening, I thought to myself,

"Why has God appointed a Sabbath day if he does not mean to give rest to men?" What a mockery it is to have one day in seven set apart for you to think of God if God does not mean to think of you! The very institution of the Sabbath seems to me to be a "wagon" in which to bring you to Christ. And why does God send ministers to preach his gospel? I said to myself, as I came here this evening, "I am going on the silliest errand that ever moved the foot of man, unless God means to save men by the message he has given me to deliver." What is the use of my talking, and talking, and talking, unless there is a living Christ, and unless that living Christ is really able to save? He has sent you a minister who, with all his faults, loves your souls, and who would do anything within the compass of a human mind to bring you to Christ if he only knew how to do it. Surely, God did not send us to speak in his name, and move us to an agony about your souls, if he did not mean to bless you. So, the Christian ministry itself is like a "wagon" in which to bring men to Christ. I have often thought to myself, when I have been going home after preaching, "I have put the truth before my hearers so plainly that, if they want to be saved, I have very clearly shown them the way to Christ." I used to attend the means of grace very, very often when I was under concern of soul, and to the best of my knowledge and belief I never heard the gospel simply and plainly put to me while I was listening for it. This is the pity, that so often our brethren preach very fine sermons, but they are no good to seeking souls, and they do not lead them to Christ. But as soon as I heard that poor Primitive Methodist preach Christ,—and he preached Christ alone, because he did not know anything else, and I myself am very much in that condition,—why, as soon as ever I heard that, I laid hold of it. When fish are hungry, they bite at the bait; and if you really want Christ, you will at once lay hold of him. If you do not accept him, at any rate he has been plainly set before you; and if you refuse him, you shall deliberately and wilfully reject and refuse him. I pray that you may not do that. O sinner, play not the fool with your own soul! If you must play, go home to your children, pick up their toys, throw their balls and twist their skipping-ropes; but trifle not with your souls, and with God, and heaven, and hell! If I have lied to you about these matters, condemn me, for I deserve it; but if I have spoken the truth to you, hear me, or if you hear not me, hear the still small voice of your own conscience, or rather, hear the voice of God which has been speaking through me. Believe in Jesus now that you

are under the influence of a ministry which may be to you what Joseph's wagons were to old Jacob.

Think also, why is it that you are instructed in the truths revealed in the Word of God? Why is it that there are so many expostulations and warnings in it? Why is it that this precious Book is put into all your homes? Why is it so full of invitations and promises, but that all this is intended to be a "wagon" to bring you to your Joseph, even to Jesus? When you see God, as it were, moving heaven and earth to help you to salvation, bending providence in the direction of aiding you to hear and to believe the gospel, surely you ought to say, "It is enough; Jesus is yet alive; God means mercy for me; Christ Jesus can save me, and he will save me."

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill,  
And receives poor sinners still."

The evidence brought before Jacob was sufficient to convince him; he said "It is enough." Oh, that you also may say the same concerning the evidence brought before you!

II. But now comes the tug of war: THE CONVICTION WAS ENOUGH TO MOVE HIM. "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Oh! how many people there are in the world who say, "Yes, there is a Savior;" and yet they are not saved! Some of you have often sung,—

"There is a fountain fill'd with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains."

Is it so? Do you believe that? Then, why have not you lost all your guilty stains? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." You never doubted the truth of that text, and yet you have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God and you have not received everlasting life. I can understand those who reject the Scriptures altogether, and who deny that

there is any Savior for sinners; I see where they are, and feel that there is some kind of consistency in their conduct, deeply as I grieve over it; but I cannot comprehend what you mean when you admit the truth of what we preach, yet do not practically obey it. If the gospel be true, why do you not believe it? If you believe it, why do you not act upon it? It is not sufficient merely to say that you trust Christ for salvation, and then to fancy there is nothing further to be done. I have often tried to expose that delusion by representing a pilot as being brought on board a vessel, and the captain and sailors saying that they all had confidence in him, that he would take the ship safely into the haven. They said they trusted him, but having declared their faith in him, they all went below, and lay down to sleep. Now, of course, the pilot wanted to have the sails attended to, and the ship put in good trim, and he needed the helmsman to manage the rudder, so he called out, "What are you all doing down there? Why have you all run away from me?" And one of them answered, "Because we trust in you; you are the pilot, and you said you would bring us safely into port. We trust in you; so the captain has gone to his cabin, and all the sailors have gone to the fo'c'sle. You see, it is a wet night, a strong nor'wester is blowing, it is very cold, and we would rather be comfortable and snug in our berths than up there on deck. You said that you would bring us to the haven, and we trust in you to do it." The pilot would of course reply, "You do not really trust in me, for if you did, you would do as I bid you. You are mocking me, you are insulting me; you have brought me on board your ship to make a fool of me; if you really trusted me, every man would take his proper place, and do his duty, and then, as I gave the word of command, it would be obeyed, and so you would be brought safely into port." It is just so with Christ and ourselves; we trust him entirely to save us, but we have no right to say that we are saved if we do not practically obey him. It is beyond all excuse that men should know that they need a Savior, and that there is a Savior, and yet that they should not trust that Savior. It is as if Jacob had said, "Joseph is yet alive; but I shall not trouble my head about him." Oh, no, no, no! The patriarch does not talk like that, but he says, "Joseph is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die." And, straightway, the poor old man and his household started to go down into Egypt; for the very next verse reads, "And Israel took his journey with all that he had."

One reason why Jacob wanted to go to Egypt was because he wished to see his son. Some of us know the delight of seeing again a dear son who has been absent from us for years, and of seeing him return again well. It is not so much a matter for us to talk about, it is rather a thing for our own hearts to rejoice over and to remember; and we often breathe the prayer, "God grant that we may see our beloved son again!" Yet, after all, to see a son is but the gratification of a natural affection; there is a great deal more reason why we should, by faith, see our Savior, for he who truly sees the Son of God shall live for ever. O dear hearts,—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!"

A faith-look to God in human flesh, a believing sight of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, will bring you life for evermore. I think that every sinner who knows that there is a living Christ ought to say, "I will go and see him, whatever else I do not go to see." There are some sights in the world of which we say, "I should like to go and see that." Well, you may forego all the things of beauty that ever charmed the eyes of men; but, I charge you, do not forego this sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the heaven of angels; he is the delight of God himself; there is no true life for you other than that which will come through your looking to him who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Since you believe that there is a Savior, I pray that you may be moved at once to say, "I will go and see him." May you be preserved from putting it off even till the daylight breaks again! This very hour, through your tears, look straight away to the cross; and may the Lord Jesus Christ reveal himself to you, that in his light you may see light!

Further, this old man, who said, "I will go and see my son," yet felt that it was but for a little while. He says, "I will go and see him before I die." He had seventeen more years to live, but he did not know that; he felt so old a man at one hundred and thirty that he thought he should only just manage to see his son, and perhaps die on his neck. He said, "But I will go and see him, even though it be only with my dying eyes. I will die with the sight of Joseph before me, and that will be enough to make me happy." And, dear souls, if you did but get to Jesus, you might be happy if you could only say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." But it need not be death to you any

more than it was to Jacob. Indeed, when you have seen him, you shall live, and never die; but your eyes shall be opened to see yet more and more of him, and the light of Christ shall so shine into your soul that you shall behold him after a still more glorious fashion till he shall be the joy of your heart, and the heaven of your soul for ever. Therefore, singe there is such a living Savior, go to him, I pray you, and you shall not merely see him for a little while, and then die, but you shall see him and live for ever. Therefore, hasten by faith to see him this very moment.

Old Jacob also felt that age should not hinder, but rather speed him. He believed that he was soon going to die, but he said, "I will go and see him before I die." I think that Jacob's age really made him go more quickly. "Ah!" said he to himself, "I shall be dead soon; therefore, let me hasten down to Joseph, that I may see him before I die." So, dear friends, do not let anyone say, "I am too old to be saved." Who is too old to trust Christ? Who is too old to seek and find the Savior? I have often heard stories told about people not being converted after they are five-and-forty, or thereabouts; but that is all untrue, and I do not believe a word of it. I have seen just as many people in proportion converted at one age as at another. There are more young people in the world than there are aged persons, and therefore there are more people converted, by God's grace, while they are young. There are fewer old people than young ones; but I do thank God that, even in this building, I could point out a great many who I know were baptized after their hair had grown grey. Some of them put their trust in Jesus when they were threescore years and ten, and others even later than that. There was a dear old brother, who came in here when he was past eighty years of age, and he found the Savior. He was such a Little-faith or Feeble-mind that he hardly dared to "peak to any of us as he came in and out amongst us, but at last he said to himself, "I must join the church." I fancy that he was eighty-eight when he was baptized, and he was so happy with us for about six months, and then he gently slipped away and went home. I am sure I never saw a more childlike person, or a more genuine conversion than that of this dear old man. However old you are, friend, come along. If Methuselah were here, I would preach to him the same gospel that I would teach to one of these dear girls; for, however old a sinner is, there is nothing in the gospel about limiting it to persons of a certain age. "Go ye into all the world, and

preach the gospel to every creature;" does not mean, go and begin picking out the creatures, and saying, "I only preach the gospel to people who are under a specified age." Go home, and go to bed, sir, if that is how you talk; Christ never sent you on such an errand as that. He sent us to preach the gospel to every creature; and to you who are almost worn out, if there be but life in you, I cry, "Come along, trust in Jesus, and he will save even you."

"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return;"  
and, returning, he shall find Christ.

Be quick about it, however, you who are getting on in life, you who are far advanced in years, and may God bless you! Yesterday, I had many kind letters congratulating me on completing my fifty-second year, but there was one that did a little surprise and amuse me. One brother writes that he has read my sermons for many years, and that, at my advanced age, he cannot pray that I may have many returns of the day; but he does trust that God may spare me at least two or three years longer for the good of the church. Well, as I read the letter, I could not help smiling, as you do, for I do not feel that I am quite as advanced in age as that; but still, I thought that, perhaps, this brother's letter might be prophetic. We may be older than we think we are, and two or three years may be all the time we are to have here. At any rate, I will try to work for Christ as earnestly as if I had only two or three years to live, and then it may be that he will add to us yet more; and, if not, what matters it? We shall go home to him who sent us, and be gathered to our Father in peace.

Once more, old Jacob was not kept back from going to see his son because it was a long journey into Egypt. Journeys appear longer to old men than they do to young folk, and it was a very great undertaking to go so far with those seventy and more people around him. There would be a deal of packing up to be done, and there were no Pantehnicon vans in those days to carry everything for the whole company. It was the transplanting of a grand old tree, and it was a difficult task to move so venerable an oak, with such wide-spreading roots and branches. Yet Jacob said, "I will go and see Joseph before I die." Now, dear friend, if it does seem a long way to Jesus, yet undertake the journey; and if you can



persuade your wife and all your children also to go, so much the better. Christ will receive them all in Goshen, and they shall dwell with him for ever. I wish that there might be a blessed migration of many who have been rooted to the soil of the old Canaan, the sinful place, who will now go, not down to Egypt, but up to Jesus in the land of plenty and of purity, to dwell with him for ever. That which ruins so many is that hesitancy, that delaying, that halting between two opinions, which I find in the original is hopping upon two twigs, and never resting upon either; let not that be the case with you. Procrastination is the devil's net in which myriads are entangled to their utter destruction; may the Lord deliver any of you who have been caught in it! Decide for Christ now, I beseech you; may the Holy Spirit constrain you to decide at once, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## Jacob And Esau

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. - Romans 9:13

Do not imagine for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still. The fact is, that the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing; and then they have concluded, that because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see.

Now, it is one thing to refute another man's doctrine, but a very different matter to establish my own views. It is very easy to knock over one man's hypothesis concerning these truths, not quite so easy to make my own stand on a firm footing. I shall try to-night, if I can, to go safely, if I do not go very fast; for I shall endeavour to keep simply to the letter of God's Word. I think that if we kept more simply to the teachings of the Bible, we should be wiser than we are; for by turning from the heavenly light of revelation, and trusting to the deceitful will-o'-the-wisps of our own imagination, we thrust ourselves into quags and bogs where there is no sure footing, and we begin to sink; and instead of making progress, we find ourselves sticking fast. The truth is, neither you nor I have any right to want to know more about predestination than what God tells us. That is enough for us. If it were worth while for us to know more, God would have revealed more. What God has told us, we are to believe, but to the

knowledge thus gained, we are too apt to add our own vague notions, and then we are sure to go wrong. It would be better, if in all controversies, men had simply stood hard and fast by "Thus saith the Lord," instead of having it said, "Thus and thus I think." I shall now endeavour, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to throw the light of God's Word upon this great doctrine of divine sovereignty, and give you what I think to be a Scriptural statement of the fact, that some men are chosen, other men are left, - the great fact that is declared in this text, - " Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

It is a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can. One man says the word "hate" does not mean hate; it means "love less:" - "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less." It may be so: but I don't believe it is. At any rate, it says "hate" here; and until you give me another version of the Bible, I shall keep to this one. I believe that the term is correctly and properly translated; that the word "hate" is not stronger than the original; but even if it be a little stronger, it is nearer the mark than the other translation which is offered to us in those meaningless words, "love less." I like to take it and let it stand just as it is. The fact is, God loved Jacob, and he did not love Esau; he did choose Jacob, but he did not choose Esau; he did bless Jacob, but he never blessed Esau; his mercy followed Jacob all the way of his life, even to the last, but his mercy never followed Esau; he permitted him still to go on in his sins, and to prove that dreadful truth, "Esau have I hated." Others, in order to get rid of this ugly text, say, it does not mean Esau and Jacob; it means the nation; it means Jacob's children and Esau's children; it means the children of Israel and Edom. I should like to know where the difference lies. Is the difficulty removed by extending it? Some of the Wesleyan brethren say, that there is a national election; God has chosen one nation and not another. They turn round and tell us it is unjust in God to choose one man and not another. Now, we ask them by everything reasonable, is it not equally unjust of God to choose one nation and leave another? The argument which they imagine overthrows us overthrows them also. There never was a more foolish subterfuge than that of trying to bring out national election. What is the election of a nation but the election of so many units, of so many people? and it is tantamount to the same thing as the particular election of individuals. In thinking, men cannot see clearly that

if - which we do not for a moment believe - that if there be any injustice in God choosing one man and not another, how much more must there be injustice in his choosing one nation and not another. No! the difficulty cannot be got rid of thus, but is greatly increased by this foolish wresting of God's Word. Besides, here is the proof that that is not correct; read the verse preceding it. It does not say anything at all about nations, it says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger," - referring to the children, not to the nations. Of course the threatening was afterwards fulfilled in the position of the two nations; Edom was made to serve Israel. But this text means just what it says; it does not mean nations, but it means the persons mentioned. "Jacob," - that is the man whose name was Jacob - " Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Take care my dear friends, how any of you meddle with God's Word. I have heard of folks altering passages they did not like. It will not do, you know, you cannot alter them; they are really just the same. Our only power with the Word of God is simply to let it stand as it is, and to endeavour by God's grace to accommodate ourselves to that. We must never try to make the Bible bow to us, in fact we cannot, for the truths of divine revelation are as sure and fast as the throne of God. If a man wants to enjoy a delightful prospect, and a mighty mountain lies in his path, does he commence cutting away at its base, in the vain hope that ultimately it will become a level plain before him? No, on the contrary, he diligently uses it for the accomplishment of his purpose by ascending it, well knowing this to be the only means of obtaining the end in view. So must we do; we cannot bring down the truths of God to our poor finite understandings; the mountain will never fall before us, but we can seek strength to rise higher and higher in our perception of divine things, and in this way only may we hope to obtain the blessing.

Now, I shall have two things to notice to-night. I have explained this text to mean just what it says, and I do not want it to be altered - " Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." To take off the edge of this terrible doctrine that makes real some people bite their lips so, I must just notice that this is a fact; and, after that, I shall try to answer the question, - Why was it that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?

I. First, then, THIS IS FACT. Men say they do not like the doctrine of election. Verily, I do not want them to; but is it not a fact that God has elected some? Ask an Arminian brother about election, and at once his eye turns fiercely upon you, and he begins to get angry, he can't bear it; it is a horrible thing, like a war-cry to him, and he begins to sharpen the knife of controversy at once. But say to him, "Ah, brother! was it not divine grace that made you to differ? Was it not the Lord who called you out of your natural state, and made you what you are?" "Oh, yes," he says, "I quite agree with you there." Now, put this question to him: "What do you think is the reason why one man has been converted, and not another?" "Oh," he says, "the Spirit of God has been at work in this man." Well, then, my brother, the fact is, that God does treat one man better than another; and is there anything wonderful in this fact? It is a fact we recognize every day. There is a man up in the gallery there, that work as hard as he likes, he cannot earn more than fifteen shillings a week; and here is another man that gets a thousand a year; what is the reason of this? One is born in the palaces of kings, while another draws his first breath in a roofless hovel What is the reason of this? God's providence. He puts one man in one position, and another man in another. Here is a man whose head cannot hold two thoughts together, do what you will with him; here is another who can sit down and write a book, and dive into the deepest of questions; what is the reason of it? God has done it. Do you not see the fact, that God does not treat every man alike? He has made some eagles, and some worms; some he has made lions, and some creeping lizards; he has made some men kings, and some are born beggars. Some are born with gigantic minds and some verge on the idiot. Why is this? Do you murmur at God for it? No, you say it is a fact, and there is no good in murmuring. What is the use of kicking against facts? It is only kicking against the pricks with naked feet, and you hurt yourself and not them. Well, then, election is a positive fact; it is as clear as daylight, that God does, in matters of religion, give to one man more than to another. He gives to me opportunities of hearing the word, which he does not give to the Hottentot. He gives to me, parents who, from infancy, trained me in the fear of the Lord. He does not give that to many of you. He places me afterwards in situations where I am restrained from sin. Other men are cast into places where their sinful passions are developed. He gives, to one man a temper and disposition which keeps

him back from some lust, and to another man he gives such impetuosity of spirit, and depravity turns that impetuosity so much aside, that the man runs headlong into sin. Again, he brings one man under the sound of a powerful ministry, while another sits and listens to a preacher whose drowsiness is only exceeded by that of his hearers. And even when they are hearing the gospel, the fact is God works in one heart when he does not in another. Though, I believe to a degree, the Spirit works in the hearts of all who hear the Word, so that they are all without excuse, yet I am sure he works in some so powerfully, that they can no longer resist him, but are constrained by his grace to cast themselves at his feet, and confess him Lord of all; while others resist the grace that comes into their hearts; and it does not act with the same irresistible force that it does in the other case, and they perish in their sins, deservedly and justly condemned. Are not these things facts? Does any man deny them? can any man deny them? What is the use of kicking against facts? I always like to know when there is a discussion, what is the fact. You have heard the story of King Charles the Second and the philosophers - King Charles asked one of them, "What is the reason why, if you had a pail of water, and weighed it, and then put a fish into it, that the weight would be the same?" They gave a great many elaborate reasons for this. At last one of them said, "Is it the fact?" And then they found out that the water did weigh more, just as much more as the fish put into it. So all their learned arguments fell to the ground. So, when we are talking about election, the best thing is to say, "Put aside the doctrine for a moment, let us see what is the fact?" We walk abroad; we open our eyes; we see, there is the fact. What, then, is the use of our discussing any longer? We had better believe it, since it is an undeniable truth. You may alter an opinion, but you cannot alter a fact. You may change a mere doctrine, but you cannot possibly change a thing which actually exists. There it is - God does certainly deal with some men better than he does with others. I will not offer an apology for God; he can explain his own dealings; he needs no defence from me,

"God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain;"

but there stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine,

just recollect, that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it; and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

For now look at Jacob's life and read his history; you are compelled to say that, from the first hour that he left his father's house, even to the last, God loved him. Why, he has not gone far from his father's house before he is weary, and he lies down with a stone for his pillow, and the hedges for his curtain, and the sky for his canopy; and he goes to sleep, and God comes and talks to him in his sleep; he sees a ladder, whereof the top reaches to heaven, and a company of angels ascending and descending upon it; and he goes on his journey to Laban. Laban tries to cheat him, and as often as Laban tries to wrong him, God suffers it not, but multiplies the different cattle that Laban gives him. Afterwards, you remember, when he fled unawares from Laban, and was pursued, that God appears to Laban in a dream, and charges him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. And more memorable still, when his sons Levi and Simeon have committed murder in Shethem, and Jacob is afraid that he will be overtaken and destroyed by the inhabitants who were rising against him, God puts a fear upon the the people, and says to them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm." And when a famine comes over the land, God has sent Joseph into Egypt, to provide corn in Goshen for his brethren, that they should live and not die. And see the happy end of Jacob - " I shall see my son Joseph before I die." Behold the tears streaming down his aged cheeks, as he clasps his own Joseph to his bosom! See how magnificently he goes into the presence of Pharaoh, and blesses him. It is said, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." He had God's love so much in him, that he was free to bless the mightiest monarch of his times. At last he gave up the ghost, and it was said at once, "This was a man that God loved." There is the fact that God did love Jacob.

On the other hand, there is the fact that God did not love Esau. He permitted Esau to become the father of princes, but he has not blessed his generation. Where is the house of Esau now? Edom has perished. She built her chambers in the rock, and cut out her cities in the flinty rock; but God has abandoned the inhabitants thereof, and Edom is not to be

found. They became the bond-slaves of Israel; and the kings of Edom had to furnish a yearly tribute of wool to Solomon and his successors; and now the name of Esau is erased from the book of history. Now, then, I must say, again, this ought to take off at least some of the bitterness of controversy, when we recollect that it is the fact, let men say what they will, that God did love Jacob, and he did not love Esau.

II. But now the second point of my subject is, WHY IS THIS? Why did God love Jacob? why did he hate Esau? Now, I am not going to undertake too much at once. You say to me, "Why did God love Jacob? and why did he hate Esau?" We will take one question at a time; for the reason why some people get into a muddle in theology is, because they try to give an answer to two questions. Now, I shall not do that; I will tell you one thing at a time. I will tell you why God loved Jacob; and, then, I will tell you why he hated Esau. But I cannot give you the same reason for two contradictory things. That is wherein a great many have failed. They have sat down and seen these facts, that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, that God has an elect people, and that there are others who are not elect. If, then, they try to give the same reason for election and non-election, they make sad work of it. If they will pause and take one thing at a time, and look to God's Word, they will not go wrong.

The first question is, why did God love Jacob? I am not at all puzzled to answer this, because when I turn to the Word of God, I read this text; - "Not for your sakes, do I this saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways O house of Israel." I am not at a loss to tell you that it could not be for any good thing in Jacob, that God loved him, because I am told that "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth." I can tell you the reason why God loved Jacob; It is sovereign grace. There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him; there was everything about him, that might have made God hate him, as much as he did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that he loved Jacob, and because he was sovereign in his dispensation of this grace, that he chose Jacob as the object of that love. Now, I am not going to deal with Esau, until I have answered the question on the side of



Jacob. I want just to notice this, that Jacob was loved of God, simply on the footing of free grace. For, come now, let us look at Jacob's character; I have already said in the exposition, what I think of him. I do think the very smallest things of Jacob's character. As a natural man, he was always a bargain-maker.

I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel: it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob's bargain-making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him, so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God: on the contrary, he would have rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with him. Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do: God only said, I will do it, - "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, "If - " There now, the man has had a vision, and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an "If." That is bargain-making with a vengeance! "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then" - not without - mark, he is going to hold God to his bargain - "then shall, the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." I marvel at this! If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man that has talked with God, then begin to make a bargain with him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ

Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part - all a promise - and yet wants after that to hold God to the bargain: as if he were afraid God would break his promise! Oh! this was vile indeed!

Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world; and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other. Then, the device that Jacob used, when he endeavoured to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God, instead of adopting such systems as that? The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob; we cannot help it. And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told, that "Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed." We will look at that - I have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did. I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary; he did not wrestle with God; God wrestled with him. I had always set Jacob up, in my mind, as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer; I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt; guarded with all the omnipotence of heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, "The elder shall serve the younger." He did not rest on that promise; it was not big enough for him. Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for, unless he went to pray; but I am afraid it was not so. The text says, "And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was, but he could not do it. Jacob's craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome; at last, the angel touched

his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, "Thou hast taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with thee;" and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince. But, even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature; and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch, when he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me?" Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise; he was always wanting to live by sight.

Now, I say if the character of Jacob, be as I have described it, and I am sure it is - we have got it in God's word - there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob, that made God love him; and the only reason why God loved him, must have been because of his own grace, because "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this, the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God's own merciful heart, and God's own omnipotent will. Now that is the doctrine; it is taught not only in this passage, but in multitudes of other passages of God's Word. Dear friends, receive it, hold fast by it, and never let it go.

Now, the next question is a different one: Why did God hate Esau? I am not going to mix this question up with the other, they are entirely distinct, and I intend to keep them so, one answer will not do for two questions, they must be taken separately, and then can be answered satisfactorily. Why does God hate any man? I defy anyone to give any answer but this, because that man deserves it; no reply but that can ever be true. There are some who answer, divine sovereignty; but I challenge them to look that doctrine in the face. Do you believe that God created man and arbitrarily, sovereignly - it is the same thing - created that man, with no other

intention, than that of damning him? Made him, and yet, for no other reason than that of destroying him for ever? Well, if you can believe it, I pity you, that is all I can say: you deserve pity, that you should think so meanly of God, whose mercy endureth for ever. You are quite right when you say the reason why God loves a man, is because God does so; there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets. In hell there will not be a solitary soul that will say to God, O Lord, thou hast treated me worse than I deserve! But every lost spirit will be made to feel that he has got his deserts, that his destruction lies at his own door and not at the door of God; that God had nothing to do with his condemnation, except as the Judge condemns the criminal, but that he himself brought damnation upon his own head, as the result of his own evil works. Justice is that which damns a man; it is mercy, it is free grace, that saves; sovereignty holds the scale of love; it is justice holds the other scale. Who can put that into the hand of sovereignty? That were to libel God and to dishonour him;

Now, let us look at Esau's character, says one, "did he deserve that God should cast him away?" I answer, he did. What we know of Esau's character, clearly proves it. Esau lost his birthright. Do not sit down and weep about that, and blame God. Esau sold it himself; he sold it for a mess of pottage. Oh, Esau, it is in vain for thee to say, "I lost my birthright by decree." No, no. Jacob got it by decree, but you lost it because you sold it yourself - didn't you? Was it not your own bargain? Did you not take the mess of red pottage of your own voluntary will, in lieu of the birthright? Your destruction lies at your own door, because you sold your own soul at your own bargain, and you did it yourself. Did God influence Esau to do that? God forbid, God is not the author of sin. Esau voluntarily gave up his own birthright. And the doctrine is, that every man who loses heaven gives it up himself. Every man who loses everlasting life rejects it himself. God denies it not to him - he will not come that he may have life. Why is it that a man remains ungodly and does not fear God? It is because he says, "I like this drink, I like this pleasure, I like this sabbath-breaking, better than I do the things of God." No man is saved by his own free-will, but every man is damned by it that is damned. He does it of his own will; no one constrains him. You know,

sinner, that when you go away from here, and put down the cries of conscience, that you do it yourself. You know that, when after a sermon you say, "I do not care about believing in Christ," you say it yourself - You are quite conscious of it, and if not conscious of it, it is notwithstanding a dreadful fact, that the reason why you are what you are, is because you will to be what you are. It is your own will that keeps you where you are, the blame lies at your own door, your being still in a state of sin is voluntary. You are a captive, but you are a voluntary captive. You will never be willing to get free until God makes you willing. But you are willing to be a bond slave. There is no disguising the fact, that man loves sin, loves evil, and does not love God. You know, though heaven is preached to you through the blood of Christ, and though hell is threatened to you as the result of your sins, that still you cleave to your iniquities; you will not leave them, and will not fly to Christ. And when you are cast away, at last it will be said of you, "you have lost your birthright." But you sold it yourself. You know that the ball-room suits you better than the house of God: you know that the pot-house suits you better than the prayer-meeting; you know you trust yourself rather than trust Christ; you know you prefer the joys of the present time to the joys of the future. It is your own choice - keep it Your damnation is your own election, not God's; you richly deserve it.

But, says one, "Esau repented." Yes, he did, but what sort of a repentance was it? Did you ever notice his repentance? Every man who repents and believes will be saved. But what sort of a repentance was his? As soon as he found that his brother had got the birthright, he sought it again with repentance, he sought it with tears, but he did not get it back. You know he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and he thought he would buy it back by giving his father a mess of pottage. "There," he says, "I will go and hunt venison for my father. I have got over him with my savoury meat, and he will readily give me my birthright again." That is what sinners say: "I have lost heaven by my evil works: I will easily get it again by reforming. Did I not lose it by sin? I will get it back by giving up my sins." "I have been a drunkard," says one, "I will give up drinking, and I will now be a teetotaler." Another says, "I have been an awful swearer; I am very sorry for it, indeed; I will not swear any more." So all he gives to his father is a mess of pottage, the same as that for which he sold it. No,

sinner, you may sell heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy heaven by merely giving them up. You can get heaven only on another ground, viz., the ground of free-grace. You lose your soul justly, but you cannot get it back by good works, or by the renunciation of your sins.

You think that Esau was a sincere penitent. Just let me tell you another thing. This blessed penitent, when he failed to get the blessing, what did he say? "The days of mourning for my father are at hand: then will I slay my brother Jacob." There is a penitent for you. That is not the repentance that comes from God the Holy Spirit. But there are some men like that. They say they are very sorry they should have been such sinners as that, very sorry that they should have been brought into such a sad condition as that; and then they go and do the same that they did before. Their penitence does not bring them out of their sin, but it leaves them in it, and, perhaps, plunges them still deeper into guilt. Now, look at the character of Esau. The only redeeming trait in it was that he did begin with repentance, but that repentance was even an aggravation of his sin, because it was without the effects of evangelical repentance. And I say, if Esau sold his birthright he did deserve to lose it; and, therefore, am I not right in saying, that if God hated Esau, it was because he deserved to be hated. Do you observe how Scripture always guards this conclusion? Turn to the ninth chapter of Romans, where we have selected our text, see how careful the Holy Spirit is here, in the 22nd verse. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." But it does not say anything about fitting men for destruction; they fitted themselves. They did that: God had nothing to do with it. But when men are saved, God fits them for that. All the glory to God in salvation; all the blame to men in damnation.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and any stranger should say, "Give me a summary of his doctrine," say this, "He preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin. He gives God all the glory for every soul that is saved, but he won't have it that God is to blame for any man that is damned." That teaching I cannot understand. My soul

revolts at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man's soul at God's door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such blasphemy as that. I delight to preach this blessed truth - salvation of God, from first to last - the Alpha and the Omega; but when I come to preach damnation, I say, damnation of man, not of God; and if you perish, at your own hands must your blood be required. There is another passage. At the last great day, when all the world shall come before Jesus to be judged, have you noticed, when the righteous go on the right side, Jesus says, "Come, ye blessed of my father," - ("of my father," mark,) - "inherit the kingdom prepared" - (mark the next word) - "for you, from before the foundation of the world." What does he say to those on the left? "Depart, ye cursed." He does not say, "ye cursed of my father, but, ye cursed. "And what else does he say?" into everlasting fire, prepared" - (not for you, but) - "for the devil and his angels." Do you see how it is guarded, here is the salvation side of the question. It is all of God. "Come, ye blessed of my father." It is a kingdom prepared for them. There you have election, free grace in all its length and breadth. But, on the other hand, you have nothing said about the father - nothing about that at all. "Depart, ye cursed." Even the flames are said not to be prepared for sinners, but for the devil and his angels. There is no language that I can possibly conceive that could more forcibly express this idea, supposing it to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that the glory should be to God, and that the blame should be laid at man's door.

Now, have I not answered these two questions honestly? I have endeavoured to give a scriptural reason for the dealings of God with man. He saves man by grace, and if men perish they perish justly by their own fault. "How," says some one, "do you reconcile these two doctrines?" My dear brethren, I never reconcile two friends, never. These two doctrines are friends with one another; for they are both in God's Word, and I shall not attempt to reconcile them. If you show me that they are enemies, then I will reconcile them. "But," says one, "there is a great deal of difficulty about them." Will you tell me what truth there is that has not difficulty about it? "But," he says, "I do not see it." Well, I do not ask you to see it; I ask you to believe it. There are many things in God's Word that are difficult, and that I cannot see, but they are there, and I believe them. I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free; but it is so, and

I believe it. "Well," says one, "I cannot understand it. My answer is, I am bound to make it as plain as I can, but if you have not any understanding, I cannot give you any; there I must leave it. But then, again, it is not a matter of understanding; it is a matter of faith. These two things are true; I do not see that they at all differ. However, if they did, I should say, if they appear to contradict one another, they do not really do so, because God never contradicts himself. And I should think in this I exhibited the power of my faith in God, that I could believe him, even when his word seemed to be contradictory. That is faith. Did not Abraham believe in God even when God's promise seemed to contradict his providence? Abraham was old, and Sarah was old, but God said Sarah should have a child. How can that be? said Abraham, for Sarah is old; and yet Abraham believed the promise, and Sarah had a son. There was a reconciliation between providence and promise; and if God can bring providence and promise together, he can bring doctrine and promise together. If I cannot do it, God can even in the world to come.

Now, let me just practically preach this for one minute. Oh, sinners, if ye perish, on your own head must be your doom. Conscience tells you this, and the Word of God confirms it. You shall not be able to lay your condemnation at any man's door but your own. If you perish you perish by suicide. You are your own destroyers, because you reject Christ, because you despise the birthright and sell it for that miserable mess of pottage - the pleasures of the world. It is a doctrine that thrills through me. Like a two-edged sword, I would make it pierce to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. If you are damned it shall be your own fault. If you are found in hell, your blood shall be on your own head. You shall bring the faggots to your own burning; you shall dig the iron for your own chains; and on your own head will be your doom. But if you are saved, it cannot be by your merits, it must be by grace - free, sovereign grace. The gospel is preached to you; it is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

May grace now be given to you to bring you to yield to this glorious command. May you now believe in him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Free grace, who shall tell thy glories? who shall narrate thy achievements, or write thy victories? Thou hast carried



the cunning Jacob into glory, and made him white as the angels of heaven, and thou shalt carry many a black sinner there also, and make him glorious as the glorified. May God prove this doctrine to be true in your own experience! If there still remains any difficulty upon your minds about any of these points, search the Word of God, and seek the illumination of his Spirit to teach you. But recollect after all, these are not the most important points in Scripture. That which concerns you most, is to know whether you have an interest in the blood of Christ? whether you really believe in the Lord Jesus. I have only touched upon these, because they cause a great many people a world of trouble, and I thought I might be the means of helping some of you to tread upon the neck of the dragon. May God grant that it may be so for Christ's sake.

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## **Jacob Worshipping On His Staff**

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff - Hebrews 11:21

"When he was dying." Death is a thorough test of faith. Beneath the touch of the skeleton finger shams dissolve into thin air, and only truth remains; unless indeed a strong delusion has been given, and then the spectacle of a presumptuous sinner passing away in his iniquities is one which might make angels weep. It is hard, very hard, to maintain a lie in the presence of the last solemnities; the end of life is usually the close of self-deception. There is a mimic faith, a false assurance, which lasts under all ordinary heats of trial, but this evaporates when the fires of death surround it. Certain men are at peace and quiet in their conscience, they stifle convictions, they refuse to allow such a thing as self-examination, they count an honest self-suspicion to be a temptation of the devil, and boast of their unbroken tranquillity of mind, and go on from day to day with perfect confidence; but we would not be of their

order. Their eyes are closed, their ears are dull of hearing, and their heart has waxen gross. A siren song forever enchants them with delight, but also entices them to destruction. Terrible will be their awakening when they lie a dying: as a dream their false peace will vanish, and real terrors will come upon them.

That expression, "When he was a dying," reminds me of many deathbeds; but I shall not speak of them now, for I desire each one of you to rehearse the scene of his own departure, for soon of every one a tale will be told commencing- "When he was a dying." I want each one to project his mind a little forward to the time when he must gather up his feet in the bed, pronounce his last farewell, and yield up the ghost. Before your actual departure, probably, there may be allotted to you, unless you are carried away with a sudden stroke, a little time in which it shall be said, "He was a dying." Perhaps it is a desirable thing to occupy some weeks in departure, till the mind seems to have passed through the gate and to be already in the glory, while yet the body lingers here; but as we have had no experience we are scarcely able to form a judgment.

The text tells us that the patriarch's faith was firm while he was a dying, so that he poured forth no murmurs, but plentiful benedictions, as he blessed both the sons of Joseph. May your faith and mine also be such that whenever we shall be a dying our faith will perform some illustrious exploit that the grace of God may be admired in us. Paul does not say anything about Jacob's life, but selects the death scene. There were many instances of faith in Jacob's life story, but you recollect that in the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul is walking through the histories and plucking a flower here and a flower there, and he complains that time fails him even in doing that, so fertile is the garden of faith. I do not doubt, however, that he gathered the best out of each biography; and, perhaps, the finest thing in Jacob's life was the close of it. He was more royal between the curtains of his bed than at the door of his tent: greater in the hour of his weakness than in the day of his power.

The old man of 147 might have been willing to depart through infirmities of age, but yet he had much to keep him below, and make him wish to live as long as possible. After a very troublous life he had enjoyed seventeen years of remarkable comfort, so much so that, had it been ourselves, we

should probably have begun to strike our roots into the soil of Goshen, and dread the bare thought of removal; yet there sits the venerable patriarch, with his hand on his staff, ready to go, seeking no delay, but rather waiting for the salvation of God. After all his tossings to and fro, when he had been so long a pilgrim, it must have been a pleasant thing for him to have settled down in a fat land with his sons, and his grandsons, and great-grandsons all around him, all comfortably provided for, with Joseph at the head of the whole country-prime minister of Egypt-reflecting honor upon his old father, and taking care that none of the family wanted anything. The last course of Jacob's feast of life was by far the sweetest, and the old man might have been loathe to retire from so dainty a table. The children of Israel were a sort of foreign aristocracy in the land, and against them would not a dog dare to move its tongue, lest the renowned Joseph should put forth his hand. That seventeen years must have been bright, and full of rest to the old man. But sense has not killed his faith, luxury has not destroyed his spirituality; his heart is still in the tents where he had dwelt as a sojourner with God. You can see that he has not even with one single rootlet of his soul taken hold upon Egypt. His first anxiety is to take care that not even his bones shall lie in Goshen, but that his body shall be taken out of the country as a protest to his family that they are not Egyptians, and cannot be made into subjects of Pharaoh, and that Canaan is their possession to which they must come. By his dying charge to bury him in Machpelah, he practically teaches his descendants that they must set loose by all the good land which they possessed in Goshen, for their inheritance did not lie on the banks of the Nile, but on the other side of the desert in Canaan, and they must be on tiptoe to journey thither. The blessing which he gave to the sons of Joseph was but an utterance of his firm faith in the covenant which gave the land to him and to his seed. It was suggested by that faith of his which let go the present and grasped the future, renounced the temporal and seized the eternal, refusing the treasures of Egypt and clinging to the covenant of God. First, then, his blessing. He blessed the two sons of Joseph. Will you have patience with me while I try to show that his blessing the sons of Joseph was an act of faith? because, first, only by faith could the old man really give a blessing to any one. Look at him. He is too feeble to leave his bed. When he sits up supported by pillows, at what is called the bed-head, he calls for his trusty staff that he may lean

upon it while he raises himself up a little, to be in a position to stretch out his hands and to use his voice. He has no strength, and his eyes are dim, so that he cannot see which is Ephraim and which is Manasseh. He is failing in most of his faculties: every way you can see that he is a worn-out old man, who can do nothing for the children whom he loves. If he is able to bestow a blessing, it cannot be by the power of nature; and yet he can and does bless them, and therefore we feel sure that there must be an inner man within that feeble old Jacob; there must be a spiritual Israel hidden away in him, an Israel who by prevailing with God as a prince has obtained a blessing, and is able to dispense it to others. And so there is; and at half a glance we see it. He rises to the dignity of a king, a prophet, and a priest when he begins to pronounce a blessing upon his two grandchildren. He believed that God spoke by him; and he believed that God would justify every word that he was uttering. He believed in the God that heareth prayer; his benediction was a prayer; and as he pronounced blessings upon his grandsons he felt that every word he was speaking was a petition which the Lord was answering. They were blessed, and they should be blessed, and he discerned it by faith. Thus, we see, he was manifesting his faith in offering believing prayer, and in uttering a confident benediction.

Whether we live, or whether we die, let us have faith in God: whenever we preach or teach the Gospel, let us have faith; for without faith we shall labor in vain. Whenever you distribute religious books or visit the sick, do so in faith, for faith is the lifeblood of all our service. If only by faith can a dying Jacob bless his descendants, so only by faith can we bless the sons of men. Have faith in God, and the instruction which you give shall really edify, the prayers you offer shall bring down showers of mercy, and your endeavors for your sons and daughters shall be prospered. God will bless what is done in faith; but if we believe not our work will not be established. Faith is the backbone and marrow of the Christian's power to do good: we are weak as water till we enter into union with God by faith, and then we are omnipotent. We can do nothing for our fellowmen by way of promoting their spiritual and eternal interests if we walk according to the sight of our eyes; but when we get into the power of God, and grasp his promise by a daring confidence, then it is that we obtain the power to bless.

You will notice, also, that not only the power to bless came to him by faith, but the blessings which he allotted to his grandsons were his upon the same tenure. His legacies were all blessings which he possessed by faith only. He gave to Ephraim and Manasseh a portion each: but where and what? Did he fetch out a bag from an iron safe and say, "Here, young men, I give you the same portion of ready money as I give my sons"? No, there does not seem to have been a solitary shekel in the case. Did he call for the map of the family estates and say, "I give over to you, my boys, my freehold lands in such a parish, and my copy hold farms under such a manor"? No, no, he gave them no portion in Goshen, but each had a lot in Canaan.

Did that belong to him? Yes, in one sense, but not in another. God had promised it to him, but he had not yet a foot of land in it. The Canaanites were swarming in the land; they were dwelling in cities walled up to heaven, and held the country by the right of possession, which is nine points of the law. But the good old man talks about Canaan as if it was all his own, and he foresees the tribes growing into nations as much as if they were already in actual possession of the country. He had, as a matter of fact, neither house nor ground in Palestine, and yet he counts it all his own, since a faithful God had promised it to his fathers. God had said to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes and behold to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. All this will I give thee." And Jacob realizes that gift of God as being a charter and title-deed of possession, and he acts upon it while he says, "This is for Ephraim: this is for Manasseh," though the sneering infidel standing by would have said, "Hear how the old man dotes and maunders, giving away what he has not got!" Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and she deals seriously and in a business manner with that which she makes real to herself: blind reason may ridicule, but faith is justified of all her children.

Beloved, in this manner believers bless the sons of men, namely, by faith. We pray for them, and we tell them of good things yet to come, not to be seen of the eye, or to be perceived by the senses, but inconceivably good-things laid up by God for them that love him, which shall be the portion of our children and our friends if they believe in the living God. By faith we believe in things not seen as yet. We confess that, like Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob, we are strangers here, and we are journeying towards a place of which God has spoken to us: "A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We have learned to talk about the crown which the Lord has laid up for us, and not for us only but for all them that love his appearing; and we delight to tell others how to win this crown. We point them to the narrow gate and to the narrow way, neither of which they can see, and to the end of that narrow road, even to the hilltops crowned with the celestial city where the pilgrims of the Lord shall dwell forever, and enjoy an eternal reward. Faith is wanted to enable us to point men to the invisible and eternal, and if we cannot do this how can we bless them? We must believe for those we love, and have hope for them; thus shall we have power with God for them, and shall bless them. Oh, you worldly fathers, you may give your sons what heritage you can, and divide among your daughters what wealth you please, but as for us, our longing is to see our children and our children's children dowried with the riches which come from above. If they win a share in the land on the other side of Jordan, as yet unseen, and have a portion now in Christ Jesus, we shall be glad-infinitely more glad than if they were the richest among mankind. Our legacies to our sons are the blessings of grace, and our dowries to our daughters are the promises of the Lord.

It is well worthy of our notice that the venerable patriarch Jacob in his benediction particularly mentioned the covenant. His faith, like the faith of most of God's people, made the covenant its pavilion of delightful abode, its tower of defense, and its armory for war. No sweeter word was on his tongue than the covenant, and no richer consolation sustained his heart. He said to Joseph, "God almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee." His confidence rested in the promise of the Lord, and in the divine fidelity: that was the fountain truth from which he drew the inspiration which led him to bless his grandchildren. And, also, you notice, how he dwells upon the name of his father Abraham, and of his father Isaac, with whom the covenant had aforetime been established: the memories of covenant love are precious, and every confirmatory token is treasured up and dwelt upon. Dying men do not talk nonsense. They get to something solid, and the everlasting covenant made with their fathers, and confirmed in their own persons, has been

one of the grand things about which dying saints have been wont to deliver their souls. Recollect how David said, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." While we are sitting here we can talk about the matter coolly, but when the death dew lies cold upon the brow, and the pulse is failing, and the throat is gradually choking up, it will be blessed to fix the eye upon the faithful promiser and to feel a calm within the soul which even death pangs cannot disturb, because we can then exclaim, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day."

I want to call your attention to one point which I think extraordinarily illustrates the faith of Jacob. In distributing to these two grandchildren his blessings as to the future, he takes them right away from Joseph, and says, "As Simeon and Reuben shall they be mine." Do you know who those two young gentlemen were? Think awhile, and you will see that they were very different in rank, station, parentage, and prospects from any of the sons of Jacob. Jacob's sons had been brought up as laboring men, without knowledge of polite society or learned arts. They were countrymen, mere Bedouins, wandering shepherds, and nothing else; but these two young gentlemen were descended from a princess, and had, no doubt, been liberally educated. Pharaoh had given to Joseph a daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On, and the priests of Egypt were the highest class of all the nobility of the land. Joseph himself was prime minister, and these were partakers of his lofty rank. The sons of Reuben and Simeon were nobodies in the polite circles of Egypt—very good, decent people, farmers and graziers, but not at all of the high class of the Right Honorable Lord Manasseh and the Honorable Ephraim. Indeed, every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians, and therefore inadmissible to Egypt's nobility; but Manasseh and Ephraim were of a superior caste, and gentlemen of position and fortune. But Jacob showed his faith by ignoring worldly advantages for his grandsons. He says to Joseph, "They are not to be yours. I do not know them as Egyptians, I forget all about their mother's rank and family. The boys have attractive prospects before them; they can be made priests of the idol temple, and rise to high dignities among the Egyptians; but all that glitter we reject for them, and in token thereof I adopt them as my own sons; they are mine;

as Simeon and Reuben they shall be mine. For all the gold of Egypt you would not have one of them serve an idol, for I know that you are true to your father's God and your father's faith." And so he takes the boys right away, you see, from all their brilliant opportunities, and bestows upon them that which, to the carnal mind, appears to be an estate in dreamland, a chateau in Spain, something intangible and unmarketable. This was a deed of faith, and blessed are they who can imitate it, choosing rather the reproach of Christ for their sons than all the treasures of Egypt. The joy of it is that these lads accepted the exchange, and let the golden possessions of Egypt go like Moses after them. May our heirs and successors be of like mind, and may the Lord say of them, "Out of Egypt have I called my son"; and again, "When Ephraim was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

This is how faith leads believers to bless their children. We are of the same mind as Jacob in this matter. We would sooner bury our little ones than that they should live to become amongst the richest and most famous of men, and yet not know or serve their father's God; better that we laid them quietly in such ground as our Christian brethren permit us to use as a sepulcher for our unbaptized babes; better that they were safely housed at God's right hand, than that they should grow up to plunge into dissipation or to follow false doctrine and perish out of Christ.

We have not done yet, for we notice that Jacob showed his faith by blessing Joseph's sons in God's order. He placed Ephraim before Manasseh. It was not according to the rule of nature, but he felt the impulse upon him, and his faith would not resist the divine guidance: blind as he was he would not yield to the dictation of his son, but crossed his hands to obey the divine monition. Faith resolves to do the right thing in the right way. Some persons' faith leads them to do the right thing the wrong way upwards, but matured faith follows the order which God prescribes. If God will have Ephraim first, faith does not quarrel with his decree. We may wish to see a favorite child blessed more than another, but nature must forego her choice, for the Lord must do what seemeth him good. Faith prefers grace to talent, and piety to cleverness; she lays her right hand where God lays it, and not where beauty of person or



quickness of intellect would suggest. Our best child is that which God calls best; faith corrects reason and accepts the divine verdict.

Notice that he manifested his faith by his distinct reference to redemption. He alone who has faith will pray for the redemption of his children, especially when they exhibit no signs of being in bondage, but are hopeful and amiable. The good old man prayed, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Let your faith bring down upon your children a share in redemption's blessings, for they need to be redeemed even as others. If they are washed in the blood of Jesus, if they are reconciled to God by the blood of his Son, if they have access to God by the blood of atonement, you may die well satisfied; for what is to harm them when once the Angel that redeemed you has also redeemed them? From sin, from Satan, from death, from hell, from self- "from all evil" does our Redeemer set us free; and this is the greatest of all benedictions which we can pronounce upon our dearest children.

Jacob showed his faith by his assurance that God would be present with his seed. How cheering is the old man's dying expression, made not only to his boys, but concerning all his family. He said, "Now I die, but God will be with you." It is very different from the complaints of certain good old ministers when they are dying. They seem to say, "When I die, the light of Israel will be quenched. I shall die, and the people will desert the truth. When I am gone the standard-bearer will have fallen, and the watchman on the walls will be dead." Many in dying are afraid for the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; and, sometimes, we who are in good health talk very much in the same fashion as though we were wonderfully essential to the progress of God's cause. I have known some of our church members speak in that manner, and inquire: "What should we do if Mr. So-and-so were dead! If our pastor were gone, what would the church do?" I will tell you what you will do without us: I will put the case as though I were myself to die- "Now I die, but God will be with you." Whoever passes away, the Lord will abide with his people, and the church will be secure. The grand old cause does not depend on one or two of us. God forbid! The truth was mighty in the land before the best man living was born, and the truth will not be buried with him, but in its own immortal youth will still be powerful; yes, and fresh advocates will arise

more full of life and vigor than we are, and greater victories will be won. It is grand to say with Jacob, "Now I die, but God will be with you." Such language honors God and bespeaks a mind greatly trustful, and completely delivered from the self-conceit which dreams itself important, if not necessary, to the cause of God.

We are told, next, that the old man "worshiped" - worshiped by faith. Very briefly let me tell you what worship I think he rendered.

First, while he was dying he offered the worship of gratitude. How pleasing is the incident recorded in the tenth and eleventh verses, "Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And Joseph brought his two sons near unto him; and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed." Ah, yes, we shall often have to say, "O Lord, I had not thought that thou wouldst do as much as this, but thou hast gone far beyond what I asked or even thought." I hope that this will be amongst our dying speeches and confessions, that the half was never told us, that our good Lord kept the best wine till the last, and that the end of the feast on earth, being but the beginning of the feast eternal in heaven, was the crown of all. Let us declare concerning our Lord that we found him better and better and better and better, even till we entered into his rest. He has been at first better than our fears, then better than our hopes, and finally better than our desires.

Did he not also offer the worship of testimony, when he acknowledged God's goodness to him all his life? He says, "The God that fed me all my life long," thus owning that he had been always dependent but always supplied. He had been a shepherd, and he uses a word here which means "The God that shepherdized me-who was a shepherd to me all my life long." It was a testimony to the care and tenderness of Jehovah. Yes, and I hope we also shall finish life by magnifying the goodness of the Lord. Be this our witness, "He fed me all my life long. I was in straits sometimes, and I wondered where the next bit of bread would come from; but if he did not send a raven, or if he did not find a widow woman to provide for me, yet somehow or other he did feed me all my life long. He worked in his own wise way, so that I never lacked, for the Lord was my shepherd all my life long."

Notice, too, how reverently he worships the covenant messenger with the adoration of reverent love. He speaks of "the Angel who redeemed me from all evil." He thinks of the Angel that wrestled with him, and the Angel that appeared to him when he fell asleep at Bethel. This is the Angel, not an ordinary angel, but the true archangel-Jesus Christ-the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in. It is he that has delivered us from all evil by his redeeming blood, for no other being could have accomplished a redemption so complete. Do you remember when he came to you personally, and wrestled with you and tore away your self-righteousness, and made you limp upon your thigh? This it may be was your first introduction to him. You saw him by night, and thought him at the first to be rather your enemy than your friend. Do you recollect when he took your strength away from you, and then at last saved you, because in utter weakness, you were about to fall to the ground, you laid hold of him and said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," and so you won a blessing from him? You had thought aforetime that you had strength in yourself, but now you learned that you were weakness itself, and that only as you became consciously weak would you become actually strong. You learned to look out of self to him, and do you not bless him for having taught you such a lesson? Will you not when you come to die bless him for what he did for you then, and all your life long? O my brethren, we owe all things to the redeeming Angel of the covenant. The evils which he has warded off from us are terrible beyond conception, and the blessings he has brought us are rich beyond imagination.

Thus you have had a picture of the old man blessing by faith, and worshiping by faith: faith was the mainspring of the two actions, their essence, their spirit, and their crown.

The last matter for us to speak upon is his attitude. He "worshiped leaning upon the top of his staff." The Romanists have made fine mischief out of this text, for they have read it, "He worshiped the top of his staff," and their notion has been, I suppose, that there was a pretty little god carved on the top-an image of a saint or a cross, or some other symbol, and that he held up that emblem, and so worshiped the top of his staff. We know that he did not such thing, for there is no trace in Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob of anything like the worship of images; though teraph

worship lingered in their families, it was not with their consent. They were not perfect men, but they were perfectly clear from idolatry, and never worshiped an image. Nay, nay, nay; they worshiped God alone. He worshiped on the top of his staff-leaning on it, supporting himself upon it. In Genesis you read that he "bowed himself upon the bed's head." It is a very curious thing that the word for bed and the word for staff in the Hebrew are so exceedingly like each other that unless the little points had been used, which I suppose were not used at all in the olden time, it would be difficult to tell whether the word is "bed" or "staff." I do not, however, think either Moses or Paul can be wrong. Jacob strengthened himself and sat upon the bed, and he leaned upon his staff, too. It is very easy to realize a position in which both descriptions would be equally true. He could sit upon the bed, and lean on the top of his staff at the same time.

But why did he lean on his staff? What was that for? I think besides the natural need which he had of it, because of his being old, he did it emblematically. Do you not remember his saying, "With my staff I cross this Jordan"? It believe he kept that staff throughout life as a memorial. It was a favorite staff of his which he took with him on his first journey, and he leaned upon it as he took his last remove. "With my staff I crossed this Jordan," he had said before, and now with that staff in hand he crosses the spiritual Jordan. That staff was his life companion, the witness with himself of the goodness of the Lord, even as some of us may have an old Bible, or a knife, or a chair which are connected with memorable events of our lives.

But what did that staff indicate? Let us hear what Jacob said at another time. When he stood before Pharaoh he exclaimed, "Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage." What made him use that word "pilgrimage"? Why, because upon his mind there was always the idea of his being a pilgrim. He had been literally so during the dearly part of his life, wandering hither and thither; and now, though he has been seventeen years in Goshen, he keeps the old staff, and he leans on it to show that he had always been a pilgrim and a sojourner like his fathers, and that he was so still. While he leans on that staff he talks to Joseph, and he says, "Do not let my bones lie here. I have come hither in the

providence of God, but I do not belong here. This staff indicates that I am only a sojourner here, and want to be gone. I am in Egypt, but I am not of it. Take my bones away. Do not let them lie here, for if they do, my sons and daughters will mingle with the Egyptians, and that must not be, for we are a distinct nation. God has chosen us for himself, and we must keep separate. To make my children see this, lo, here I die with my pilgrim staff in my hand." Now, Christian brother, I want you to live in the same spirit, feeling that this is not your rest nor your native country. There is nothing here that is worthy of you. Your home is yonder, on the other side the desert, where God has mapped out your portion. Christ has gone to prepare your place, and it would ill become you to have no desires for it. The longer you live the more let this thought grow upon you: "Give me my staff. I must be gone. Poor world, thou art no rest for me; I am not of thy children, I am an alien and a stranger. My citizenship is in heaven, I take my share in Egypt's politics and Egypt's labor, aye, and in Egypt's griefs, but I am no Egyptian, I am a stranger bound for another land." Worship on the top of your staff, and sing -

A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,  
I march on in haste through an enemy's land;  
There is nothing on earth which can tempt me to stay,  
My staff is the emblem of 'up and away'.

Singular enough is it that each descendant of Jacob came to worship on the top of his staff at last, for on the paschal supper night, when the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the side posts, they each one ate the lamb with their loins girt and with a staff in his hand. The supper was a festival of worship, and they ate it each one leaning on his staff, as those that were in haste to leave home for a pilgrimage through the wilderness. My dear hearers, this advice does not apply to all of you, for you are not all Jacobs, nor do you belong to the believing seed. I cannot bid you take your staff, for if you were to take your staff and start off, where would you go? You have no portion in the next world, no promised land, no Canaan flowing with milk and honey. Whither will you go? You must be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Alas for you! You cannot worship, for you know not God; you cannot bless others, for you have not been blessed yourselves. May the Lord bring you to his

dear Son Jesus Christ, and lead you to put your trust in him, and then I shall hope that being saved you will by faith imitate Jacob, and both bless men, worship God, and wait with your staff in your hand, ready to journey to the eternal rest.

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## **Jacob's Waking Exclamation**

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord in this place; and I knew it not - Genesis 28:16

Through his own foolish wisdom Jacob had been compelled to leave his father's house. Perhaps we are scarcely able to judge of the sorrowful feelings which this banishment would beget in his soul. Here we go from one Christian home to another. If we leave the parental roof we may hope still to sojourn where there is an altar to the Most High God, and where we can still unite with worshippers who fear his name. Not so in Jacob's case. The family of which he was a member, was the only household in the land that worshipped God; or if there were some few others, probably they were unknown to one another, and as far as Jacob's knowledge would go, he was fully assured that all the way from the place where he left his father until he arrived at Padan-Aram, he would not meet with a single person who feared the God of heaven. He was passing from one oasis to another across a burning sand. We may compare him to a swallow, which for the first time leaves our shore to find no rest until it has passed with weary wing the long leagues of purple sea. You must know too that the prevalent notion of the heathens among whom Jacob dwelt was that their gods had only local authority; that for instance, the god of Gaza was not the god of Askelon; the god of Beersheba would not be the God of Bethel. Their deities were gods of the hills and not of the

valleys, and it may be but just possible that from great connection with the heathen, Jacob may have failed clearly to recognize the fact that his father's God was not like their gods; so in leaving his father's house there may have been this troublous thought rising in his mind, that he was also leaving his father's God; that now his prayers would scarcely be heard; that he should be an alien from Jehovah's land, and cut off from the congregation of the blessed. Jacob was not at this time a full-grown believer, he was but a babe in grace; his ready yielding to his mother's craft proves his want of advanced piety; and it is no trifling thing for a weakling to be taken from the nurture of home and cast alone upon a world unfriendly and ungenial. Happy was it for the fugitive that his Lord's compassion tracked his way even when he knew not that God was there. Blessed was the dream which assured him that Jehovah's wing had covered his stony bed as really as it guarded his softer couch in Isaac's tent. The truth seemed to surprise him, but O how sweetly it must have yielded consolation! "Surely," said he, and he opened his eyes to new light as though he knew that the night of distress had passed, and that a day of confidence had begun—"Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not."

I would address you this morning upon a topic which may perhaps be as useful to us as to Jacob, if God the Holy Ghost shall but enable me to preach, and you to hear. Oh thou that art everywhere, be speedily now; be thou in this place, and may we know it, and tremble in thy presence. I shall speak on three points; first, the omnipresence of God—the doctrine of it; secondly, a recognition of that omnipresence, or the spirit which is necessary in order to discover the presence of God; and thirdly, the results of a recognition of this omnipresence, or the practice which is sure to spring out of the conviction that God is everywhere.

I. First, then, THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE. He is everywhere.

In the early Christian Church, there was a wicked heresy, which for a long while caused great disturbance, and exceeding much controversy. There were some who taught that Satan, the representative of evil, was of co-equal power with God, the representative of good. These men found it necessary to impugn the doctrine of God's universal power. Their doctrine denied the all-pervading presence of God in the present world,

and they seemed to imagine that we should of necessity have to get out of the world of nature altogether, before we could be in the presence of God. Their preachers seemed to teach that there was a great distance between God and his great universe; they always preached of him as the King who dwelt in the land that was very far off; nay, they almost seemed to go as far as though they had said, "Between us and him there is a great gulf fixed, so that neither can our prayers reach him, nor can the thoughts of his mercy come down to us." Blessed be God that error has long ago been exploded, and we as Christian men, without exception, believe that God is as much in the lowest hell as in the highest heaven, and as truly among the sinful hosts of mortals, as among the blissful choir of immaculate immortals, who day without night praise his name. We believe that he filleth heaven and earth, and hell; that he is in the very space which his creation seems to claim, for creatures do not displease God; and even the space which is occupied by his handiworks is still filled with himself. The rocky bowels of the unsearched-out depths are full of God; where the sea roars, or where the solid granite leaves no interstice or vacuum, even there is God; not only in the open place, and in the chasm, but penetrating all matter, and abounding everywhere in all, and filling all things with himself. "In him we live and move, and have our being, and in him are all things, and by him all things consist." Yet, while we receive the doctrine, it is well sometimes to enlarge upon it, not so much for sake of argument, as to make the truth stand out the more clearly to our minds' eye. Let us remember, then, that in the three kingdoms God is everywhere; in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace, we may say of each spot, "Surely God is in this place."

He is everywhere in the fields of nature. Go if you please to secluded parts; walk through the forest-glades where the virgin moss presents a delicate carpet for human foot; where the deer starts up affrighted by the intrusion of an unexpected visitor; where the wild bird scarcely flies from you because as yet it is not familiar with the cruel face of man. As you walk among the intertwined boughs, the natural arches of God's own temple which He Himself hath builded, without toil of hewer of stone or dauber of clay, if you be a true Christian you will be compelled to say -

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,



With prayer and praise agree;  
And seem by thy sweet bounty made  
For those who follow thee."

You will solemnly exclaim, "Surely God is in this place." Nor will you be alone in your thought, for every waving flower-bell will bear witness to the fact, and the insect humming in the breeze, and the glossy beetle creeping among the sere leaves that lie beneath your feet, relics of many a winter's slaughter among the verdant groves, and the birds that are warbling among the trees will every one of them bear witness that surely God is there. In fact, if there be one spot more than another where the consciousness of God's presence will strike the heart of the awakened man, it will be where other men are not but where he himself is alone the only worshipper of God, save as a creation joins his strain. But you must remember too that if you go to the haunt of men, where they crowd and congregate together, that God is there. Go to one of the abutments of London Bridge and stand a moment gazing at the throng as it harries by, thousands and tens of thousands in an hour, on, on they sweep—the riches of Nations grinding the roadway, and multitudes of men, women, and children wearing away the granite pavement. God is there, though forgotten by most of them who are thinking only of the world and of its toils, forgetting that there is one above them who looks on all, and one within them who inhabiteth all space. Let not you and I forget, but let us say, "God is there; in every drop of blood that is circulating through the veins of the passengers; in every flush that is on the cheek; in every pulse that throbs or breath that heaves." The very fact that they are fed and clothed and are in existence will bear you witness that surely God is in that place; and thoughts of awe may soon come crowding o'er your mind, and you may find yourself as much alone with God in crowded Cheapside, or in the thronging Borough or noisy Whitechapel, as though you were far away alone on the wild prairie, or in some desert of Africa where footprint of man could not be perceived. Verily God is in this place. Then fly with the white sail across the deep, and as you skim the foaming billows, if your soul be right within you, you will say, "Surely God is in this place." And when the storm comes on and the thunder rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies, and the skies seem to be wounded with the flashing of his glittering spear in the tremendous lightning, you may say

in the midst of the storm as your bark reels and rocks, and is tossed like a sea-bird upon the billow—"Surely he holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, and God is here." And when you have landed, and calm comes on, and the fair white clouds sail slowly through the air, sailing gallantly in the abated breath of the wind, when everything comes out all fresh and green from the last shower, and there is a clear shining after the rain and the storm, and profound peace after the noisy hurricane, you may say then with refreshed enjoyment—"Surely God is in this place." But I need not continue in such a strain as this. Ye shall go where ye will; ye shall look to the most magnificent of God's works, and ye shall say—"God is here, upon thine awful summit, O hoary Alp! in thy dark bosom, O tempest-cloud! and in thy angry breath, O devastating hurricane!" "He makes the clouds his chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind." God is here. And so in the most minute—in the blossom of the apple, in the bloom of the tiny field-flower, in the sea-shell which has been washed up from its mother-deep, in the sparkling of the mineral brought up from darkest mines, in the highest star, or in yon comet that startles the nations and in its fiery chariot soon drives afar from mortal ken,—great God, thou art here, thou art everywhere. From the minute to the magnificent, in the beautiful and in the terrible, in the fleeting and in the lasting, thou art here, though sometimes we know it not.

Let us enter now the kingdom of Providence, again to rejoice that God is there. My brethren, let us walk the centuries, and at one stride of thought let us traverse the earliest times when man first came out of Eden, driven from it by the fall. Then this earth had no human population, and the wild tribes of animals roamed it at their will. We know not what this island was then, save that we may suspect it to have been covered with dense forests, and perhaps inhabited by ferocious beasts; but God was here, as much here as he is to-day; as truly was he here then, when no ear heard his foot fall as he walked in the cool of the day in this great garden,—as truly here as when to-day the stings of ten thousand rise up to heaven, blessing and magnifying his name. And then when our history began—turn over its pages and you will read of cruel invasions and wars which stained the soil with blood, and crimsoned it a foot-deep with clotted gore; you will read of civil wars and intestine strifes between brother and brother, and you will say—"How is this? How was this

permitted? "But if you read on and see how by tumult and bloody strife Liberty was served, and the best interest of man, you will say, "Verily, God was here." History will conduct you to awful battle-fields; she will bid you behold the garment rolled in blood; she will cover you with the thick darkness of her fire and vapor of smoke; and as you hear the clash of arms, and see the bodies of your fellow men, you say, "The devil is here;" but truth will say, "No, though evil be here, yet surely God was in this place though we knew it not; all this was needful after all—these calamities are but revolutions of the mighty wheels of Providence, which are too high to be understood, but are as sure in their action as though we could predict their results." Turn if you will to what is perhaps a worse feature in history still, and more dreary far—I mean the story of persecutions. Read how the men of God were stoned and were sawn asunder; let your imaginations revive the burnings of Smithfield, and the old dungeons of the Lollards' Tower; think how with fire and sword, and instruments of torture, the fiends of hell seemed determined to extirpate the chosen seed. But remember as you read the bloodiest tragedy, as your very soul grows sick at some awful picture of poor tortured human flesh, that verily God was in that place, scattering with rough hands, it may be, the eternal seed, bidding persecution be as the blast which carries seed away from some fruit-bearing tree that it may take root in distant islets which it had never reached unless it had been carried on the wings of the storm. Thou art, O God, even where man is most in his sin and blasphemy; thou art reigning over rebels themselves, and over those who seem to defy and to overturn thy will. Remember, always, that in history, however dreadful may seem the circumstances of the narrative, surely God is in that place. You may say that yon nation depended for its welfare upon a woman's will, or that its destiny hinged upon a child's life; that this dynasty rose and fell at the will of some far-famed adventurer; that another nation was rocked to its very center by the fanaticism of a foolish pretender. We will grant you all this, for who denies the second cause when he vindicates the first?—but let me say, more present is God than even man himself; more truly is he King, than the kings of the earth; more certainly is the Lord a man of war than even warriors themselves. In everything in the page of history, from the moment of its first unrolling till the last of the seven seals shall be loosed, and the book shall be read out before men and angels, you will have to say, "God was in it all." But

you will please to recollect that while this is true of history in the mass, it is also true of it in the detail, and with reference to yourself and your own lot—God is there. You had a fire by which you lost your all, but God was there. By some fortunate circumstances, as you call it, you rose in life—God was there—but by a reverse, as you name it, you soon fell back again—God was there. There has nothing happened to you but what has been under his knowledge, his superintendence, and his ordination. Do not, I pray you, forget yourself while you are thinking of nations and of kingdoms, for it is as true of a gnat that God supports it in life as it is of an angel, and God is as certainly in the creeping of the aphid upon a rosebud as in the tumble of an avalanche from the mountain. He is in all things. He is in you; he is in your circumstances to-day. Take the thought home, and may God grant that it may have its due effect upon your minds. In Providence, then, we may say, "Surely God is in this place."

But we now come to the third great kingdom of which the truth holds good in a yet more evident manner—the kingdom of grace. In yonder province of conviction, where hard-hearted ones are weeping penitential tears, where proud ones who said they would never have this man to reign over them are bowing their knees to kiss the Son lest he be angry; where rocky, adamantine consciences, have at last begun to feel; where obdurate, determined, incorrigible sinners, have at last turned from the error of their ways—God is there, for were he not there, none of these holy feelings would ever have arisen, and the cry would never have been heard—"I will arise and go unto my Father." And in yonder province which shines under a brighter sun, where penitents with joy look to a bleeding Saviour, where sinners leap to lose their chains, and oppressed ones sing because their burdens have rolled away; where they who were just now sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death have seen the great light—God is in that place, or faith had never come and hope had never arisen. And there in yonder province, brighter still, where Christians lay their bodies upon the altar as living sacrifices, where men with self-denying zeal think themselves to be nothing and Christ to be all in all; where the missionary leaves his kindred that he may die among the swarthy heathen; where the young man renounces brilliant prospects that he may be the humble servant of Jesus; where yonder work-girl toils night and day to earn her bread rather than sell her soul; where yonder

toiling laborer stands up for the rights of conscience against the demands of the mighty; where yonder struggling believer still holds to God in all his troubles, saying—"Though he slay me yet will I trust in him"—God is in that place, and he that has eyes to see will soon perceive his presence there. Where the sigh is heaving, where the tear is falling, where the song is rising, where the desire is mounting, where love is burning, hope anticipating, faith abiding, joy o'erflowing, patience suffering, and zeal abounding, God is surely present. In the temple of the human heart, consecrating it unto himself. In all these three kingdoms then, my brethren, let us never forget that "God is in this place."

I shall turn from this point when I have just made the remark that we are still so apt to think that God is not here. You remember that splendid picture which God himself gives—"Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool." You have seen, perhaps, the drawings of those wonderful statues which amid the ruined temples of Egypt, lift their heads into the very clouds. They sit upon their awful thrones continually, men of common stature reach no higher than the pedestals of their feet, while these gigantic ones tower upwards into the very sky. Now consider these to be but a minute representation, and let the colossal figure of Deity rise before your mind. Heaven is his throne, and there he sits; earth is his footstool, and here are his feet; while higher than angels fly is the head of the All-glorious One. We cannot comprehend the Lord at all, but we may think of him as he represents himself to us; he does it, you know, under human representations—let us then get the human representation into our mind. He is greater than the greatest thought—his head higher than heaven; his feet lower than the deepest hell; earth his footstool; heaven his throne. Do not let us think that he is ever absent here, for if his face be seen in heaven, the skirts of his garments are trailing over the whole earth. We are never at a distance from him; he is here, there, and everywhere; with you and with me, very present at every time and in every circumstances. I cannot bring out the truth more clearly than that; I therefore leave it to pass on to the second head.

II. BUT HOW ARE WE TO RECOGNISE THIS PRESENCE OF GOD?  
"What is the Spirit which shall enable us constantly to feel it? The presence of electricity is very soon discovered by those bodies which are

susceptible of its action. The presence, for instance, of iron in a vessel is very soon detected and discovered by the magnetic needle. There is an affinity between them. That carnal men should not discover God here I do not wonder at: that they should even say, "There is no God," is no marvel, because there is nothing in their nature akin to him, and therefore they do not perceive him. They lack all the affinity that can discover his presence.

To commence, then. If you would feel God's presence, you must have an affinity to his nature. Your soul must have the spirit of adoption, and it will soon find out its Father. Your spirit must have a desire after holiness, and it will soon discover the presence of Him who is holiness itself. Your mind must be heavenly, and you will soon detect that the God of Heaven is here. The more nearly we become like God, the more sure shall we be that God is where we are. To a man who has reached the highest stage of sanctification the presence of God becomes a more sure fact than the presence of anything else beside. In fact, he may even get to such a state that he will look upon the fields, streets, inhabitants and events of the world as a dream, a passing background, while the only real thing to him will be the unseen God which his new nature so clearly manifests to him, that his faith becomes the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things which sense cannot perceive. Likeness to God is first necessary for the clear perception of his presence. Next, there must be a calmness of spirit. God was in the place when Jacob came there that night, but he did not know it, for he was alarmed about his brother Esau; he was troubled, and vexed, and disturbed. He fell asleep, and his dream calmed him; he awoke refreshed; the noise of his troubled thoughts was gone and heard the voice of God.

"In solemn silence of the mind,  
My heaven and there my God I find."

More quiet we want, more quiet, more calm retirement, before we shall well be able, even with spiritual minds, to discover the sensible presence of God.

But then, next Jacob had in addition to this calm of mind—a revelation of Christ. That ladder, as I have said in the exposition, was a picture of

Christ, the way of access between man and God. You will never perceive God in nature, until you have learned to see God in grace. We have heard a great deal about going up from nature to nature's God. Impossible! A man might as well attempt to go from the top of the Alps to heaven. There is still a long gulf between nature and God to the natural mind. You must first of all perceive God incarnate in the flesh of Christ, before you will perceive God in the creation which he has made. We have heard a great deal about men worshipping in the forest glades, who never frequent the sanctuary of the saints. You have heard much, but there was little truth in it. There is often great sound where there is much emptiness, and you will frequently find that those men who talk most of this natural worship are those who do not worship God at all. God's works are too gross a medium to allow the light, and the road to him is a rugged one if we go the way of the creatures. But when I see Christ, I see God's new and living way, between my soul and my God, most clear and pleasant. I come to my God at once, and finding him in Christ, I find him everywhere else besides.

More than this, no man will perceive God, wherever he may be, unless he knows that God has made a promise to be with him and is able by faith to look to the fulfillment of it. In Jacob's case God said, "I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest, and I will not leave thee." Christian, have you heard the same? Is the twenty-third Psalm the song of your faith? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Have you consciously perceived that though men forsook you, God stood with you? Could you join the song of one who said,

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud  
Has gathered thick and thunder'd loud,  
He near my side hath always stood,  
His loving-kindness O how good!"

Then to you it will not be difficult to perceive the presence of God. You will in fact look upon it as so real that when you open your eyes in the morning, you will look for him with praise, and when you close them at night, it will only be that you may repose under the shadow of his wings. I wish we could get back to the spirit of the old Puritans, they believed in a present God always. We speculate about the laws of nature, we are always

talking about organic matter and so on, but with them it was God and God alone. We look to the barometer about the rain, and very properly in some sense, they looked to God, and they prayed God either to stay the bottles of heaven, or to pour down the refreshing floods upon the thirsty earth. We are talking about attraction, finding out the laws by which the worlds are governed, the Puritans looked to the Lawgiver rather than to the law, and to the present power of God manifest in his present hand, rather than to any power which some dream may exist in matter itself, or in the laws of matter. Oh to feel God everywhere, in the little as well as in the great, in our risings up and in our sittings down, in our goings forth and in our comings in! I can conceive of no life more blessed, and of no Spirit more akin to the spirit of the glorified, than the mind and heart of the man who lives in God, and knows and feels that God is ever present with him.

III. This brings me, very briefly, to one or two concluding remarks upon the PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A FULL RECOGNITION IN THE SOUL OF THIS DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

One of the first things would be to check our inordinate levity. Cheerfulness is a virtue: levity a vice. How much foolish talking, how much jesting which is not convenient, would at once end if we said, "Surely God is in this place." The next time you have been indulging in mirth—I mean not innocent mirth, but that which is connected with uncleanness, or with any sort of ill—think you see a finger lifted up, and you hear a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place." Let your recreation be free from sin; let your amusements be such that you can enjoy them while God looks on. If, too, we felt that God was in this place, how much oftener should we talk of him and of Christ. This afternoon what will many of you talk of? Sunday afternoon talk is generally a great difficulty to some professors. They do not like to go right down into what they think worldly conversation, so they generally talk about ministers. They consider that to be a spiritual subject; and generally, this talk about ministers is more wicked than talk about the devil himself, for I had rather you should speak religiously concerning Satan, than irreligiously concerning even the angels of the Churches. There is one tale retailed about this minister and another tale about the other, and the



conversation ministers no edification. If they heard an angel say, "God is in this place," the afternoon of the day of rest would be spent in much more profitable conversation. But suppose that I have some here, to-day, who have been lately exposed to personal danger and peril; brethren, do you not think if in the midst of the storm, or in time of disease, you had heard a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place," you would have been perfectly at rest? The noxious air grows pure if he be there. The lightning cannot scathe, or if they scathe 'tis bliss; the storm cannot devour, nor can the hungry deep engulf; or, if they do, 'tis bliss if God be there: what need have you at any time to fear? What is your nervousness but wickedness, when the Eternal God is your certain refuge? A Christian in alarm at in the hand of his God, surely he distrusts his Father, and doubts the heart of infinite love! "God is in this place though I knew it not." I speak to some, too, who are in great poverty. You will go home to-day, and there are bare walls. Perhaps the seat you sit upon hath many of the rushes torn away and the table will be but very scantily furnished, and very homely at the best. "Well," but you will say, "surely God is in this place." What comfort for you! You may remember the old Christian's exclamation as you sit down for a blessing, "What, all this, and my God present with me!" Better this, and feel his presence, than be possessed of the best of the world's dainties and not know that he is here. Perhaps you have today some sore trouble at home. There is a Christian wife who has to go home to an ungodly husband, or sons and daughters who have to go home to a household which is anything but what it should be. Do not be afraid to go home, and as you cross the threshold, say, "Surely God is in this place." I think as John Bunyan passed over the threshold of the dungeon of Ledford Jail, if he could have known that he should be twelve years there, but that in those twelve years he would write the "Pilgrim's Progress," he would have said, "Surely God is in this place." And you, if you are called to enter a den such as Bunyan called his dungeon, can say, "Surely God is in this place," and you make it a palace at once. Some of you, too, are in very deep affliction. You are driven to such straits that you do not know where things will end, and you are in great despondency to-day. Surely God is in that place. As certain as there was one like unto the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so surely on the glowing coals of your affliction the heavenly foot-prints may be seen, for surely God is in this place. You are called to-

day to some extraordinary duty, and you do not feel strong enough for it. Go to it, for "Surely God is in this place." You have to address an assembly this afternoon for the first time. Surely God is in that place. He will help you. The arm will not be far off on which you have to lean, the divine strength not be remote to which you have to look. "Surely God is in this place."

But were I to multiply pictures, I might not describe the condition of one-tenth of my hearers. Let me rather leave it to you or to the blessed Spirit of God to make an application to your own lot, and you shall find this to be a very well of comfort springing up with clear transparent water of life, "Surely God is in this place."

And lastly, if we always remembered that God was where we are, what reverence would it inspire when we are in his house, in the place particularly and specially set apart for his service! I do not think we always feel in the assembly of the saints as we should do. It is not the place that is holy;—holiness cannot attach itself to anything but moral virtues and to intelligent beings. There cannot be holy bricks and holy stones,—the thing is absolutely impossible; but where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. He is here, and yet how many come out of form and fashion. Some few think rather more of the dress they come in than they do of what they shall hear, or of what Spirit they shall come in. Oh! be dressed, stay not for another pin, but stay for another prayer it thou wilt, that thy soul may be dressed, for often thou comest with thy body decked out, but with thy soul naked before God for want of preparation in coming up to his house. And when we sit here, what thoughts come in! What buyers and sellers transact business here! How have some of you been looking to the cares of housewives, and some of you been busy with your shops! At home you do not take the shutters down on the Sunday, but you keep them up; I wish you would keep them up in your souls. You do not go into the field and look after the crops, but some men bring the crops into the house of God and look at them there. You would not take down the ledger and cast up your accounts to-day, (though some do that) but at the same time you have a ledger in your brains, and are busy with that when you ought to be thinking of your God. And I have noticed this, too, that in so large a house

as this, where so many have to be occupied in showing persons to their seats, keeping the pews and arranging the services, there is such a tendency in the minds of such to have their minds dissipated from the solemn occupation in which they are engaged. I think there ought never to be employed in churches and chapels pew-openers who are not converted, for they will not be converted afterwards. I suppose the case of a pew-opener being converted after taking the office was never known. Those persons who have to do with the externals of the House are just those persons who seldom know anything of the internal. They are occupied with the shell; they can not think of the kernel. As with the grave digger and with undertaker's men, the least thoughtful of all, the most careless of all men, so is it with them who are most in the sanctuary, they are often furthest from God. Oh, may we remember "Surely God is in this place," and it will give us awe when we come into his immediate presence!

But once more, what a restraint from sin would this thought be if it could be painted upon our very soul! A man once took his child with him while he went out to steal from a neighbour's stack, and he said to the boy, "Look about you for fear anybody should see your father." The boy had read the Sculptures, so, having looked all round, his father said, "Have you looked all ways?" He said, "No, father, there is somebody looking." "Who is it?" "Father, you have not looked up, and there is God looking down upon you." The man's conscience was pricked. Sinner, you look round you, there is no one in the chamber, you perpetrate the crime. Look up! The father with murderous thoughts in his mind gets his son into an unfrequented lane, no eye he thinks beholds him, but the divine watcher looks on and finds helpmates on earth to keep watch too. Man, there are eyes in every wall. Nature is God's great photographer, photographing every act you do, nay, every thought that you feel as it prints itself upon your brain and upon your brow. You shall find at the last great day the picture of everything that you have done preserved, for he shall speak to the beam out of the sun and it shall tell what you said, and he shall speak to the sun itself and it shall reveal the picture of the uplifted hand and of the dark deed. You are always seen. Eyes watch you: through the thick darkness he beholdeth. The spirits which he sendeth abroad to and fro are ever at your elbow, and he himself is there. Now go

and sin in the presence of God if thou darest. Curse him to the face if thou darest; go home to day to break his Sabbath if thou darest while he looks on. Surely men would not offend in the very presence of the Judge! They would not break the laws with the Lawgiver himself before their very eyes. Let him then abide in your thoughts.

"Nor let your weaker passions dare  
Consent to sin, for God is there."

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## **A Jealous God**

For the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God. - Exodus 34:14

The passion of jealousy in man is usually exercised in an evil manner, but it is not in itself necessarily sinful. A man may be zealously cautious of his honor, and suspiciously vigilant over another, without deserving blame. All thoughtful persons will agree that there is such a thing as virtuous jealousy. Self-love is, no doubt, the usual foundation of human jealousy, and it may be that Shenstone is right in his definition of it as "the apprehension of superiority," the fear lest another should by any means supplant us; yet the word "jealous" is so near akin to that noble word "zealous," that I am persuaded it must have something good in it. Certainly we learn from Scripture that there is such a thing as a godly jealousy. We find the Apostle Paul declaring to the Corinthian Church, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." He had an earnest, cautious, anxious concern for their holiness, that the Lord Jesus might be honored in their lives. Let it be remembered then, that jealousy, like anger, is not evil in itself, or it could never be ascribed to God; his

jealousy is ever a pure and holy flame. The passion of jealousy possesses an intense force, it fires the whole nature, its coals are juniper, which have a most vehement flame; it resides in the lowest depths of the heart, and takes so firm a hold that it remains most deeply rooted until the exciting cause is removed; it wells up from the inmost recesses of the nature, and like a torrent irresistibly sweeps all before it; it stops at nothing, for it is cruel as the grave (Cant. 8:6), it provokes wrath to the utmost, for it is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance (Proverbs 6:34), and it over throws everything in the pursuit of its enemy, for "wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before jealousy?" For all these reasons jealousy is selected as some faint picture of that tender regard which God has for His own Deity, honor, and supremacy, and the holy indignation which he feels towards those who violate his laws, offend his majesty, or impeach his character. Not that God is jealous so as to bring him down to the likeness of men, but that this is the nearest idea we can form of what the Divine Being feels—if it be right to use even that word toward him—when he beholds his throne occupied by false gods, his dignity insulted, and his glory usurped by others. We cannot speak of God except by using figures drawn from his works, or our own emotions; we ought, however, when we use the images, to caution ourselves and those who listen to us, against the idea that the Infinite mind is really to be compassed and described by any metaphors however lofty, or language however weighty. We might not have ventured to use the word, "jealousy" in connection with the Most High, but as we find it so many times in Scripture, let us with solemn awe survey this mysterious display of the Divine mind. Methinks I hear the thundering words of Nahum, "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reseryeth wrath for his enemies." My soul be thou humbled before the Lord and tremble at his name!

I. Reverently, let us remember that **THE LORD IS EXCEEDINGLY JEALOUS OF HIS DEITY.**

Our text is coupled with the command—"Thou shalt worship no other God." When the law was thundered from Sinai, the second commandment received force from the divine jealousy—"Thou shalt not

make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." Since he is the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, he cannot endure that any creature of his own hands, or fiction of a creature's imagination should be thrust into his throne, and be made to wear his crown. In Ezekiel we find the false god described as "the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy," and the doom on Jerusalem for thus turning from Jehovah runs thus, "Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head." False gods patiently endure the existence of other false gods. Dagon can stand with Bel, and Bel with Ashtaroth; how should stone, and wood, and silver, be moved to indignation; but because God is the only living and true God, Dagon must fall before his ark; Bel must be broken, and Ashtaroth must be consumed with fire. Thus saith the Lord, "Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves;" the idols he shall utterly abolish. My brethren, do you marvel at this? I felt in my own soul while meditating upon this matter an intense sympathy with God. Can you put yourselves in God's place for a moment? Suppose that you had made the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures that inhabit this round globe; how would you feel if those creatures should set up an image of wood, or brass, or gold, and cry, "These are the gods that made us; these things give us life." What—a dead piece of earth set up in rivalry with real Deity! What must be the Lord's indignation against infatuated rebels when they so far despise him as to set up a leek, or an onion, or a beetle, or a frog, preferring to worship the fruit of their own gardens, or the vermin of their muddy rivers, rather than acknowledge the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways! Oh! it is a marvel that God hath not dashed the world to pieces with thunderbolts, when we recollect that even to this day millions of men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. With what unutterable contempt must the living God look down upon those idols which are the work of man's hands—"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not:

neither speak they through their throat." God hath longsuffering toward men, and he patiently endureth this madness of rebelhon; but, oh! what patience must it be which can restrain the fury of his jealousy, for he is a jealous God, and brooks no rival. It was divine jealousy which moved the Lord to bring all his plagues on Egypt. Careful reading will show you that those wonders were all aimed at the gods of Egypt. The people were tormented by the very things which they had made to be their deities, or else, as in the case of the murrain, their sacred animals were themselves smitten, even as the Lord had threatened—"Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah." Was it not the same with ancient Israel? Why were they routed before their enemies? Why was their land so often invaded? Why did famine follow pestilence, and war succeed to famine? Only because "they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was Froth, and greatly abhorred Israel." (Psalm 78:58-59.) How was it that at the last the Lord gave up Jerusalem to the flames, and bade the Chaldeans carry into captivity the remnant of his people? How was it that he abhorred his heritage, and gave up Mount Zion to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles? Did not Jeremiah tell them plainly that because they had walked after other gods and forsaken Jehovah, therefore he would cast them out into a land which they knew not?

Brethren, the whole history of the human race is a record of the wars of the Lord against idolatry. The right hand of the Lord hath dashed in pieces the enemy and cast the ancient idols to the ground. Behold the heaps of Nineveh! Search for the desolations of Babylon! Look upon the broken temples of Greece! See the ruins of Pagan Rome! Journey where you will, you behold the dilapidated temples of the gods and the ruined empires of their foolish votaries. The moles and the bats have covered with forgetfulness the once famous deities of Chaldea and Assyria. The Lord hath made bare his arm and eased him of his adversaries, for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

With what indignation, then, must the Lord look down upon that apostate harlot, called the Romish Church, when, in all her sanctuaries, there are pictures and images, relics and slivines, and poor infatuated beings are even taught to bow before a piece of bread. In this country,

Popish idolatry is not so barefaced and naked as it is in other lands; but I have seen it, and my soul has been moved with indignation like that of Paul on Mars' Hill, when he saw the city wholly to idolatry; I have seen thousands adore the wafer, hundreds bow before the image of the Virgin, scores at prayer before a crucifix, and companies of men and women adoring a rotten bone or a rusty nail, because said to be the relic of a saint. It is vain for the Romanist to assert that he worships not the things themselves, but only the Lord through them, for this the second commandment expressly forbids, and it is upon this point that the Lord calls himself a jealous God. How full is that cup which Babylon must drink; the day is hastening when the Lord shall avenge himself upon her, because her iniquities have reached unto heaven, and she hath blasphemously exalted her Pope into the throne of the Host High, and thrust her priests into the office of the Lamb. Purge yourselves, purge yourselves of this leaven. I charge you before God, the Judge of quick and dead, if ye would not be partakers of her plagues, come out from her more and more, and let your protest be increasingly vehement against this which exalteth itself above all that is called God. Let our Protestant Churches, which have too great a savour of Popery in them, cleanse themselves of her fornications, lest the Lord visit them with fire and pour the plagues of Babylon upon them. Renounce, my brethren, every ceremony which has not Scripture for its warrant, and every doctrine which is not established by the plain testimony of the Word of God. Let us, above all, never by any sign, or word, or deed, have any complicity with this communion of devils, this gathering together of the sons of Behal: and since our God is a jealous God, let us not provoke him by any affinity, gentleness, fellowship, or amity with this Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth.

With what jealousy must the Lord regard the great mass of the people of this country, who have another God beside himself! With what indignation doth he look upon many of you who are subject to the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world! To you Jehovah is nothing. God is not in all your thoughts; you have no fear of Him before your eyes. Like the men of Israel, you have set up your idols in your heart. Your god is custom, fashion, business, pleasure, ambition, honor. You have made unto yourselves gods of these things; you have said, "These be thy gods, O



Israel." Ye follow after the things which perish, the things of this world, which are vanity. O ye sons of men, think not that God is blind. He can perceive the idols in your hearts; he understandeth what be the secret things that your souls lust after; he searcheth your heart, he trieth your reins; beware lest he find you sacrificing to strange gods, for his anger will smoke against you, and his jealousy will be stirred. O ye that worship not God, the God of Israel, who give him not dominion over your whole soul, and live not to his honor, repent ye of your idolatry, seek mercy through the blood of Jesus, and provoke not the Lord to jealousy any more.

Even believers may be reprov'd on this subject. God is very jealous of his deity in the hearts of his own people. Mother, what will he say of you, if that darling child occupies a more prominent place in your love than your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Husband, what shall he say to you, and with what stripes shall he smite you, when your wife reigns as a goddess in your spirit? And wife, thou shouldest love thy husband—thou doest well in so doing; but if thou exaltest him above God, if thou makest him to have dominion over thy conscience, and art willing to forsake thy Lord to please him, then thou hast made to thyself another god, and God is jealous with thee. Ay, and we may thus provoke him with the dead as well as with the living. A grief carried to excess, a grief nurtured until it prevents our attention to duty, a grief which makes us murmur and repine against the will of Providence is sheer rebelhon; it hath in it the very spirit of idolatry; it will provoke the Lord to anger, and he will surely chasten yet again, until our spirit becomes resigned to his rod. "Hast thou not forgiven God yet?" was the language of an old Quaker when he saw a widow who for years had worn her weeds, and was inconsolable in her grief—"Hast thou not forgiven God yet?" We may weep under bereavements, for Jesus wept; but we must not sorrow so as to provoke the Lord to anger, we must not act as if our friends were more precious to us than our God. We are permitted to take solace in each other, but when we carry love to idolatry, and put the creature into the Creator's place, and rebel, and fret, and bitterly repine, then the Lord hath a rod in his hand, and he will make us feel its weight, for he is a jealous God. I fear there are some professors who put their house, their garden, their business, their skill, I know not what, at seasons into the place of God. It

were not consistent with the life of godliness for a man to be perpetually an idolater, but even true believers will sometimes be overcome with this sin, and will have to mourn over it. Brethren, set up no images of jealousy, but like Jacob of old cry to yourselves and to your families, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean." Let me warn those of you who neglect this that if you be the Lord's people you shall soon smart for it, and the sooner the better for your own salvation; while, on the other hand, to those ungodly persons who continue to live for objects other than divine, let me say, you not only smart in this life by bitter disappointments, but you shall also suffer eternal wrath in the life to come.

Come, let me push this matter home upon your consciences; let me carry this as at point of bayonet. Why, my hearers, there are some of you who never worship God. I know you go up to his house, but then it is only to be seen, or to quiet your conscience by having done your duty. How many of you merchants aim only to accumulate a fortune! How many of you tradesmen are living only for your families! How many young men breathe only for pleasure! How many young women exist only for amusement and vanity. I fear that some among you make your belly your god, and bow down to your own personal charms or comforts. Talk of idolaters! They are here to-day! If we desire to preach to those who break the first and second commandments we have no need to go to Hindostan, or traverse the plains of Africa. They are here. Unto you who bow not before the Lord let these words be given, and let them ring in your ears—"The Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God." Who shall stand before him when once he is angry? When his jealousy burneth like fire and smoketh like a furnace, who shall endure the day of his wrath. Beware, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Dreadful shall it be for you, if at the last you shall behold an angry God sitting in judgment. Pause now and meditate upon your doom, and think you see the Almighty robed in tempest and whirlwind.

"His throne a seat of dreadful wrath,  
Girt with devouring flame;  
The Lord appears consuming fire,  
And Jealous is his name."

God save you for Jesus' sake.

## II. The Lord IS JEALOUS OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

He that made heaven and earth has a right to rule his creatures as he wills. The potter hath power over the clay to fashion it according to his own good pleasure, and the creatures being made are bound to be obedient to their Lord. He has a right to issue commands, he has done so—they are holy, and just, and wise; men are bound to obey, but, alas, they continually revolt against his sovereignty, and will not obey him; nay, there be men who deny altogether that he is lying of kings, and others who take counsel together saying, "Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us." He that sitteth in the heavens is moved to jealousy by these sins, and will defend the rights of his crown against all comers, for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

This reminds us of the Lord's hatred of sin. Every time we sin, we do as much as say, "I do not acknowledge God to be my sovereign; I will do as I please." Each time we speak an ill-word we really say, "My tongue is my own, he is not Lord over my lips." Yea, and everytime the human heart wandereth after evil, and lusteth for that which is forbidden, it attempts to dethrone God, and to set up the Evil One in his place. The language of sin is "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice; I will not have God to reign over me." Sin is a deliberate treason against the majesty of God, an assault upon his crown, an insult offered to his throne. Some sins, especially, have rebelhon written on their forehead—presumptuous sins, when a man's conscience has been enlightened, and he knows better, and yet still forsakes the good and follows after evil; when a man's conscience has been aroused through some judgment, or sickness, or under a faithful ministry; if that man returns, like a dog to his vomit, he has, indeed, insulted the sovereignty of God. But have we not all done this, and are there not some here in particular of whom we once had good hope, but who have turned back again to crooked ways? Are there not some of you who, Sabbath after Sabbath, get your consciences so quickened that you cannot be easy in sin as others are and though you may, perhaps, indulge in sin, yet it costs you very dearly, for you know better? Did I not hear of one who sits in these seats often, but is as often on the ale bench? Did I not hear of another who can sing with us the hymns of Zion, but is

equally at home with the lascivious music of the drunkard? Do we not know of some who in their business are anything but what they should be, yet for a show can come up to the house of God? Oh, sirs, oh, sirs, ye do provoke the Lord to jealousy! Take heed, for when he cometh out of his resting-place, and taketh to himself his sword and buckler, who are you that you should stand before the dread majesty of His presence! Tremble and be still! Humble yourselves, and repent of this your sin.

Surely, if sin attacks the sovereignty of God, self-righteousness is equally guilty of treason: for as sin boasts, "I will not keep God's law," self-righteousness exclaims, "I will not be saved in God's way; I will make a new road to heaven; I will not bow before God's grace; I will not accept the atonement which God has wrought out in the person of Jesus; I will be my own redeemer; I will enter heaven by my own strength, and glorify my own merits." The Lord is very wroth against self-righteousness. I do not know of anything against which his fury burneth more than against this, because this touches him in a very tender point, it insults the glory and honor of his Son Jesus Christ. Joshua said to the children of Israel when they promised to keep the law—"Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; and he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." So I may well say to every self-righteous person, "You cannot keep the law, for God is a jealous God," carefully marking every fault, and just to mark your iniquities; nor will he forgive your iniquities so long as you attempt to win his favor by works of law. Throw away thy self-righteousness, thou proud one; cast it with all other idols to the moles and to the bats, for there is no hope for thee so long as thou dost cling to it. Self-righteousness is in itself the very height and crowning-point of rebelhon against God. For a man to say, "Lord, I have not sinned," is the gathering-up, the emphasis, the climax of iniquity, and God's jealousy is hot against it.

Let me add, dear friends, I feel persuaded that false doctrine, inasmuch as it touches God's sovereignty, is always an object of divine jealousy. Let me indicate especially the doctrines of free-will. I know there are some good men who hold and preach them, but I am persuaded that the Lord must be grieved with their doctrine though he forgives them their sin of ignorance. Free-will doctrine—what does it? It magnifies man into God; it

declares God's purposes a nullity, since they cannot be carried out unless men are willing. It makes God's will a waiting servant to the will of man, and the whole covenant of grace dependent upon human action. Denying election on the ground of injustice it holds God to be a debtor to sinners, so that if he gives grace to one he is bound to do so to all. It teaches that the blood of Christ was shed equally for all men and since some are lost, this doctrine ascribes the difference to man's own will, thus making the atonement itself a powerless thing until the will of man gives it efficacy. Those sentiments dilute the scriptural description of man's depravity, and by imputing strength to fallen humanity, rob the Spirit of the glory of his effectual grace: this theory says in effect that it is of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that showeth mercy. Any doctrine, my brethren, which stands in opposition to this truth—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," provokes God's jealousy. I often tremble in this pulpit lest I should utter anything which should oppose the sovereignty of my God; and though you know I am not ashamed to preach the responsibility of man to God—if God be a sovereign, man must be bound to obey him—on the other hand, I am equally bold to preach that God has a right to do what he wills with his own, that he giveth no account of his matters and none may stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" I believe that the free-will heresy assails the sovereignty of God, and mars the glory of his dominion. In all faithfulness, mingled with sorrow, I persuade you who have been deluded by it, to see well to your ways and receive the truth which sets God on high, and lays the creature in the dust. "The Lord reigneth," be this our joy. The Lord is our King, let us obey him and defend to the death the crown rights of the lying of kings, for he is a jealous God.

While tarrying upon this subject, I ought also to remark that all the boastings of ungodly men, whenever they exalt themselves, seeing that they are a sort of claim of sovereignty, must be very vexatious to God, the Judge of all. When you glory in your own power, you forget that power belongeth only unto God, and you provoke his jealousy. When kings, parhaments, or synods, trespass upon the sacred domains of conscience, and say to men, "Bow down, that we may go over you"—when we make attempts to lord over another man's judgment, and to make our own opinions supreme, the Lord is moved to jealousy, for he retains the court

of conscience for himself alone to reign in. Let us humbly bow before the dignity of the Most High, and pay our homage at his feet.

"Glory to th' eternal King,  
Clad in majesty supreme!  
Let all heaven his praises sing,  
Let all worlds his power proclaim.

O let my transported soul  
Ever on his glories gaze!  
Ever yield to his control,  
Ever sound his lofty praise!"

Let us crown him every day! Let our holy obedience, let our devout lives, let our hearty acquiescence in all his will, let our reverent adoration before the greatness of his majesty, all prove that we acknowledge him to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, lest we provoke a jealous God to anger.

### III. THE LORD IS JEALOUS OF HIS GLORY.

God's glory is the result of his nature and acts. He is glorious in his character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that he must be glorious. The actions which flow from his character, the deeds which are the outgoings of his inner nature, these are glorious too; and the Lord is very careful that all flesh should see that he is a good, and gracious, and just God; and he is mindful, too, that his great and mighty acts should not give glory to others, but only to himself.

How, careful, then, should we be when we do anything for God, and God is pleased to accept of our doings, that we never congratulate ourselves. The minister of Christ should unrobe himself of every rag of praise. "You preached well," said a friend to Jolin Bunyan one morning. "You are too late," said honest Jolin, "the devil told me that before I left the pulpit." The devil often tells God's servants a great many things which they should be sorry to hear. Why, you can hardly be useful in a Sunday School but he will say to you—"How well you have done it!" You can scarcely resist a temptation, or set a good example, but he will be whispering to

you—"What an excellent person you must be!" It is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory." Now God is so jealous on this point that, while he will forgive his own servants a thousand things, this is an offense for which he is sure to chasten us. Let a believer once say, "I am," and God will soon make him say "I am not." Let a Christian begin to boast, "I can do all things," without adding "through Christ which strengtheneth me," and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust. Many of the sins of true Christians, I do not doubt, have been the result of their glorifying themselves. Many a man has been permitted by God to stain a noble character and to ruin an admirable reputation, because the character and the reputation had come to be the man's own, instead of being laid, as all our crowns must be laid, at the feet of Christ. Thou mayest build the city, but if thou sayest with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded!" thou shalt be smitten to the earth. The worms which ate Herod when he gave not God the glory are ready for another meal; beware of vain glory!

How careful ought we to be to walk humbly before the Lord. The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Penitent souls are always accepted, because they are not in God's way; proud souls are always rejected, because they are in God's way. Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the Sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man that fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? O thou nothingness and vanity, thou puny mortal called man, humble thyself and reverence thy Great Creator.

Let us see to it that we never misrepresent God, so as to rob him of his honour. If any minister shall preach of God so as to dishonor him, God will be jealous against that man. I fear that the Lord hath heavy wrath against those who lay the damnation of man at God's door, for they dishonor God, and he is very jealous of his name. And those, on the other hand, who ascribe salvation to man must also be heavily beneath God's displeasure, for they take from him his glory. Ah, thieves! ah, thieves! will

ye dare to steal the crown-jewels of the universe! Whither go ye, whither bear ye the bright pearls which ought to shine upon the brow of Christ? To put them on the brow of man? Stop! stop! for the Lord will not give his glory to another! Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto him the honor that is due unto his name! Any doctrine which does not give all the honor to God must provoke him to jealousy.

Be careful, dear friends, that you do not misrepresent God yourselves. You who murmur; you who say that God deals hardly with you, you give God an ill character; when you look so melancholy, worldlings say, "The religion of Jesus is intolerable;" and so you stain the honor of God. Oh, do not do this, for he is a jealous God, and he will surely use the rod upon you if you do.

A flash of holy pleasure crosses my mind. I am glad that he is a jealous God. It is enough to make us walk very carefully, but, at the same time, it should make us very joyful to think that the Lord is very jealous of his own honor. Then, brethren, if we believe in Christ, you and I are safe, because it would dishonor him if we were not; for his own name's sake and for his faithfulness' sake, he will never leave one of his people; since "His honor is engaged to save the meanest of his sheep." Now, if Christ could trifle with his own honor, if he had no jealousy, you and I might be afraid that he would suffer us to perish; but it never shall be. It shall be said on earth and sung in heaven at the last, that God has suffered no dishonorable defeats from the hands of either men or devils. "I chose my people," saith the Eternal Father, "and they are mine now that I make up my jewels." "I bought my people," saith the eternal Son, "I became a surety for them before the Most High, and the infernal hon could not rend the meanest of the sheep." "I quickened my people," saith the Holy Spirit; the temptations of hell could not throw them down; their own corruptions could not overpower them; I have gotten the victory in every one of them, not one of them is lost; they are all brought safely to my right hand." Hide yourselves, then, under the banner of Jehovah's jealousy. It is bloody red, I know; its ensign bears a thunderbolt and a flame of fire; but hide yourselves, hide yourselves under it, for what enemy shall reach you there? If it be to God's glory to save me, I am



entrenched behind munitions of stupendous rock. If it would render God inglorious to let me, a poor sinner, descend into hell; if it would open the mouths of devils and make men say that God is not faithful to his promise, then am I secure, for God's glory is wrapped up with my salvation, and the one cannot fail because the other cannot be tarnished. Beloved, let us mind that we be very jealous of God's glory ourselves since he is jealous of it. Let us say with Elijah—"I am very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." May our lives, and conduct, and conversation prove that we are jealous of our hearts lest they should once depart from him; and may we smite with stern and unrelenting hand every sin and every thought of pride that might touch the glory of our gracious God; living to him as living before a jealous God.

#### IV. In the highest sense, THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Let me only hint, that human jealousy, although it will exercise itself over man's reputation, rights, and honor, hath one particularly tender place: jealousy guardeth, like an armed man, the marriage-covenant. A suspicion here is horrible. Even good old Jacob, when he came to die, could not look upon his son Reuben without remembering his offense. "He went up to my couch," said the old man—and, as if the remembrance was too painful for him, he hurried on from Reuben to the next. The Lord has been graciously pleased to say of his people, "I am married unto you." The covenant of grace is a marriage-covenant, and Christ's Church has become his spouse. It is here that God's jealousy is peculiarly liable to take fire. Men cannot be God's favourites without being the subjects of his watchfulness and jealousy: that which might be looked over in another will be chastened in a member of Christ. As a husband is jealous of his honor, so is the Lord Jesus much concerned for the purity of his Church.

The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I now speak, is very jealous of your love, O believer. Did he not choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did he not buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that he could not stop in heaven without you; he would sooner die than that you should perish; he stripped himself to nakedness that he might clothe you with beauty; he

bowed his face to shame and spitting that he might lift you up to honor and glory, and he cannot endure that you should love the world, and the things of the world. His love is strong as death towards you, and therefore will be cruel as the grave. He will be as a cruel one towards you if you do not love him with a perfect heart. He will take away that husband; he will smite that child; he will bring you from riches to poverty, from health to sickness, even to the gates of the grave, because he loves you so much that he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and him. Be careful Christians, you that are married to Christ; remember, you are married to a jealous husband.

He is very jealous of your trust. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He will not endure that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we come up from the wilderness leaning upon our Beloved, then is our Beloved glad, but when we go down to the wilderness leaning on some other arm; when we trust in our own wisdom or the wisdom of a friend—worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, he is angry, and will smite us with heavy blows that he may bring us to himself.

He is also very jealous of our company. It were well if a Christian could see nothing but Christ. When the wife of a Persian noble had been invited to the coronation of Darius, the question was asked of her by her husband—"Did you not think the king a most beautiful man?" and her answer was—"I cared not to look at the king; my eyes are for my husband only, for my heart is his." The Christian should say the same. There is nothing beneath the spacious arch of heaven comparable to Christ: there should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find solace in our comforts, to be loving this evil world, this is vexing to our jealous Lord. Do you not believe that nine out of ten of the troubles and pains of believers are the result of their love to some other person than Christ? Nail me to thy cross, thou bleeding Savior! Put thy thorn-crown upon my head to be a hedge to keep my thoughts within its bound! O for a fire to burn up all my wandering loves. O for a seal to stamp the name of my Beloved indelibly upon my heart! O love divine expel from me all carnal worldly loves, and fill me with thyself!

Dear friends, let this jealousy which should keep us near to Christ be also a comfort to us, for if we be married to Christ, and he be jealous of us, depend upon it this jealous husband will let none touch his spouse. Joel tells us that the Lord is jealous for his land, and Zechariah utters the word of the Lord, "I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy;" and then he declares that he will punish the heathen. And will he not avenge his own elect who cry unto him day and night? There is not a hard word spoken but the Lord shall avenge it! There is not a single deed done against us, but the strong hand of him who once died but now lives for us, shall take terrible vengeance upon all his adversaries. I am not afraid for the Church of God! I tremble not for the cause of God! Our jealous Husband will never let his Church be in danger, and if any smite her he will give them double for every blow. The gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church, but she shall prevail against the gates of hell. Her jealous Husband shall roll away her shame; her reproach shall be forgotten; her glory shall be fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, for he that is jealous of himself is jealous for her fair fame. The subject is large and deep; let us prove that we understand it, by henceforth walking very carefully; and if any say "Why are you so precise?" let this be our answer—"I serve a jealous God."

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## **Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord Our Righteousness**

This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.  
- Jeremiah 23:6

Man by the fall sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature, and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned; he was therefore no

longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command; he therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he committed, and in that which he omitted, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked. Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the fall for his people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command, that he has removed by his precious blood. His agony and bloody sweat have for ever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by his one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in his flesh. He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Still it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eye of God without sin. But it was required of man that he should actually keep the command. It was not enough that he did not break it, or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He must keep it, he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. How is this necessity supplied? Man must have a righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience, or else God cannot reward him. Should He give heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the law; that were to give the reward where the service is not done, and that before God would be an act which might impeach his justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the law, and reward him for so doing? Surely, my brethren, none of you are so besotted as to think that this righteousness can be wrought out by yourselves. You must despair of ever being able to keep the law perfectly. Each day you sin. Since you have passed from death unto life, the old Adam still struggles for dominion within you. And by the force of the lusts of the flesh you are brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members. The good you would do, you do not, and the evil you would not, that you too often do. Some have thought the works of the Holy Spirit in us would give us a righteousness in which we might stand. I am sure, my brethren, we would not say a word derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is divine. But we hold it to be a great cardinal point in divinity that the work of the Spirit never meant to supplant the merits of the Son. We could not depreciate the Lord Jesus Christ in order to exalt the office of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that each particular branch of the divine salvation which was espoused by the persons of the Trinity has been carried out by each one to perfection. Now as we are accepted in

the Beloved, it must be by a something that the Beloved did; as we are justified in Christ it must be by a something not that the Spirit has done, but which Christ has done. We must believe, then,—for there is no other alternative—that the righteousness in which we must be clothed, and through which we must be accepted, and by which we are made meet to inherit eternal life, can be no other than the work of Jesus Christ. We, therefore, assert, believing that Scripture fully warrants us, that the life of Christ constitutes the righteousness in which his people are to be clothed. His death washed away their sins, his life covered them from head to foot; his death the sneaky to God, his life was the gift to man, by which man satisfies the demands of the law. Herein the law is honored and the soul is accepted. I find that many young Christians who are very clear about being saved by the merits of Christ's death, do not seem to understand the merits of his life. Remember, young believers, that from the first moment when Christ did lie in the cradle until the time when he ascended up on high, he was at work for his people; and from the moment when he was seen in Mary's arms, till the instant when in the arms of death he "bowed his head and gave up the ghost," he was at work for your salvation and mine. He completed the work of obedience in his life, and said to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Then he completed the work of atonement in his death, and knowing that all things were accomplished, he cried, "It is finished." He was through his life spinning the web for making the royal garment, and in his death he dipped that garment in his blood. In his life he was gathering together the precious gold, in his death he hammered it out to make for us a garment which is of wrought gold. You have as much to thank Christ for loving as for dying, and you should be as reverently and devoutly grateful for his spotless life as for his terrible and fearful death. The text speaking of Christ, the son of David, the branch out of the root of Jesse, styles him **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Having introduced the doctrine of imputed righteousness, I proofed to map out my subject. First, by way of affirmation; we say of the text—it is so—Christ is the Lord or righteousness; secondly, I shall exhort you to do him homage; let us call him so: for this is the name whereby he shall be called; and thirdly, I shall appeal to your gratitude; let us wonder at the reigning grace, which has caused us to fulfill the promise, for have been

sweetly compelled to call him the Lord our righteousness.

First, then, He is so. Jesus Christ is the Lord our righteousness. There are but three words, "JEHOVAH"—for so it is in the original,—"OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He is Jehovah. Read that verse, and you will clearly perceive that the Messiah of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour of the Gentiles, is certainly Jehovah. He hath the incommunicable title of the Most High God. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Oh, ye Arians and Socinians, who monstrously deny the Lord who bought you and put him to open shame by denying his divinity, read you that verse and let your blasphemous tongues be silent, and let your obdurate hearts melt in penitence because ye have so foully sinned against him. He is Jehovah, or, mark you, the whole of God's word is false, and there is no noun for a sinner's hope. We know, and this day we testify in his name, that the very Christ who did lie in the manger as an infant was infinite even then; that he who cried, cried for very pain as a child, was nevertheless saluted at that very moment as God by the songs of the creatures that his hands had made. He who walked in pain over the flinty acres of Palestine, was at the same time possessor of heaven and earth. He who had not where to lay his head, and was despised and rejected of men, was at the same instant God over all, blessed for evermore. He that sweat great drops of blood did bear the earth upon his shoulders. He who was flagellated in Pilate's hall was adored by spirits of the just made perfect. He who did hang upon the tree had the oration hanging upon him. He who died on the cross was the ever living, the everlasting One. As a man he died, as God he lives. As Mary's son he bled, as the son of the Eternal God he had the sway and the dominion over all the world. In nature Christ proves himself to be universal God. Without him was not anything made that was made. By him all things consist. Who less than God could make the heavens and the earth? Bow before him, bow before him, for he made you, and should not the creatures acknowledge their Creator?

Providence attests his Godhead. He upholdeth all things by the word of

his power Creatures that are animate have their breath from his nostrils; inanimate creatures that are strong and mighty stand only by his strength. He can say concerning the earth, "I bear the pillars thereof." In the deep foundations of the sea his power is felt, and in the towering arches of the starry heavens his might is recognized to the full. And as for Grace, we claim for Christ that he is Jehovah in the great kingdom of his grace. Who less than God could have carried your sins and mine and cast them all away? Who less than God could have interposed to deliver us from the jaws of hell's lions, and bring us up from the pit, having found a ransom? On whom less than God could we rely to keep us from the innumerable temptations that beset us? How can he be less than God, when he says, "Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world?" How could he be omnipresent if he were not God! How could he hear our prayers, the prayers of millions, scattered through the leagues of earth, and attend to them all, and give acceptance to all, if he were not infinite in understanding and infinite in merit? How were this if he were less than God? Let Atheists scoff, let Deists sneer, let the vain Socinian boast, let the Arian lift up his puny voice, but we will glory in this fact, that he that bought us with his blood is Jehovah—very God of very God. At his footstool we bow and pay him the very homage that we pay to his Father and to the Spirit.

"Blessings more than we can give,  
Be Lord for ever thine."

But the text speaks about righteousness too—"Jehovah our righteousness." And he is so. Christ in his life was so righteous, that we may say of the life, taken as a vehicle, that it is righteousness itself. Christ is the law incarnate Understand me. He lived out the law of God to the very full, and while you see God's precepts written in fire on Sinai's brow, you see them written in flesh in the person of Christ.

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in thy word,  
But in thy life the law appears  
Drawn out in living characters."

He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From his eye

there never flashed the fire of unhallowed anger. On his lip there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of his reins no fault was hidden. In his understanding was no defect; in his judgment no error. In his miracles there was no ostentation. In him there was indeed no guile. His powers being ruled by his understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection's very self, so that never was there any flaw of omission or stain of commission. The law consists in this first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." He did so. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. Never man spent himself as he did. Hunger and thirst and nakedness were nothing to him, nor death itself if he might so be baptised with the baptism wherewith he must be baptized, and drink the cup which his Father had set before him. The law consists also in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In all he did, and in all he suffered he more than fulfilled the precept, for "he saved others himself he could not save." He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving. He loved man better than his own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of hell and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls his Father gave him should be cast away. He carried out the law, then, I say to the very letter he spelt out its mystic syllables, and verily he magnified it, and made it honorable. He loved the Lord his God, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and he loved his neighbors as himself. Jesus Christ was righteousness impersonated. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" he might well say. One thousand eight hundred years have passed since then, and blasphemy itself has not been able to charge him with a fault. Strange as it may appear, the most perverted judges have nevertheless acknowledged the awful dignity of his character. They have railed at his miracles; they have denied his Godhead; but his righteous character I know not that they have dared to impugn. They have hatched jokes about his generation; they have made his poverty a jest, and his death has been the theme of ribald song; but his life has staggered even the most unbelieving, and made the careless wonder how such a character could have been conceived even if it be a fiction, and much more, how it could have been executed if it be a fact. No one that I know of has dared to charge Christ with unrighteousness to man, or with a want of



devotedness to God. See then, it is so. We do not stay to prove his righteousness any more than we did to prove his Godhead. The day is coming when men shall acknowledge him to be Jehovah, and when looking upon all his life while he was incarnate here, they shall be compelled to say that his life was righteousness itself. The pith, however, of the title, lies in the little word "our,"—"Jehovah our righteousness." This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on him—this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of his immaculate righteousness. This is the saved rivet by which our souls are joined to him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul toucheth him, and he becometh to us all in all, "Jehovah our Righteousness"

You will now observe that there is a most precious doctrine unfolded in this title of our Lord and Saviour. I think we may take it thus: When we believe in Christ, by faith we receive our justification. As the merit of his blood takes away our sin, so the merit of his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ here our works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves,—as though our hands had been bony at the loom, and though the fabric and the stuff which have been worked up into the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, had been grown in our own fields. God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though his life had been our life—and accepts, blesses, and rewards us as though all that he did had been done by us, his believing people. Accordingly, if you will turn to the thirty-third chapter of this same prophet Jeremiah, and look at the sixteenth verse, you will see it written, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." I know that Socinus in his day used to call this an execrable, detestable, and licentious doctrine: probably it was, because he was an execrable, detestable, and licentious man. Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other persons; they are so well acquainted with their own characters, and so suspicious of themselves, that they think it best, before another can express the suspicion, to attach the very same accusation to someone else. Now we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not execrable, but most delightful, that it is not abominable, but Godlike, that it is not licentious, but holy:

and let others say what they will of it, we will repeat the praise which we have been singing,—

"Jesus, thy perfect righteousness  
My beauty is, my glorious dress;"

and we will say when all things shall be tried by fire, for we feel confident that—

"Bold shall we stand in that great day,  
For who ought to our charge shall lay,"

when we are clothed with the righteousness divine?

Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the righteousness of Christ, lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of Scripture. How did we fall, my brethren? We fell by the imputation of Adam's sin to us. Adam was our federal head; he represented us; and when he sinned, we sinned representatively in him, and what he did was imputed to us. You say that you never agreed to the imputation. Nay, but I would not have you say thus, for as by representation we fell, it is by the representative system that we rise. The angels fell personally and individually, and they never rise, but we fell in another, and we have therefore the power given by divine grace to rise in another. The root of the fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed; thus we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine, and I ask you—How are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has been offered for sin by Christ? Very well then, but that satisfaction must be imputed to them, or else how is God just in giving to them the results of the death of another, unless that death of the other be fire? of all imputed to them? When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to an believing souls, we do not hold forth an exceptional theory, but we expound a grand truth, which is so consistent with the theory of the fall and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the gospel clear. I think it was this doctrine which Martin Luther called the article of standing or falling of the Church. I find a passage in his works which seems to me to refer to this doctrine rather than to justification by faith. He ought certainly to

have said, "Justification by faith is the doctrine of standing or falling of the Church." But in Luther's mind, imputed righteousness we, so interwoven with justification by faith, that he could not see any distinction between the two. And I must confess, in trying to observe a difference, I do not see much. I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil, but then imputed righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it; and if you dig down through the great truth of a sinners being justified by faith in Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that simple doctrine rests.

And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—"The Lord our righteousness." Brethren, the Law-giver has himself obeyed the law. Do you not think that his obedience will be sufficient? Jehovah has himself become man that so he may do man's work: think you that he has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—he who girds the angels that excel in strength—has taken upon him the form of a servant that he may become obedient: think you that his service will be incomplete? Let the fact that the Saviour is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be ye bold. Be ye very courageous. Face heaven, and earth, and hell with the challenge of the apostle. "Who shall say anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Look back upon your past sins, look upon your present infirmities, and all your future errors, and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch your cheek. You stand before God to-day robed in your Saviour's garments, "with his spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One." Not Adam when he walked in Eden's bowers was more accepted than you are,—not more pleasing to the eye of the all-judging, the sin-hating God than you are if clothed in Jesus' righteousness and sprinkled with his blood. You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness; your garments are divine. He had a robe complete, it is true, but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete, but heaven has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of this great truth and boast exceedingly, and glory in your God; and let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul: "Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness."

You will remember that in Scripture, Christ's righteousness is compared to fair white linen; then I am, if I wear it, without spot. It is compared to wrought gold; then I am, if I wear it, dignified and beautiful, and worthy to sit at the wedding feast of the King of kings. It is compared, in the parable of the prodigal son, to the best robe; then I wear a better robe than angels have, full they have not the best; but I, poor prodigal, once clothed in rage, companion to the nobility of the sty,—I, fresh from the husks that swine do eat, am nevertheless clothed in the best robe, and am so accepted in the Beloved.

Moreover, it is also everlasting righteousness. Oh! this is, perhaps, the fairest point of it—that the robe be shall never be worn out; no thread of it shall ever give way. It shall never hang in tatters upon the sinner's back. He shall live, and even though it were a Methusaleh's life, the robe shall be as if it were woven yesterday. He shall pass through the stream of death, and the black stream shall not foul it. He shall climb the hills of heaven, and the angels shall wonder what this whiteness is which the sinner wears, and think that some new star is coming up from earth to thine in heaven. He shall wear it among principalities and powers, and find himself no whit inferior to them all. Cherubic garments and seraphic mantles shall not be so lordly so priestly, so divine, as this robe of righteousness this everlasting perfection which Christ has wrought out, and brought in and given to all his people. Glory unto thee, O Jesus, glory unto thee! Unto thee be hallels for ever; Hallelu—jah! Thou art you —"Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness."

II. Having thus expounded and vindicated this title of our Saviour, I would now APPEAL TO YOUR FAITH.

Let us call him so. "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." Let us call him by this great name, which the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath named. Let us call him—poor sinners!—even we, who are today smitten down with grief on account of sin. I want this text to be fulfilled in your ears and in your case to-day. You are guilty. Your own conscience acknowledges that the law condemns you, and you dread the penalty. Soul! he that trusteth Christ Jesus is saved, and he that believeth on him is not condemned. To every trustful spirit Christ is "the Lord our righteousness." Call him so, I pray thee. "I have no good thing of

my own," sayest thou? Here is every good thing in him. "I have broken the law," sayest thou? There is his blood for thee. Believe in him, he will wash thee. "But then I have not kept the law. "There is his keeping of the law for thee. Take it, sinner, take it. Believe on him. "Oh, but I dare not," saith one. Do him the honor to dare it. "Oh, but it seems impossible." Honour him by believing the impossibility then. "Oh, but how can he save such a wretch as I am?" Soul! Christ is glorified in saving wretches. As I told you the other day, Christ cures incurable sinners; so I say now he accepts unacceptable sinners. He receives sinners that think they are not fit to be received. Only do thou trust him and say, "He shall be my righteousness to-day." "But suppose I should do it and be presumptuous? It is impossible. He bids you, he commands you. Let that be your warrant. "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." If you cannot say it with a loud voice, yet with the trembling silence of your soul let heaven hear it. Yes, Jesus, "All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin, yet I dare with fervent venture of these quivering lips to call thee, and to call upon thee now, as the Lord my righteousness."

And you who have passed from a state of trembling hope into that of lively faith, I beseech you call him so. Let your faith say, as you see him suffering, bleeding, dying, "Thus my sins were washed away." But let not your faith stay there. As you see him sweating, toiling, living a self-denying laborious life, say, "Thus the law was kept for me." Come up to the foot of Sinai now, and if you see its lightnings flash, and hear its thunders roar, be brave, and say like Moses, "I will ascend above those thunders, I will stand enwrapped within the storm-cloud, and I will talk with God, for I have no cause for fear, there are no thunderbolts for me; for me no lightning flash can spend its arrow, I am perfectly, completely justified in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ." Say that, child of God! Does yesterday's sin make thee stammer? In the teeth of all thy sins believe that he is thy righteousness still. Thy good works do not improve his righteousness; thy bad works do not sully it. This is a robe which thy best deeds cannot mend and thy worst deeds cannot mar. Thou standest in him, not in thyself. Whatever, then, thy doubts and fears may have been, do now, poor troubled, distressed, distracted believer, say again, "Yes, he is the Lord my righteousness."

And some of us can say it yet better than that: for we can say it not merely by faith, but by fruition. We remember well the day when we first called him "the Lord our righteousness." Oh, the peace it brought, the joy, the gladness, the transport! Since then we have proved it to be true, for we have had privileges we could not have had if he had not been our righteousness. We have had the privilege of reconciliation with God; and He could not be reconciled to one that had not a perfect righteousness, we have had access with boldness to God himself, and He would never have suffered us to have access if we had not worn our brother's garments. We have had adoption into the family, and the Spirit of adoption, and God could not have adopted into his family any but righteous ones. How should the righteous Father be God of an unrighteous family? Our prayers have been heard, and we have had gracious answers, and that could not have been—for he could not heal the prayer of the wicked; he could not have heard us—if it had not been that he seemed to hear Christ crying through us, and to have seen Christ's merits in us. And therefore granted the desire of our hearts. We have had in daily rich and sweet experience such manifestations of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, that to us it is a matter of fact as well as a matter of faith, a matter of praise as well as a matter of profession, that Jesus Christ is "the Lord our righteousness."

Brethren, your divinity must be experimental or it will not profit you. I would not give a straw for your theology if you learned it merely out of a pollee, or out of a system of man's teaching. No, no, we must prove these things to be true in our lives. I can say it, and I must say it—the testimony is not egotistical—I know there is a comfort in the faith of Christ's imputed righteousness which no other doctrine can yield. There is something that a man can sleep on and wake on, can live on and die on, in the firm conviction that he is received by God as though the deeds of Christ were his deeds, and the righteousness of Christ his righteousness. Take away his filthy garments from him, set a fair mitre on his head, array him in fine linen. O, Joshua, priest of the Most High, thou man greatly beloved, come thou forth now in thy garments and offer acceptable sacrifice, seeing, thou wearest the garments of Jesus, our great High Priest." Let us, then, call upon his name and extol him in our worship as "the Lord our righteousness."

And now let the whole universal Church of Christ, in one glad song, call Jesus Christ the Lord their righteousness. Wake up, ye isles of the sea; shout, thou wilderness that Kedar doth inhabit; ye people of God, scattered and peeled, banished among the heathen, vexed with the filthy conversation of the idolaters, from your huts, from the destitute places that ye inhabit, sing, "The Lord our righteousness!" Let no heir of heaven be silent at this hour; let every soul be stirred. Though tempest-tossed and half a wreck, yet, mariner in Christ, say, "Thou art the Lord my righteousness." Though cast down into the deep dungeon, thou despairing soul, yet say, "The Lord my righteousness." Let no one of the entire believing family keel; back his song but together let us sing, "The Lord our righteousness." And you, ye spirits that walk in white, ye glorious ones that "day without night circle his throne rejoicing," ye saints that ere his day beheld him, and died, not having received the promise, but having beheld it afar off,—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and Jephthah, and David, and Solomon, and all the mighty host, sing ye, sing ye, sing ye unto him to-day; and let this be the summit of your song, "The Lord our righteousness." Our spirit bows before him now. Sweet fellowship beyond the stream! Me clasp our hands with those that went before; and while the cherubim can only say, "Holy, holy, holy; he is righteous," we lift up a higher note, and say, "yes, thrice holy, but the Lord our righteousness is he." Let none, then, of all his saints in heaven and in earth, refuse to call him "the Lord our righteousness"

III. I now conclude, in the third place, by appealing to your GRATITUDE. Let us admire that wonderful and reigning grace which has led you and me to call him, "The Lord our righteousness."

When I look back some ten or twelve years upon a foolish boy, who cared little for the things of God, who was burdened with an awful sense of sin, and thought that he never could be pardoned—clad so often driven to the borders of despair that he was fain to make away with his own life, because he thought there was no happiness on earth for him—I can only say for my own self. O the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that ever I should stand not only conscious that he is the Lord my righteousness, but to preach him to you! O God, thou hast done wonderful things! Thou

saidst by the mouth of Jeremy, "This is the name whereby he shall be called." I call him so this day from my inmost soul. Jesus of Nazareth! suffering man! glorious God! thou art the Lord my righteousness! If I were to pass this question round these galleries, and down below oh, what hundreds of responses would there be from such as joyously obey the summons of gratitude! And among those about to be added to the Church (I am sure they would permit me to tell, for the honor of the glorious grace of God), there are very many who are special instances of that grace which has sweetly constrained them to call Christ their righteousness. Some of them, according to their own concession before us at the Church meeting, were not only revelling in drunkenness, one until he had well nigh drank away his reason by thirty years of habitual intoxication; but others of them were unclean and unchaste, till they had rioted in debauchery, and gone to the utmost lengths of crime. There be many in this place to-day, who would not, though they would blush for the past, refuse to tell, to the honor of redeeming grace, that once they had committed every crime in the catalogue except murder; and if they have not committed that, it was nothing but the sovereign grace of God that restrained them. Some members of this Church have sinned in every part of the world—have sinned in every quarter of the globe—have committed every form of lust and vice—and if you had asked them ten years ago whether they should ever be in a place of worship, they would have repelled with an oath what they would have thought an insult, and would have cursed you for supposing that they should so degrade themselves as to profess the faith of Christ. Brothers and sisters, I should not be surprised if you were to stand up now and say, "Yes, still Jehovah Jesus is the Lord our righteousness." Oh!—

"Wonders of grace to God belong;  
Repeat his mercies in your song."

Who would have thought that the lip of the blasphemer should fulfill that very prophecy—that the tongue that could scarce move without an oath should, nevertheless, glorify Christ,—that the heart that was black with accumulated lust,—the mouth which must have become a very sepulcher, breathing forth deadly miasma, has now become a place for song, and the heart a house for music, while heart and tongue say, "Yes, he is the Lord



my righteousness this very day!"

It would be a wonder if God should vow that the devils should yet sing his praise; but I do not think it would be a greater wonder than when he makes some of us sing his glorious praise. Brethren, you and I know that there is nothing in freewill doctrine; for in our case, at any rate, it was not true. Left to ourselves, where should we have been? What could Arminianism have done for us? Oh, no! it was irresistible grace that brought us to call him "the Lord our righteousness." It was that divine shall that broke in pieces our will. It was that strong arm that broke the iron sinew of our proud neck, and made us bow, even us, who would not have this man to reign over us. It was his finger that opened the blind eye; for once we could see now beauty in him. It was his breath that thawed our icy heart; for once we felt no love to him; -

"But now, subdued by sovereign grace,  
Our spirit longs for his embrace;  
Our beauty this our glorious dress,  
Jesus the Lord our righteousness."

And this shall be our glory here, and our song forever - "The Lord our righteousness."

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## **Jehovah-Shammah: A Glorious Name For The New Year**

The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there [or in the Hebrew Jehovah-shammah]. - Ezekiel 48:35

These words may be used as a test as well as a text. They may serve for examination as well as consolation, and at the beginning of a year they

may fulfill this useful double purpose. In any case they are full of marrow and fatness to those whose spiritual taste is purified. It is esteemed by the prophet to be the highest blessing that could come upon a city that its name should be, "JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, The Lord is there." Even Jerusalem, in its best estate, would have this for its crowning blessing: nothing could exceed this. Do we reckon the presence of the Lord to be the greatest of blessings? If in any gathering, even of the humblest people, the Lord God is known to be present in a peculiarly gracious manner, should we make a point of being there? Very much depends upon our answer to these queries.

Doubtless many would be greatly pleased if there were no God at all; for in their hearts they say, "No God." God is not to them a father, a friend, a trust, a treasure. If they were to speak from their hearts, and could hope for a satisfactory answer, they would ask, "Whither can I flee from his presence?" If a spot could be found wherein there would be no God, what a fine building speculation might be made there! Millions would emigrate to "No God's land," and would feel at ease as soon as they trod its godless shore. There they could do just as they liked, without fear of future reckoning. Now, friend, if you would fain escape from the presence of God, your state is clearly revealed by that fact. There can be no heaven for you; for heaven is where the Lord's presence is fullness of joy. If you could be happy to be far off from God, I must tell you what your fate will be. You are now going away from God in your heart and desire, and at last the great Judge of all will say to you, "Depart, ye cursed"; and you will then be driven from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

I know that there is a company who can truly say that they feel only happy when they are conscious that God is with them. The place where they meet with the Lord is very dear and precious to them, because of his unveilings. The memory of holy convocations is sweet, because the Lord was among them. They would not care to go where God is not. If there were a place forsaken of God, however gay and full of merriment men might think it, they would not be found among its guests. Where we cannot enjoy God's company we will not go. Our motto is: "With God, anywhere. Without God, nowhere." In him we live, and move, and have

our being; and, therefore, it would be death to us to be apart from God. Without God we should be without hope. Ah, my dear friend! whatever your difficulties, and trials, and sorrows, all is well with you if God is your delight, and his presence your joy. But, however high your temporal enjoyments may rise, it is all wrong with you if you can rest away from the God of grace. The child must be in a sad state of heart when he does not care to have his father's approving smile. Things must be terribly wrong with any creature when it can be content to walk contrary to its Creator. Nothing but the corruption of the heart could permit any man to be at ease away from God.

Will you permit these thoughts to saturate you for a little space? I have spoken them with the desire that each one of us may ask himself, "Is the presence of God my delight?" If so, I am his, and he will be with me. On the contrary, Is the presence of God a matter of indifference, or even of dread? Then my condition is one of guilt, disease, and danger. May the Lord, of his infinite mercy, set me right!

This much may stand as a preface; but it must not be treated as most prefaces are, namely, left unread, or glanced over and forgotten. I pray you, carry it with you all along.

I. Now kindly notice that, according to our text, **THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE GLORY OF THE MOST GLORIOUS PLACE**. The prophet Ezekiel has been telling us many remarkable things which I shall not attempt to explain to you; and my chief reason for not doing so is the fact that I do not understand them. If I could open up every dark saying, it is not just now the time to go into an explanation of all the sublime mysteries which were seen by the eagle eye of Ezekiel, for I seek present, practical edification; and this we can gain in an easier way. It is clear from the text, that when God shall bless his ancient people, and restore them to their land, and the temple shall be rebuilt, and all the glory of the latter days shall arrive, this will still be the peculiar glory of it all, that "the Lord is there." The prophet works up a climax, and closes his book of prophecy with these glorious words, "the Lord is there."

What a glorious state this world was in at the very first, in the age of Paradise, for the Lord was there! Our glorious Creator, having taken the

first days of the week to make the world, and fit it up for man, did not bring forward his dear child until the house was built and furnished, and supplied for his use and happiness. He did not put him in the garden to dress it till the roses were blooming, and the fruits were ripe. When the table was furnished he introduced the guest, by saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The Lord put man, not in an unreclaimed plot of soil, where he must hunger till he could produce a harvest; but into an Eden of delights, where he was at home, with creatures of every sort to attend him. He had not to water dry lands, nor need he thirst himself, for four rivers flowed through his royal domain, rippling over sands of gold. I might say much of that fair garden of innocence and bliss, but the best thing I could say would be the Lord was there. "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day," and communed with man; and man, being innocent, held high converse with his condescending Maker. The topstone of the bliss of Paradise was this all-comprehending privilege—the Lord is there."

Alas! that has vanished. Withered are the bowers of Eden: the trail of the serpent is over all landscapes, however fair. Yet days of mercy came, and God's saints in divers places found choice spots where they could converse with heaven. In the first days our gracious God spake with his chosen ones in their daily walk, as Enoch; or under the oak, as Abraham; or by the brook, as Jacob; or before the bush, as Moses; or near the city wall, as Joshua. Wherever it might be, the place became to them the gate of heaven, for the Lord was there. Amid a torrent of sin and sorrow, you may cross the stream of time upon the stepping-stones of the places marked "JEVOHAH-SHAMMAH. The Lord's delights were with the sons of men, and to them nothing brought such bliss as to find that still the Lord would be mindful of man, and visit him.

In the days when God had called out unto himself a chosen nation, he revealed himself at Sinai, when the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." Well might he feel a holy awe, for the Lord was there. I will not dwell upon the glory of the tabernacle that was pitched in the wilderness, with its costly furniture and its instructive rites, for after all, the glory of the tabernacle was that the Lord was there. A bright light shone between the wings of the

cherubim, and so the Psalmist in after days spake unto the Lord saying, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims shine forth." Above the sacred tent was the pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day—an emblem of the constant presence of God, for all through the wilderness his glorious marchings were in the center of the armies of his Israel. The desert sand glowed with the blaze of the present Deity. No spot on earth was so like to heaven's high courts as that wilderness wherein there was no way, wherein the Lord himself led his people like a flock. Holy was Horeb, for the Lord was there. Then were the days of Israel's espousals, for the Most High tabernacled among her tribes, and made them "a people near unto him."

In Canaan itself the days of sorrow came when the nation went after other gods, and the Lord became a stranger in the land. When he returned, and delivered his people by the judges, then the nations knew that Israel could not be trampled on, for the Lord was there. This was the glory of David's reign. Then the Lord made bare his arm, and the enemies of his chosen were driven like snow from the bleak sides of Salmon, when the rough blast carries it away. This was the shout of the joyful people, "The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge." Never were the hills of Judah more fruitful, nor the vales of Sharon more peaceful, nor the homes of Israel more restful, nor the sons of Zion more valiant, than when to the harp of David the song was raised, "They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord shall dwell in it for ever."

You remember how, in after ages, when Solomon was crowned and his reign of peace had been inaugurated, he built for God a temple adorned with gold and precious stones, and all manner of cunning, work of the artificer; but it was not that glittering roof, it was not those massive pillars of brass in the forefront, it was not the hecatombs of bullocks whose blood was poured forth at the altar, which were the glory of the temple on Mount Zion. Beautiful for situation, it was the joy of the whole earth; but its glory lay in this—"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." The excellence of the temple was seen when, on the opening day, the Lord revealed himself,

and the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." Little remains for man to do when in very deed the Lord dwells in the midst of his saints. Apart from priests and ceremonies, that place is sacred wherein the Lord Most High hath his abode. Say of any place "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there," and be it tent or temple, you have spoken glorious things of it.

I almost tremble while I remind you of the truest temple of God—the body of our Lord. The nearest approach of Godhead to our manhood was when there was found, wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that child who was born, that Son who was given whose name was called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." As for thee, O Bethlehem favored above all the towns of earth, out of thee he came, who is Immanuel, God with us! Verily thy name is Jehovah-shammah. All along, through thirty years and more of holy labor, ending in a shameful death, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. In the gloom of Gethsemane, among those sombre olives, when Jesus bowed, and in his prayer sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground, he was "seen of angels" as the Son of God bearing human sin. Speak of Gethsemane, and we tell you God was there. Before Herod, and Pilate, and Caiaphas, and on the cross—the Lord was there. Though in a sense there was the hiding of God, and Jesus cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet in the deepest sense Jehovah was there, bruising the great sacrifice. The thick darkness made a veil for the Lord of glory, and behind it he that made all things bowed his head and said, "It is finished." God was in Christ Jesus on the cross, and we, beholding him, feel that we have seen the Father. O Calvary, we say of thee, "The Lord is there."

Here I might fitly close, for we can mount no higher; but yet we could not afford to leave out those other dwellings of the Invisible Spirit, who still by his presence makes holy places even in this unholy world. We have to remind you that God is the glory of the most glorious living thing that has been on the face of the earth since our Lord was here. And what is that? I answer, Jesus is gone: the prophets are gone; and we have no temple, no human priest, no material holy of holies.

Jesus, where'er thy people meet,  
There they behold thy mercy-seat:  
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

And yet there is a special place where God dwells among men, and that is in his church. He has but one—one church, chosen by eternal election, redeemed by precious blood, called out by the Holy Ghost, and quickened into newness of life—this as a whole is the dwelling place of the covenant God. Because God is in this church, therefore the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. "The Lord is there" might be said of the church in all ages. I have seen the crypts and underground chapels of the catacombs, and it made one feel that they were glorious places, when we remembered that the Lord God was there, by his Spirit, with his suffering people. When holy hymn and psalm and solemn prayer went up from the very bowels of the earth, from men who were hunted to the death by their foes—the Lord was there. In those dreary excavations, unvisited by sunlight and wholesome air, God was as he was not in the palaces of kings, and is not in the cathedrals of priests. In this land of ours, when a few people met together, here and there, to hear the gospel and to worship, they made cottages, caves, and hollows in the woods, to be holiness unto the Lord." Ay, and when crowds met beneath your gospel oaks, or gathered together by the hillside to listen to the pure word of grace, the Lord was there, and souls were saved and sanctified. When the Puritans solemnly conversed together of the things of God, and held their little conventicles for fear of their adversaries—God was there. On Scotland's bleak moors and mosses, when the covenanters gathered in the darkness and the storm, for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons—God was there. Those who wrote in those days tell us that they never knew such seasons in days of peace as they enjoyed among the hills, amid the heather, or by the brookside; for Jehovah-shammah, the Lord was there. And so onward, to this very day, wheresoever the chosen of God lift up holy hands and worship him, whether it be in cathedral or in barn, beneath the blue sky or beneath a thatched roof, anywhere and everywhere when the heart is right, and the soul adores the living Lord, this is the special glory of the place, that Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there."

Flying forward, as with a dove's wing, to the future that is drawing near, we bethink us of the truth that there is to be a millennial age—a time of glory, and peace, and joy, and truth, and righteousness. But what is to be the glory of it? Why this, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there!" The Lord Jesus Christ will come, and begin his personal reign on earth among his ancients. In like manner as he went up into heaven, and the disciples saw him, so will he descend a second time, to be seen here among men; and his glorious presence shall fashion the golden age, the thousand years of peace. Then shall the nations shout "The Lord is come." What hallelujahs will then rise to heaven! Welcome, welcome, son of God! How will all his faithful ones rejoice with joy unspeakable, and sing and sing again; for now the day of their reward has come, and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! In all the glory of the latter days everything is wrapped up in this one word, "the Lord is there."

"Oh, come, thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by thine advent here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight!  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!"

Up yonder, whither many of our beloved ones have already gone: up yonder, within that gate of pearl where eye cannot as yet see. What is it that makes heaven", with all its supreme delights? Not harps of angels, nor blaze of seraphim; but this one fact, "the Lord is there." What must it be to be with God? O soul that loves him, what will your fullness of pleasure be when you shall dwell with him for whom your soul is hungering and thirsting! What joy to be "for ever with the Lord"! This perfect bliss may be ours this very day. We little know how near we are to our glorification with our Lord. The veil is very thin that parts the sanctified from the glorified.

One gentle sigh, the soul awakes:  
We scarce can say 'He's gone,'  
Before the ransomed spirit takes  
Its mansion near the throne."



The joy and glory of those divine mansions is that "the Lord is there." Heaven's loftiest peak shines for ever in this clear light—The Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof: "the Lord is there."

Enough of this. I have proved my point, that the glory of the most glorious place is that "the Lord is there."

II. Suffer me for a few minutes to speak to you upon another point: THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE BEST PRIVILEGE OF HIS CHURCH. It is her glory that "the Lord is there." Note this, and mark it well. Brethren, we as a church have grown to great numbers, and we are not deficient either in gifts or in graces, or in work for our Lord; but let me solemnly remind you always that our chief, our only strength, must always lie in this—"the Lord is there." If the Lord should depart from us, as he has gone from churches which are now apostate, what an abyss opens before us! If he should take his Holy Spirit from us, even as the glory departed from the temple at Jerusalem, then our ruin would become a thing to mention with dread, a case to be quoted for a warning to future generations. O Lord, our God, take not thy flight! Abide with us, we pray thee! Our only hope lies in thy making the place of thy feet glorious among us.

If the Lord be among us, the consequences will be, first, the conservation of true doctrine. The true God is not with a lie: he will not give his countenance to falsehood. Those who preach other than according to his word, abide not under his blessing; but are in great danger of his curse. If any man speak another gospel (which is not another, but there be some that trouble us), God is not with him, and any transient prosperity which he may enjoy, will be blown away as the chaff. God is with those who speak the truth faithfully, hold it devoutly, believe it firmly, and live upon it as their daily bread. May it always, be said of this church, the Lord is there," and therefore they are sound in the faith, reverent towards Holy Scripture, and zealous for the honor of Christ! Trust-deeds and confessions of faith are useful in their way, even as laws are useful to society; but as laws cannot secure obedience to themselves, so articles of belief cannot create faith, or secure honesty; and to men without conscience, they are not worth the paper they are written upon. No subscription to articles can keep out the unscrupulous. Wolves leap into

the fold however carefully you watch the door. The fact is, the most of people say, "Yes, that doctrine is in the creed, and is not to be denied; but you need not preach it. Put it on the shelf as an ornament, and let us hear no more about it." Truth must be written on the heart as well as in the book. If the Lord be among his people, they will cling to the eternal verities, and love the doctrine of the cross, not by force of law, but because divine truth is the life of their souls.

Where God is present, the preservation of purity will be found. The church is nothing if it is not holy. It is worse—it is a den of thieves. Setting the seal of its pestilent example upon evil living, it becomes the servant of Satan, and the destroyer of souls. Who is to keep the church pure? None but God himself. If the Lord is there, holiness will abound, and fruits of the Spirit will be seen on all sides; but if the Lord be once withdrawn, then flesh and blood will rule, and gender towards corruption, after its own manner; and the church will become a synagogue of formalists. Pray, my brethren, continually, that the Lord may dwell in our Zion, to maintain us in all holy obedience and purity of life.

Where God is, there is the constant renewal of vitality. A dead church is a reeking Golgotha, a breeding-place of evils, a home of devils. The tombs may be newly whitewashed, but they are none the less open sepulchres, haunts of unclean spirits. A church all alive is a little heaven, the resort of angels, the temple of the Holy Ghost. In some of our churches everybody seems to be a little colder than everybody else. The members are holy icicles. A general frost has paralyzed everybody; and though some are colder than others, yet all are below zero. There are no flowing rills of refreshment, but everything is bound hard and fast with the frost of indifference. Oh, that the Lord would send forth his wind, and melt the glaciers! Oh, that the Spirit of God would chase winter out of every heart and every church! No human power can keep a church from the frostbite which numbs and kills. Except the Lord be there, growth, life, warmth—are all impossible. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, but cry day and night to him, O Lord, abide with us. Go forth with our armies. Make us to be the living children of the living God"!

When the Lord is there, next, there is continuing power. With God there is power in the ministry, power in prayer, power in all holy work. We may do a vast deal of work, and yet nothing may come of it; and, on the other hand, we may only be able to do comparatively little, and yet great results may flow therefrom: for results depend not on the quantity of the machinery, but on the presence of the Lord.

Do you not all know persons who are not peculiarly gifted, and yet are eminently useful? You do not remark anything about them that is specially noticeable, and yet their whole career enlists attention by its power. Their words tell, for there is character behind them. A consistent life gives force to a plain testimony. It is not so much what is said as who says it? But that is not all: God himself is at the back of the man who is living for him. He causes him to speak in his name, so that none of his words fall to the ground. Is it not said of the godly, "His leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"? This is so with every church where the Lord abides. His presence makes it a power with its children and adherents, a power with the neighborhood, and a power with the age. Its example, its testimony, its effort tells. God uses it, and therefore it answers its end. The power is with God; but the church is the instrument by which that power exercises itself. He uses a living people for the display of living power, and he gives to them both life and power, more and more abundantly. As we desire power with which to labor for God, we must pray that the God of power will remain in our midst.

Furthermore, whenever it can be said of an assembly, "the Lord is there," unity will be created and fostered. Show me a church that quarrels, a church that is split up into cliques, a church that is divided with personal ambitions, contrary doctrines and opposing schemes, and I am sure that the Lord is not there. Where there are envyings, jealousies, suspicions, backbitings, and dislikes, I know that the Holy Dove, who hates confusion, has taken his flight. God is love, and he will only dwell where love reigns. He is the God of peace, and will not endure strife. The children of God should be knit together. It would indeed be a shameful sight should children of his family fall out, and chide, and fight Saints who dwell with God love each other "with a pure heart, fervently." Some professors act as if they hated each other: I may not say, "with a pure

heart," but I will say, "fervently." Where God is present the church is edified in love, and grows up, like a building fitly framed together, to be a holy temple in the Lord. Oh, for more of this unity!

Where the Lord is there is sure to be happiness. What meetings we have when the Lord is here! It is a prayer-meeting; but when you have said that, you have not fully described it, for it is far more. It was an unusual meeting for prayer, for, God being there, every prayer was spoken into his ear, and all the desires and petitions of the saints were prompted by his Holy Spirit. Why, the very room was lit up with the glory of the Lord; and whether we were in heaven or not we could hardly tell. What happy times we have in preaching the word of the Lord, when God's own presence is realized! His paths drop fatness. What joyous seasons we have frequently enjoyed at the communion table! The provision is but bread and wine; but when, by faith, we perceive the real and spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the breaking of the bread we eat his flesh, and in the fruit of the vine we drink his blood. When we have gathered in the Lord's presence we have sung—

"No beams of cedar or of fir  
Can with thy courts on earth compare;  
And here we wait, until thy love  
Raise us to nobler seats above."

At the Master's table I have often been so blest that I would not have exchanged places with Gabriel. The Lord was there: what more could I desire? Joy, delight, rapture, ecstasy—what word shall I use?—all these have waited around the table of fellowship, as musicians at a king's banquet. If God be there, our heaven is there.

III. I shall now close by noticing, in the third place, that since this presence of God is the glory of the most glorious place, and the choice privilege of the most privileged, it is our exceeding joy. **THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS OUR DELIGHT IN EVERY PLACE.**

We will think of our own dear homes. What a delightful family we belong to if it can be said of our house, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there"! Has it a thatched roof and a stone floor? What matters? The father of the

family lives near to God, and his wife rejoices to be his fellow-helper in prayer, while the children grow up to honest toil and honorable service. Assuredly that cottage home is dear to God, and becomes a place where angels come and go. Because God is there, every window looks towards the Celestial City. It is a comfort that we need not go across the road to morning prayer, or step out every evening to worship, for we are priests ourselves, and have a family altar at home, whereon the incense burns both morning and night. We talk not of matins and vespers, but we glory that "the Lord is there" when we bow the knee as a household. What is more delightful than to gather round the family hearth, to hear the Scriptures read, and listen to the senior, as he talks to the younger ones of what God has done for him, and what the Lord is waiting to give to all who trust him? Free from all formality, family prayer makes a house a temple, a family a church, and every day a holy day. Truly, I may say of families of this kind, wherever they dwell, that it is none other but the house of God, and it is the very gate of heaven"; for "the Lord is there." Friend, is God in your house? If it has no family prayer, it has no roof to it. There is no true joy in domestic life unless the Lord be there. All else is fiction; God alone is true delight. I charge you, if your homes are not such that God could come to them, set your houses in order, and say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Will you dare to dwell where God could not lodge with you? May all men say of your home, "The Lord is there"!

Here is a Christian who lives alone, apart altogether from family life. All his dear ones are dead, or far away. In his lone chamber, when he bows his knee in secret prayer, or whenever he takes his walk abroad to meditate, if he be indeed a true lover of the Lord Jesus, "the Lord is there." Wherever the believer's lot is cast, if he lives in fellowship with Christ, he may say of his quiet room, or of the garden-walk, or even of the stable or the loft, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there." Many a humble garret is a right royal residence! for "the Lord is there." Better Paul's inner dungeon at Philippi, with his feet fast in the stocks, and the presence of the Lord, than the grandest apartments of Caesar's palace and an unknown God. The Lord is very gracious to his lonely ones. They can say, "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Put you in a hospital, or in a workhouse: what matters it, if Jehovah is at your side to

cheer you?

Some of us can bear witness that we have had the nearest approaches of God to our souls in times of intolerable pain, and even in seasons of intense depression of spirit as to earthly things. "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me," said David; and we can say the same. The Lord has said, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee"; as much as to say, "If I am not with thee anywhere else, I will be with thee then." In the furnace one like unto the Son of God was seen. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego never had that glorious fourth person in their company before, they had him when they were cast into the midst of the glowing coals. Jehovah-shammah makes a seven-times-heated furnace a pleasant arbour. We may say of the refining fire, and of the threshing-floor, and of the oil-press, God has been there. In the time of trouble he has been a very present help. One might almost say, "Send me back to my prison again," as one did say who lost God's presence after he had gained his liberty. One might well cry, "Ah! let me have back my pain if I may again overflow with the joy of the Lord's presence."

Dear friends, I thank God that you and I know what it is to enjoy the presence of God in a great many different ways. When two or three of the people of God meet together, and talk to one another about the things of God, the Lord is never away. You remember that blessed text, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." They had holy talks about heavenly things. It was such sweet conversation, that the Lord himself turned eaves-dropper, and hearkened and heard. What he heard pleased him so well that he there and then made a note of it; yea, and wrote it down, and ordered that "a book of remembrance" should be preserved "for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Was not this sure evidence of his most gracious presence? John Bunyan knew that God was there when he went about tinkering, and came to Bedford, and there were three godly women sitting in the sun, at work; and as they worked they talked so sweetly that the tinker stood and listened, and was drawn to better things. By such means he became a believer and a preacher, and the writer of the "Pilgrim's Progress," which has so refreshed us all. The Lord was there, and therefore he dreamed a heavenly dream in Bedford jail. Wherever his people meet, the Lord is

graciously near. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Yes, but when Christian people go forth to work, when you come to your Sunday-school, or go out with your bundle of tracts, to change them on your district, or when you join a little band and stand in the street corner yonder, and lift up your voice in the name of Jesus, you may expect, if you go with prayer and faith, that it shall be written, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there." It is only a young man standing up in a cottage to speak, and he has not much to say; yet there are penitential tears, and broken hearts: it is so, for God is there. It is only a humble woman speaking to a few persons of her own class, and yet angels are rejoicing over a repenting sinner—yes, because God is there. It is only a little room in one of our back streets, and the city missionary has come in, and there are a dozen or two of the neighbors called together, and he is talking of Jesus and his love—oh, but if the Lord be there, do not tell me that the missionary is not in the apostolical succession; he need not claim it, he is himself an apostle of God to those poor people. He wants no gorgeous vestment, nor the swell of organ, nor even the thunders of the multitude as they raise the solemn hymn. The few so simple and so poor have God with them, and it is enough. Wherever you are seeking to do good, in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, it shall be said "the Lord is there."

And now, from this time forth, beloved, ye that fear God and think; upon his name, wherever you go, let it be said, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there." I often feel sorry when the Sabbath is nearly over; and so do many of you. I know you wake on Monday morning and take those shutters down again, or go off to that workshop where you suffer so much ridicule, or return to the ordinary grind of daily labor, and mix up with so many of the ungodly; and you do it mournfully. Now, pray that you may keep up the Sabbath tone all the week. Make every place, wherever you go, to be the house of God. A dear brother of ours went to a shop where he worked with four ungodly men, but his Lord went with him. It was not long before we had the privilege of baptizing that friend's master and all his shopmates, for the Lord was there. The other day there came a fresh man to work who could not bear to hear a word upon religion, but our brother was the means of his conversion, and the new man is coming among us,

warm with his first love. Our brother makes up his mind that he is not to be conquered by any scoffers, but on the contrary he is determined to conquer them for Christ. He will not yield to the influences of sin, but he resolves, in the name of the Lord, that evil influences shall yield to the power of truth, and to the attractions of the cross. Write across your workshop, "The Lord is here." If you cannot do it literally, do it spiritually, "Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there."

Do not be found anywhere where you could not say that the Lord was there; but if you are called into the world in the pursuit of your daily vocation, cry unto the Lord, "If thy Spirit go not with me, carry me not up hence." Determine that you will have the Spirit of God with you, and that, be it in busy Cheapside, or be it in the lonesome country while you are hoeing the turnips or attending to a flock of sheep, of every field, and every street, and every room, it shall be said that God is there. Take Jesus with you when you go; and, when you come home, may his Spirit still be with you! God grant that it may be so! The Holy Spirit can work you to this self-same thing.

What shall I say to those who do not know the Lord, and do not care for him? O friend, the day will come in which Jesus Christ will say to you, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Do not let him say that; but to-night commence an acquaintance with him. May his Holy Spirit help you so to do! I am sure the Lord Jesus Christ could not say to me, "I never knew you." It is impossible, because I could reply to him, "Never knew me, Lord? Why, I have been to thee with so many burdens, I have run to thee with so many troubles, that I am sure thou knowest me as one knows a beggar whom he has relieved many times a day.

'Dost thou ask me who I am?  
Ah, my Lord! thou know'st my name.'

Thou rememberest me, for in my despair I cried to thee, and thou didst relieve me of my burden. Thou knowest me, for in my sorrow my broken heart found no comfort but in thee. Thou hast known me all these years in which I have had to cry to thee for something to preach about, and for help while preaching. Thou knowest how I have had to come to thee and confess my failures, and mourn my shortcomings, and lament my sins,



and trust in thy blood for cleansing. "My Lord cannot say that he does not know me, for he has known my soul in adversity. Blessed be his name, I know him, and lean all my weight upon him. They that know him shall be with him, and he will receive them unto himself for ever, and this shall be their glory—"Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there." With him shall they dwell, world without end. Amen.

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## **Jesus About His Father's Business**

Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. - John 4:34

It is peculiarly pleasing to the Christian to observe the interest which God the Father takes in the work of salvation. In our earlier days of childhood in grace, we conceived the idea that God the Father was only made propitious to us through the atonement of Christ that Jesus was the Savior, and that the Father was rather an austere Judge than a tender friend. But since then, we have learned the Father through the Son: for it was not possible we could come unto the Father except through Jesus Christ. But, now, having seen Christ, we have seen the Father also, and from henceforth, we both know the Father, and have seen him, since we know the love of Christ, and have felt it shed abroad in our hearts. It is always refreshing then, to the enlightened Christian, to call to mind the intense interest which the Father takes in the work of salvation. Here you find in this verse it is three times hinted at. Salvation-work is called the Father's will. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish;" but more, it is his will that his chosen, the blood-bought ones of Christ, should every one of them be redeemed from the ruins of the fall, and brought safely home to their Father's

house. Note, again, we are told that Jesus was sent of the Father. Here, again, you see the Father's interest. It is true that Jesus rent himself away from the glories of heaven, from the felicities of blessedness, and voluntarily descended to the scorn, the shame, and spitting of this lower world. But, yet his Father had a part therein. He gave up his only begotten Son; he withheld not the darling of his bosom, but sent away his well-beloved, and sent him down with messages of love to man. Jesus Christ comes willingly, but still he comes by his Father's appointment and sending. A third hint is also given us. Salvation is here called God's work: "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." We know that when this world was made, the Father did not make it without reference to the Spirit, for "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion. Nor did he make it without the Son; for we are told by John the Apostle, "Without him was not anything made that was made." Yet, at the same time, creation was the Father's work. So also is it in salvation; the Father does not save without the Spirit, for "the Spirit quickeneth whom he will." He doth not save without the Son, for it is through the merit of the Redeemer's death that we are delivered from the demerit of our iniquity. But, notwithstanding this, God the Father is the worker of salvation as much as he is the worker of creation. Let us look up then, with eyes of delight, to our reconciled God and Father. O Lord our GOD, thou art not an angry one! Thou art not an austere ruler! "Thou art not merely the Judge but thou art the grand patriarch of thy people! Thou art their great friend! Thou lovest them better than thou didst thy Son! For thou didst not spare him—thou didst send him down to suffer and to die, that thou mightest bring thy children home. "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

The particular contemplation of this morning will be however, to describe Christ Jesus as he manifests himself as doing his Father's will, and finishing his Father's work. Our Lord and Master had but one thought, but one wish, but one aim. He concentrated his whole soul, gathered up the vast floods of his mighty powers, and sent them in one channel, rushing towards one great end: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

1. In bringing out the great truth of Christ's entire devotedness to the work of salvation—a devotedness so great that he could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,"—I shall want to call your attention first of all to the fact, verified by the gospels, that his soul was in all that he did. Mark our Master when he goes about doing good. The task is not irksome to him. There are some men who if they distribute to the poor, or if they comfort the fatherless, do it with such reserve with such coldness of spirit, that you can perceive that it is but the shell of the man that acts, and not the man's whole soul. But see our divine Lord. Wherever he walks, you see his whole self in flame. his whole being at work. Not a single power slumbers, but the whole man is engaged. How much at ease he seems among his poor fishermen! You do not discover that his thoughts are away in the halls of kings; but he is a fellow with them, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He walks in the midst of publicans and harlots, and he is not ill at ease; not like one who is condescending to do a work which he feels to be beneath him; he is pleased with it, his whole soul is in it. Mark how he takes the little children on his knee, and though his disciples would put them away, yet his whole spirit is set truly with the poor, with the sinful, whom he came to save, that he says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Look up into that face, and there is a whole-soured man there; not one whose thoughts are set on dignity and power, and who is schooling himself down, toning down his mind to the circle in which he moves, as a matter of constraint and duty. His vocation becomes his delight. His Father's service is his element. He is never happy when he is out of it. He casts his whole being, his whole spirit, into the work of man's redemption.

2. As a further proof of his devotedness, you will observe that whatever a man takes to heart as being the object of his life, it always makes him glad when he sees it succeeding. How you notice in our Savior's life, that when he goes into a pharisee's house to eat bread he always seems under constraint. In any chapter which records what Jesus said in the house of a pharisee there is a want of vivacity. He speaks solemnly, but evidently his spirit is spell-bound, he is unhappy. He knows that he is watched by cavillers who resist his good work, and he there saith but very little, or else his discourse hath but little joy and brilliance therein. But see him

among publicans; when he is sitting down with Zaccheus, or when he is come into some poor man's house and is sitting down to his ordinary meal; there is Jesus Christ with His eyes flashing, his lips pouring forth eloquence, and his whole soul at ease. "Now," says he, "I am at home; here is my work; here are the people among whom I shall succeed." How the man snaps his chain! You see the Lord Jesus Christ as the child-man, no more restraining himself before the watchers, but speaking out of his full soul all that his heart thinks and feels. Now you generally know when a man's heart is in his work, by the joy he feels in it. You see some preachers go up into their pulpits as though they were going to be roasted at the stake; and they read their sermons through as if they were making their last dying speech and confession. What do you think they call it?—why, doing their duty. True ministers call preaching pleasure, not duty. It is a delight to stand up to tell to others the way of salvation and to magnify Christ. But mere hirelings cannot go higher than the idea of doing their duty when they are telling out this glorious tale. Jesus Christ was none of these. "My meat is" he said, "to do the will of him that sent me." The only times that Jesus ever smiled and rejoiced are the times when he was in the midst of poor sinners. At that time "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Let him see a penitent, let him hear the groan of a sinner mourning over his evil way, let him discern a tear trickling down the cheek of one of his hearers, and Jesus Christ begins to be glad, and the Man of Sorrows wears a smile for a moment upon that pale and sorrowful face. At all times there is a travailing in birth for souls: he is only happy when he sees the family of God enlarged.

3. There is another test by which you may know when a man's spirit is in his work. When a right noble lord, some little time ago, stood up in the House of Lords to speak against the infamous productions and prints of Holywell Street, I felt quite sure that his lordship was thoroughly in earnest, because he grew angry. After some person had ventured to defend the filth that comes forth from that street, as if it had some connection with the glories of art, his lordship replied in a very tart speech, which at once let you see that he meant what he said, and that he felt the work upon which he had entered to be an important one. Now,

our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes grew warm in speech, but he was never angry except with men who opposed the good work with which he came, and not even with them if he saw that they opposed it through ignorance, but only with those who stood up against him on account of pride and vain glory. Did ye ever read such a mighty tirade of threatening as that which roars from Christ when he is speaking against the Pharisees? "But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? "Methinks I see his holy cheeks glowing with a divine furore, when he hurls his thunderbolts about him, and denounces the men who shut up the gates of heaven, and will not enter in themselves, and they that would enter in they hinder. Now, you can see that his soul is in it, because the man grows warm. The loving spirit of Jesus, who was trodden on like a worm, who would never defend himself who had not a spark of resentment towards his persecutors, but "when he was reviled, reviled not again," who gave blessings for curses—oh! how he kindles into a flame when he sees enemies! in the way of his poor people whom he has come to save! Then, indeed, he spares no words. Then can he ply the lash with a mighty hand, and let them see that the voices of Jesus can be as terrible as thunder, while, at other times, it can be sweet as harpers harping with their harps.

4. A sure evidence that a man has espoused some mighty purpose, and that his purpose has saturated his whole soul, and steeped him in its floods, is, that if he be unsuccessful, he will weep. Now, see our Lord. Were there ever such tears shed as those which he poured forth over Jerusalem? Standing on the hilltops, he saw its towers and its glittering temple, and he discerned in the dim future the day when it should be burned with fire, and the ploughshare of destruction should be driven o'er its once fair, but then desolate, foundations and he cries, "O

Jerusalem! Jerusalem I how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Oh that wail of his,— "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" Does it not remind you of those words of God in one of the old prophets, where weeping over Ephraim, he saith "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Jehovah's bowels yearned to clasp his Ephraim to his breast. And so with Jesus. They may spit in his face, and he weeps not. They may drag him out of the synagogue and seek to cast him headlong down the brow of the hill, but I find not that he sighs. They may nail him to the cross, and yet there shall be ne'er a tear. The only thing that can make him weep is to see that they reject their own mercy, that they put away from them their only hope, and refuse to walk in that only way of peace. This alone might serve as a proof of the intensity of Jesus' soul in his great purpose. He must save others; and if they be not saved, he will weep. If others oppose their salvation he will grow angry; not for himself but for them. Careless of what happens to himself, he has no fear, no anger for injuries that are poured on him, but his whole spirit is given up to the one great work of rescuing souls from sin, and sinners from going down into the pit.

5. It often happens, however, that when we are really earnest about some purpose, some enemy will rise up. Unconscious, perhaps, of the nobility of our purpose, he will misconstrue our motives, vilify our character, and tread our fair name in the dust. There is a strong temptation at such seasons to defend one's self. We want to say just a word about one's own sincerity and heartiness of purpose. The temptation comes very strongly on us, because we think that we ourselves are so wrapped up, so intimately connected with the work, that perhaps, if our name be injured that work may suffer also. How many good and great men have fallen into this snare, so that they have left their work in order to take care of themselves, and have at least diminished some little of their ardor, or commingled the ardor which they feel for those objects with another fervency of spirit—the fervency of self-defense. Now, in our Lord Jesus Christ you see nothing of this. He is so set upon his purpose that when they call him a drunkard he doth not deny it; when they say he is a

Samaritan and is mad, he takes it silently and seems to say, "Be it so; think so, if you will." Now and then there is a word of complaint, but not of accusation. When it is really for their good he will rebuke them, and say, "How can Beelzebub cast out Beelzebub?" But there is no elaborate defense of his character. Christ has left on record, in his sermons, no apology for anything he said. He just went about his work and did it, and left men to think what they pleased about him. He knew right well that contempt and shame from some men are but another phase of glory, and that to suffer the despite of a depraved race was to be glorified in the presence of his Father, and in the midst of his holy angels. Yet we might wonder (if we did not know who he was) that some little personal animosity did not sometimes creep in; but you never detect a shade of it. Many there were, I dare say, whom he knew to be his dire enemies; he has not a word to say against them. Some would come up in the street to insult him; I do not find that he took the slightest notice of them. Many there were, too, that spread all manner of ill reports, but he never told his disciples to try and stop the ill tale that was abroad. He treated with silent pity the calumnies of men, and walked on in the majesty of his goodness, defying all men to say what they pleased, for all their devices could no more make him turn aside from his course than the baying of the dog can make the moon stand still in her orbit. And so, too good to be selfish, too glorious to care for any one's esteem, he could not and would not turn aside, but as an arrow from the bow of some mighty archer, he sped on his way towards his destined target.

6. Then, mark again, another proof of the full devotedness of Christ to his ministry namely, that you always see him laboring. The three years of Christ's ministry were three years of ceaseless toil. He never rested: one wonders how he lived at all. It is but little marvel that his poor body was emaciated, and that his visage was more marred than that of any man. What with stern conflicts with Satan in the desert—conflicts so severe, that, if you and I were to undergo them, they might make our hairs turn grey in a single night; what with conflicts with the crowd of men who all seemed to rise up at once against him, like warriors armed to the teeth, while he stood like a defenseless lamb in the midst of cruel wolves—what with preaching, with more private teaching, with healing the sick and the lepers, restoring the maimed, the deaf, the blind; going about everywhere

doing good, and never ceasing in his journeys, walking every inch of his way on foot, save when he was tossed on the stormy bosom of the lake, in some small boat which belonged to his disciples—never having a home wherein to dwell, crying, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"—surely never man labored like this man. That three years of our Savior's ministry reads like the history of three centuries. It is the life of a man who is living at a matchless rate. His minutes are all hours; his hours all months; his months all years; or longer still than that. He does enough in one day to give a man eternal fame, and yet, thinking nothing of it, he goes to something yet more arduous; and on, and on, and on, he toils his whole life through. The most hard working man among us has his hours of sleep. Give us but sleep and we can do anything, we rise up from our beds like giants refreshed with new wine, to run our course anew. But Jesus sleeps not.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air,  
Witness the fervor of his prayer."

He has stood up to preach all day long; he has fed thousands. and at last he faints. His disciples take him even as he is, for he cannot walk, his strength is gone; and they carry him down to the boat and lay him there. He shuts his eyes, he is about to have some little repose but they come to him, and cry, "Master, why sleepest thou? Awake! we perish." And he arises to rebuke the waves, and finds himself on another shore, and in another field of labor, upon which he enters at once without delay. He seems to have known no moment of repose. He preaches day by day, he prays by night. He seemed to be a sun that never had a setting, always shining always progressing in his mighty course. Oh! there never was such a worker never such a toiler as this Lord Jesus, who toiled not for himself but for others.

7. And here let me remark, again, that I may give you another proof that his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, namely, that at many times when he was in full labor he does not seem to have felt fatigue at all. He had been walking one hot day along the dusty road, under the burning sun; and he comes at last to the well of Sychar. Being very weary, he sat down on the well. He was hungry, too, for his disciples had gone



away to buy meat. That little wallet which Judas carried was not often full enough to afford meat for luxury; they could only buy for mere necessity. They doubtless had enough in that little bag, which was filled by the voluntary gifts of those among whom he labored, to keep those twelve men with daily bread, but they had none to spare. I conclude, then, that our Savior needed meat, or they would not have gone away to buy it. They come back after they have bought their meat, and they find their Master sitting on the well preaching to a woman. She goes away and they wonder how it is he does not eat. He tells them he needs no food, he has been refreshed, he had seen that woman converted. A woman who had had five husbands, and was then living with one who was not her husband, had listened to his voice, and she had been saved, and he saw her go away to bring the men to hear. He expected a harvest; he saw the fields white and ready for it; and this so refreshed his spirit that he did not need to eat. And we read at another time he forgot to eat bread, and at another season we read they thronged him in, "insomuch that he was not able to eat." Yet he could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He seemed to get refreshed in his work to grow stronger amid his toils; instead of growing tired, he renewed his strength; as he went on with his sacred labors. Now, this could not have happened to Christ, unless his whole soul was in it. Those of you who have ever undertaken an enterprise with all your might, know that as that has been going on you have been so absorbed that you did not know when it was time for you to eat, and when at last you have seen success dawning upon you, if any one had hinted that you needed bread, you would put him by and say, "Don't disturb me; let me watch; let me see this light come to its full blaze of noon day." You have needed no other refreshment than that which success, has given you. I could myself give an illustration of this, which occurred to me a little while ago, to prove that fact. Coming from home early in the morning, I went to the chapel, sat there all day long seeing those who had been brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word. Their stories were so interesting to me that the day went on. I may have seen some thirty or more during the day, one after the other, as they came up to me. I was so delighted with the tales they told me, and the wonders of grace that God had wrought in them, that I did not know anything about how the day went. Seven o'clock came for prayer-meeting. I went in and prayed with the brethren. After that came the church-meeting. A little before ten o'clock I felt faint, and I

began to think at what hour I had had my dinner, and I found that I had had none; I never thought of it, I never felt hungry, because God had made me so glad with success. I think we could live right on, almost without food, if God would sustain us daily with this divine manna—this heavenly food of success—in winning souls. This showed that our Master's heart was in it: for the toil needed no refreshment.

8. Then, again, if I have not said enough to convince you that he gave his whole spirit to the work; let me remark that many a man has espoused a purpose, and, as he imagined, has betrothed himself to it by eternal nuptials, yet at last he has been divorced from the darling object. He has seen some path of brightness opening to him with some glittering honor at the end, and he has turned aside to selfaggrandisement and glory. But our Lord had a prospect before him, such as no man ever had. Satan took him to the brow of a hill, and offered him all the kingdoms of this world a mightier dominion even than Caesar had—if he would bow down and worship him. That temptation was substantially repeated in Christ's life a thousand times. You remember one practical instance as a specimen of the whole. "They would have taken him by force and would have made him a king." And if he had but pleased to accept that offer, on the day when he rode into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass when all cried "Hosanna!" when the palm branches were waving, he had needed to have done nothing but just to have gone into the temple, to have commanded with authority the priest to pour the sacred chrism publicly upon his head, and he would have been king of the Jews. Not with the mock title which he wore upon the cross, but with a real dignity he might have been monarch of nations. As for the Romans, his omnipotence could have swept away the intruders. He could have lifted up Judea into a glory as great as the golden days of Solomon: he might have built Palmyras and Tadmors in the desert: he might have stormed Egypt and have taken Rome. There was no empire that could have resisted him. With a band of zealots such as that nation could have furnished, and with such a leader capable of working miracles walking in the van, the star of Judea might have risen with resplendent light, and a visible kingdom might have come, and his will might have been done on earth, from the river unto the ends of the earth. But he came not to establish a carnal kingdom upon earth, else would his followers fight: he came to wear the thorn-crown, to

bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. And from that single object the most splendid temptation could not make him diverge. You may heap together the glittering pomps and the gaudy jewels, but he treads them all beneath his feet. The Cross to him is brighter than a crown, the suffering more dear than wealth and honor. So then, in this too, we may see how full was his purpose, and how firmly he was set on the salvation of man.

9. One other thought here. If we knew that some purpose which we had undertaken could never be achieved unless by our death, supposing that we could bring our mind to give up our blood as the price of success—if we knew that after the most toilsome effort, though the walls of the structure might rise, yet our own tomb must furnish the topstone—if we resolve to die for it, yet I can well conceive that firmly as our purpose might be set, we should dread the hour. Let it be at a distance, we should say. And if we were told it was drawing near, we should sigh, and our spirit would sink. But not so, Christ. Do you observe throughout his life in what a hurry he is? Read the gospel according to St. Mark. The gospel of St. Mark is the gospel of the servant. The chosen emblem in the old church windows represents St. Mark as the ox, the laborious ox. Each of the evangelists had his own particular idiom, and the idiomatic expression of St. Mark is the word, *Eutheos*, which we translate "straightway," "immediately." You will see if you read the evangelist through, that the word "straightway," "immediately," occurs more frequently in that book than in any other, perhaps more times than in all the rest of the Word of God besides, to teach us this lesson, that Christ as a servant was in haste to fulfill his mission; never loitering, but always doing it straightway. He seems to me to be always stretching out his hands after the cross; not standing back from it, as if he knew it must come to him by necessity. No, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His soul was speeding towards the cross, and his body seemed to be straitened, encaged, imprisoned, that it could not get to the end of this three years of labor. His soul was panting after suffering; groaning, crying out to be permitted to drink of the cup of our redemption even to the dregs. Now, this majesty of purpose, not merely to die, but to pant for death—not simply to climb the wall, to lead the forlorn hope and to long to do it, to be panting for the battle, desiring the fight, longing for the suffering—this

is heroic ardor, self devotion entirely unexampled! I could hardly imagine a man panting for the fight an hour before it begins, but all his life long to be desiring to enter upon It, to be panting for that bloody sweat, to be sighing for those nails, that shame, that spitting, this showed how strongly our Lord Jesus Christ had bent all his thoughts to the divine purpose of doing his Father's will, and finishing his Father's work.

Now, I shall say no more upon this subject by way of proof. I come very briefly to make the practical we thereof.

The first practical inference is addressed to the timid, agonized soul, who desires salvation, but who thinks that Christ is unwilling to give it to him. Timid spirit, timid spirit, put away the thought that he is unwilling to save. It is a lie against thy own soul; it is a libel against his character. What! He unwilling to distribute that which he so freely bought at so immense a price! Do you see in any one period of his life an unwillingness to save? There might be once a shrinking of the flesh, but that is over now. No more the crown of thorns; the cross and nails no more. The flesh has nothing more to shrink at. It is done; redemption is accomplished, and think you he was so earnest and so intent on the work of redemption, and now is unwilling to reap the fruits of it? Why, do you not know, poor penitent, that he died to save you, and think you that it needs much argument to move the heart that once was pierced to pity and compassion? Scout the thought once for all. He is able to forgive; that thou knowest. He is as willing as he is able. Infinite is his ability, and as infinite his willingness. I beseech thee, distrust him not. Come as thou art, with all thy sins about thee. Come, now and put thy trust in him. Thou shalt find the door of heaven's gate not creaking on its hinges, but standing on jar and opening easily. John Bunyan says the posts of the gates of the temple were made of olive tree; and he allegorized it thus:— They were made of that fat and oily tree, that so the hinges might move readily and smoothly, that there might be no difficulty in opening the temple-gates when timid souls came flying in. When mothers are unwilling to receive their children, when fathers are unwilling to give food to their own offspring, then—nay, not even then, will Jesus be unwilling to forgive. When the hard-working man is unwilling to take his wage, when the toiling politician is unwilling to grasp the honor which he

has achieved, then—nay, not even then, may Christ be unwilling to lay hold upon the sheep which is his own purchased with his own blood, and to pluck that jewel from a dung-hill which he has redeemed with his own suffering. He is not unwilling; thou art unwilling. If there be any hardness of heart, it lies with thee, and not with him. If there be difficulties in the way of thy salvations they are difficulties in thyself, not in him. Come and welcome. This is the invitation which reaches thee to day from heaven's festal board. Come and welcome. Come and welcome. Come and welcome, sinner, come! Let nothing make thee linger. He thirsts to save; he pants to bless. He longs to redeem and ransom. Only trust him; and if thou be made glad when thou trustest, he will be glad too. If the prodigal is glad when he returns, the father's joy is not an atom less. If there be mirth in the heart of the returning one, there is as much mirth in the heart of the parent to whom he returns. So come, and make thy Savior glad. Come and make him see of the travail of his soul that he may be abundantly satisfied. This is my first practical inference.

There is yet another. Christian men, it is but fair that we should give you one lesson from such a subject as this. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. I would not be censorious, but solemnly and seriously, I fear there are not very many whose whole heart is set on Christ's glory. We have church members, men of wealth; do they not spend more upon themselves than upon Christ? And may I not infer from this that they love themselves better than Christ? We have other members of our churches, men who are but comparatively well-to-do. These spend more on their mere pleasures than on Christ. What am I to suppose, but that they find more pleasure in the enjoyments of the flesh than they do in serving Christ? Oh, have we not tens of thousands in the army of the Lord, that strike for themselves in their own battles with an arm as strong as that of king Arthur of our table, but when they come to fight for Christ their arm drops nerveless at their side? We have men who are all eye, all ear, all hand in business, but they are blind, and deaf, and impotent when they come into Christ's church. The fact is, we have in too many of our churches the chrysalis of men, but not the real body. They give us their names, but they keep their whole influence for the world. Ah! and is this what Christ deserves of you? Is this the reward of his self-devotion? Do you thus repay him who saved others but could not save himself. And you

profess to be a follower of the Lamb, is this your following? An imitator of Jesus, and is this the imitation? Oh, sirs, the likeness is marred and blotted. Ye are poor sculptors indeed, if ye imagine yourselves to be sculptured in the image of Christ. Brothers and sisters, this matter may not seem to be of interest to you, but I feel it to be a subject of the most intense importance to the world that lieth in the wicked one. If we were more like Jesus it would be a happy day for the poor dying sons of men. Oh, if our divided aims could but be exchanged for singleness of heart; if our littleness of zeal could be consumed in the intensity of love to Christ, what better men should we be, and what a happier world would be this. Do you imagine that you are pleasing to God when you are living for fifty aims instead of one? When you bring to Christ your lukewarm love, your lukewarm zeal, do you think he is pleased with you, and that he accepts your offer? Oh, church of Laodicea, thou hast moved from Asia, thou hast come to England, and taken up thy abode in London! Truly might the Lord say to many of our London churches, "You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm, and I will spue thee out of my mouth." There is nothing God abhors more than our cold Christianity, such as we have in these modern times—a religion which professes to live, but which lives like a gasping, fainting, trembling creature, that is on the verge of death. And you think to shake the world while you are shaking yourself with the ague of your cold indifference! You cry to God, "Arise!" and yet you rise not yourself! You ask a blessing and yet you will not win it! You crave for victory, and yet your swords rust in their scabbards! Out with you, sirs, be rid of this hypocrisy; begin first to ask for singleness of soul, and devotedness of purpose; and when this is given you, then shall there come days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Then shall sinners be converted, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. But for all this we want the influence of the Holy Spirit, for without that we shall never give our whole hearts up to the sacred mission of winning souls for Christ.

Spirit of the living God! descend upon us now; rest on thy saints, and fill them with love to perishing souls, and rest thou on the sinner, to bring him to this willing Savior, and make him willing in the day of thy power.

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## Jesus And His Brethren

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. - Genesis 45:1-5

I need not say to, you beloved, who are conversant with Scripture, that there is scarcely any personal type in the Old Testament which is more clearly and fully a portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ than is the type of Joseph. You may run the parallel between Joseph and Jesus in very many directions, yet you need never strain the narrative so even much as once. I am not about to attempt that task on the present occasion; but I am going to take this memorable portion of the biography of Joseph, and to show you how, in making himself known to his brethren, he was a type of our Lord revealing himself to us.

It seems that, at last, Joseph could bear the suspense no longer. He knew who his brethren were, he knew which was Benjamin, and which was Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and the rest, and he recollected all the story of their early days together; but, they did not know him. They thought him some mysterious potentate, some great ruler of the land of Egypt—as indeed he was, but they did not know so much about him as he knew about them. Consequently, there was a distance between him and them, and his loving heart ached to bridge that gulf by manifesting himself to them. It is the way of love to desire to make itself known.

Now, in a still higher sense, the Lord Jesus Christ knows all about those in this place whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. The Father gave them to Him from before the foundation of the world, and he took them into covenant relationship with Himself of ever the earth was. Often has He thought of these His beloved Ever since these redeemed and chosen ones have been born into the world, He has watched them so carefully that He has counted the very hairs on their heads. ones; His delights have been with the sons of men, and He has looked forward, and foreseen all that would happen to them. They are so precious to Him, as the purchase of His heart's blood, that they have never taken a single wandering step but His eye has tracked the mazes of their life. He knows them altogether—knows their sins, knows their sorrows, knows their ignorance of Him, knows how sometimes that ignorance has been willful, and they have continued in the dark when they might have walked in the light; and now, at this moment, speaking after the manner of men, the heart of Christ aches to manifest Himself to some of them, He wants to be known, He thirsts to be known, He can only be loved as He is known, and He pines for love, and so He pines to manifest Himself to His loved ones. Ay, and there are some of them who do know Him already in a measure, but their measure is a very little one; it is but as a drop compared with the great deep sea. I have been praying, and am praying still, and I am not alone in the prayer, that this very hour, the Lord Jesus may be pleased to manifest Himself to His own blood-bought ones. To all who have been called by His grace already, and to many not yet called to Him, may He come in the fullness of His own glorious revelation, and make Himself known; for know ye not this—that the revelation of Christ in the Word will not save you unless Christ be revealed in you and to you personally? Nay, more than that; the Christ born at Bethlehem will not save you unless that Christ be formed in you the hope of glory, He must Himself come to you, and make himself known to you. It will not suffice you to read about his healing the sick, He must touch you with His hand, or you must touch the hem of His garment with your hand; but somehow there must be personal contract between yourself and the Lord Jesus Christ, or else all that He did will avail nothing to you. Let this be our prayer now—that to each man and woman and child here the Lord may graciously make himself known.



I. Notice, first, that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, LIKE JOSEPH, REVEALS HIMSELF IN PRIVATE FOR THE MOST PART.

Joseph cried, "Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren." It would not have been seemly for this great ruler to lose all command of himself in the presence of the Egyptians. His heat was carried away with love to his brothers, and the cry that he lifted up was so loud that the people in other parts of the palace could hear that something strange was going on; but he could not bear that they should all stand around, and gaze with curious eyes upon their ruler as he unbosomed himself to his brothers. They would not have understood it, they might have misrepresented it; at any rate, he could not bear that the scene of affection which was now to be enacted should be witnessed by strangers, so he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me."

My dear friends, do you really want savingly to see and know the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you never yet beheld Him by the eye of faith? Then, permit me to exhort you to be literally much alone—searching the Scriptures, and much alone in private, secret prayer. That gracious revelation of Himself to you as bearing your sins, and putting away your guilt, will not be likely to come to you until you get a little time in private, where you can quietly meditate upon your Lord and His great atoning work. The mischief of this busy London is that we are fretted and worn with incessant occupations; we should all of us be much stronger and better if we saw less of the faces of men and more of the face of God. But for a penitent sinner, who desires to behold his pardon written in the smiling countenance of Christ, there must be solitude. You must rise earlier in the morning, and get a half-hour to yourself then, or you must sit up later at night, or you must steal out of bed at the dead of night, or you must even resolve that you will not go to your business until the first business of finding Christ is ended once for all. I feel persuaded that, with some of you at least, there will be no peace to your heart, and no comfortable sight of Christ, until you have gone upstairs, and said, "Here, alone, with every man put out and every wandering thought excluded, will I bow the knee, and cry, and look, and hope, and believe, until I can say, 'I have seen the Lord; I have looked to Him whom I have pierced, and

I have seen my sin put away by His death upon the tree."

Further, I want you to notice, not only the excellence of solitude in general, but the benefit of a kind of mental solitude. Brethren, if in the house of God, in the midst of the assembly, the Lord Jesus Christ is ever to manifest Himself personally to us, it must be in a kind of mental and spiritual solitude. I believe that the preacher will never succeed in winning a soul if he tries to make himself prominent in his own preaching. An old man, who was accustomed to catching trout in a certain stream, was asked by one who had been fishing in vain, "Have you caught any fish today?" "Yes, Sir," he said, "I have a little basketful." "Oh!" said the other, "I have been fishing all day long, and I have taken none." "No," said the man, "but there are three rules about catching trout, which, Perhaps you have not observed. The first is—Get quite out of sight; and the second is—Get still more out of sight, and the third is—Get still more out of sight than that; and you will catch them so." And I believe that it is just so in preaching. If the preacher can get quite out of sight, and still more out of sight, and yet still more out of sight, then he will be the means of bringing souls to Christ. And you, dear friends, will only see Him well in any kind of preaching when you try to forget the man. I mean that remark to apply in two ways. Perhaps the preacher is one whom you dearly love, and you expect much from him. Well then, forget him, expect nothing from him, but look away from him to your Lord. Or perhaps the preacher's voice has no particular charm for you, the man is not very bright in his utterances; well, forget him, and try to see his Master. Forget the preacher for good and for bad, for better and for worse, and get to the Lord Himself.

There is a story told of Mr. Erskine having preached on one occasion before the communion, and a good woman, a child of God, heard him with such delight, and was so much fed and satisfied, that she left her own pastor, and went some miles on the next Lord's day to go and hear him again. That morning, he was dreadfully dry and barren, or at least she thought that he was. There was no food for her whatever; and being not a very wise woman, she went in to tell him so. She said, "Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you at the communion with such delight; you seemed to take me to the very gates of heaven, and I was fed with the finest of the

wheat; so I have come this morning on purpose to hear you, and I confess that I have got nothing out of you!" So he said, "My good woman, what did you go for last Sabbath-day?" "I went to the communion; Sir." "Yes, you went to the communion; that was to have communion with the Lord?" "Yes," she said, "I did." "Well," said Mr. Erskine, "that is what you went for, and you got it; and the Lord blessed my word to you, and you had communion with Him. Now, what did you come here for this morning?" "I came to hear you, Sir." "And you have got what you came for, there is nothing in me. "Think of this story when you are remembering the Lord's servants, and forgetting their Master Himself. I do believe that, as you are sitting here, you whose eyes have already been opened by the Spirit of God, if you will but say, "Cause every man to go out from me; shut to the door, I have entered into my closet even while in the pew; I am alone now, and I desire to see no man save Jesus only," you shall see Him, for He manifests Himself to His people all alone. Oh, that each one here would say, "There is nothing but Christ that I desire to see, there is nothing else I wish to remember, I would think only of my Lord Jesus; may He be pleased to reveal Himself to me!"

II. The second remark I have to make is this—when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to any man for the first time, it is usually in the midst of terror, and **THAT FIRST REVELATION OFTEN CREATES MUCH SADNESS.**

When Joseph made himself known to his brethren, and said to them, "I am Joseph," "they were troubled in his presence." Judah had made a very plaintive speech when it was threatened that Benjamin should be detained in Egypt, and all the brothers were in deep trouble; so that, when the great ruler said to them, "I am Joseph," they were not filled with joy by his words, so we read, "His brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." He was Joseph, their brother, and he loved every one of them; yet "they were troubled at his presence." It was the best thing that could have happened to them to be in the presence of him who was sent of God to save their lives with a great deliverance; yet "they were troubled at his presence."

And you and I recollect, perhaps, when, under a deep sense of sin and sorrow, we had our first perception of Christ's salvation, instead of being

glad at it, we were "troubled at his presence." "Why!" we said to ourselves, "this Christ is He whom we have despised, and rejected, and crucified." There did not seem, at first, much comfort for us in the manifestation of Christ. One said, in order to cheer us, "He died for sinners." "But," we answered, "surely not for such sinners as we are." Even the very sound of that blessed word "salvation" grated on our ears, because we thought we should be like the fabled Tantalus, up to our neck in water which we could not drink, or surrounded by fruit which we could not have pluck. "He may have died for others," we seem to say, "but scarcely for us." "We were troubled at his presence." Even the house of God, to which we continued to go, was a place of terror to us and we cried, like Jacob did at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place!" In the worst sense of that word, it really was "dreadful" to us, full of dread although we believed it to be "none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." We said, "What right have we to be in the house of God? How can we expect to enter heaven even though its gate is so near to us?" We heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but we sorrowfully exclaimed, "Ah, that is only too true! He will pass by, He will stop to look at us." We heard that precious text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life"; yet we said, "What is it to believe in Him? How can we believe in Him?" The light seemed shifting all around us, but our eyes were blind to it; the music of heaven was sounding in all its sweetness, but our ears were closed to its melody; everlasting love was coming near to us, yet our hearts did not open to receive it; and therefore we could not answer Christ, for we "were troubled at his presence."

Dear friends, if any of you are in this sad state, do not therefore be driven away from our Jesus, our greater Joseph but still stand in His presence, even though you are troubled at it, for that experience, though it be bitter, is a bitter sweet. There may be trouble in Christ's presence, but there is a far greater trouble in being driven front His presence, and from the glory of His power. So keep standing just where you are, even though you stand trembling, for by-and-by, and perhaps this very hour, He will graciously reveal Himself to you, and you shall no longer tremble at His presence, but, on the contrary, you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, as you perceive that this Joseph, this Jesus, is your Brother, your

Savior, your Friend, your all in all.

III. Now, thirdly, though the first appearance of Jesus, like that of Joseph, may cause sadness, THE FURTHER REVELATION OF THE Lord JESUS CHRIST TO HIS BRETHREN, BRINGS THEM THE GREATEST POSSIBLE JOY.

If you look at this passage when you are at home, you will perhaps say to yourself, "The second time that Joseph spoke to his brethren, he had not much more to say than he said the first time," for then he said, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" And the second time there was as much the same burden in his language: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." So, when Christ reveals Himself in grace to any poor heart, the revelation, for substance, is much the same as at the first, yet there is a great difference. When, for the first time, I heard the gospel to my soul's salvation, I thought that I had never really heard the gospel before, and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the gospel fully preached many hundreds of times, before, and that this was the difference—and that I then heard it as though I heard it not; and when I did hear it, the message may not have been any more clear in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ear, and to guide the message to my heart. O dear friend, if you have heard me preach Christ crucified, and you have not yet seen Christ crucified, your soul's salvation, I pray that you may do so now! I do, not suppose that word, there will be any difference in the sermon, or in the truth proclaimed; the difference will be that, in the one case, it has not reached your heart, and in the other case it will. O blessed Master, speak comfortably to the hearts of sinners, and to the hearts of thy people, too. Make the old, old gospel to be new to us by clothing it with a new power within our hearts and consciences, and throughout our lives!

Yet, there were some differences in the words which Joseph uttered to his brethren. If you turn again to the narrative, you will see that he began his second speech by saying to them, "Come near to me, I pray you." There was a longing for nearness to those he loved, and that is the point of my sermon at this time. I want you, who do not believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ, but who are, nevertheless, His elect, His redeemed ones, to come near to Him now by an act of faith, and trust Him with yourselves, your souls, your sins, and everything else. Stand not back through shame or fear, ye chief of sinners, for he says, "Come near to me, I pray you. 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I Will give You rest.' "As for you who are His brethren already, come you near to Him, for to you also he says, "Come near to me, I pray you." Oh, if our Lord were actually here in bodily presence—and I can almost picture Him in the loveliness and glory of Divine Majesty—if He were to stand here, and say to us, "Come near to me, I pray you," we would, with solemn reverence, bow before Him, but we would with joyful obedience come near to Him, and try to hold Him by the feet and worship Him. Would not each one of you press forward to come near unto Him? I am sure that you would; well, that is what you have to do in a spiritual fashion. We know not Christ after the flesh, but we do know Him after the Spirit. So, come near to Him, dear brethren in Christ; believe in Him again as you did at the first, look to Him again as if you have never looked before. Worship Him as your Lord and Your Redeemer, prostrate yourselves before Him, and adore Him as the Son of God revealed in our midst; come near to Him. Then talk to Him; tell Him all that is in your inmost heart. Unburden to Him your cares and your doubts; ay, and come near to Him with your fondest affection, and say to Him now, in the silence of your spirit, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Come near to Christ with all your tears of penitence, come near with your alabaster box of gratitude, come near with the kisses of your lips of love, come near with your whole heart's purest affection, and come now, for that is what He invites you to do. It is a part of His manifestation of Himself to you that you should endeavor to come near to Him. Cry, "Stand back, O self! Stand back, O devil! Stand back, all care for the world! Stand back, even care for the church just now! My heart must come near unto her Lord, and sit like a dove on His finger, and be satisfied to look with her gentle eyes at the beauties of His countenance." God help us so to do, in in response to our Lord's gracious invitation, "Come near to me, I pray you."

Then, as of to help us to come near our Lord, in this revelation, declares His relationship to us. The speaker in the type says, "I am Joseph your brother"; and the Lord Jesus Christ, though He is Head overall things to

His Church, and King and Lord of death and hell, yet says to everyone who believes in Him, "I am your Brother; I am your kith and kin; Head of the family, but still of the family; and touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for I was in all points tempted like as you are." Do not imagine, concerning the Lord Jesus, that there is only a fanciful or sentimental brotherhood between Him and You. It is a real brotherhood; there is no such brotherhood under heaven, so complete and true, as that which exists between Christ and every blood-washed soul, for it is not a brotherhood according to the flesh, but an everlasting, spiritual brotherhood. An eternal union of the closest and most vital kind is established between Christ and every one who believes in Him.

We do not reckon it hard do we, to win a brother's heart? If we have been a little cold towards a brother, his heart soon warms to us again; and as for our Lord, if we have not seen Him of late, if any of us have not loved Him as we should, if we are saying, "We are troubled at His presence, we hardly dare come to His table," may He say to us, "Come near to me, I pray you; I am your Brother. Come near, come nearer, nearer still. I am pleased when you are near." Come with your sin and your lukewarmness; come just as you are, as you came to Him at the first; and He will receive you, and will manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world.

In addition to revealing his relationship, which was a great motive for inviting his brethren to come near, he also told them a secret. He said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." I think he mentioned that to show them that he must be Joseph their brother, for who else in all the world knew of that shameful action on their part? I do not suppose that the Midianite merchants, who bought Joseph, knew that he was sold by his own brethren; or if they did know, there were none of them in Pharaoh's palace, for they were Ishmaelites, and they had gone their way to traffic somewhere else. All who knew of that wicked transaction were Joseph and his brothers, so by this password he lets them know that there was a sort of freemasonry between them. This was the sign, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." It made them blush, I dare say; and it must have made them mourn; but it also made them feel, "Yes, that is our brother; nobody but Joseph would know that we sold him into slavery." And, dear friends, have you never seen your Well-

beloved as He reads your heart? I have known Him read mine from the first thought in it to the last, and I have thanked I Him as He has read it, for I have said, "Lord, Thou hast read that book right through, and now Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love thee. Alas! I did sell thee into Egypt; there was a day when I chose Egypt and its pleasures rather than Thyself; and there have been days since when I have sold Thee again into Egypt by treating Thee with lukewarmness, and giving myself up to other lovers. Yes, Lord, I have sold Thee to the Ishmaelites by doubting Thee and mistrusting Thee; and by my sins I have stripped Thee of thy many-colored garment, and by my own folly I have let Thee go away from thy Father's house, and from the chamber of her that bore Thee. Thou knowest all this, my Lord, but I know Thee, too, because Thou knowest me so well."

Then notice that, when Joseph thus revealed himself to his brethren, he did not say more till he had sweetly put away till their offenses against him. They had been troubled because they knew that they had sold him into Egypt, but he said to them, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither." So Jesus says to His loved ones, who have grieved Him by their evil deeds, "Be not grieved, for, I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.' Be not angry with yourselves, for I will receive you graciously, and love you freely. Be not angry with yourselves, for your sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go, and sin no more. For my name's sake, will I defer mine anger; wherefore, 'Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' " Many of you know the way our Savior talks; I pray that He may just now make every believer sure that there is not a sin against him in God's Book of remembrance. May you, dear friends, be clear in your conscience from all dead works! May you have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, and in the clear white light of your Savior's glorious presence, may you see the wounds He endured when suffering for your sins! Then will you sing with the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."



Last of all, Joseph was not satisfied with thus revealing himself to his brethren, and assuming them of his forgiveness, but he promised them rich supplies for the future. To my mind, this was the next best news to his message of forgiveness. He said to them, in effect, "You have had two years of famine. It is only through me that you have been preserved alive; you have come down to Egypt with your asses and your sacks, and you have taken home provender to my father and to your households; but there are yet five more years in which there will be no plowing and no harvest. What will become of you? What little you had in store, is already all consumed. God has sent me here that, through those five years, I may nourish you. You shall come down, and live in Goshen, on the fat of the land of Egypt, and you shall never have any want, for all the treasures of the land of Egypt are mine, and I will take care of you, you shall never know any lack." In like manner, beloved, your Lord stands, and says to you, "You will have many more troubles yet." Some of my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, who are here, will be in heaven before five more years have expired; they have good reason to be very grateful to God. But to some of its who are younger, it may be that God has appointed many a year to abide here; but our Savior lives.

"He is at the Father's side,  
The man of love, the Crucified;"

and the arrangements of providence are in His hand, and all that providence shall be over-ruled for us. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You will be in Egypt for a while longer, dear friend, but you will be in the Goshen of Egypt, and the good of all the land is yours. Oh, what a blessing it is to think that we have a Brother who reveals Himself to us as the Universal Provider, who will not let us have a want, but will take care that, before our need comes, the supply shall be ready, and we shall have nothing to do but to rejoice in Him who careth for us!

Let not that sweet thought take away from your minds what I want to be the center of all the meditation, namely, that you should come near to your Lord. We never use a crucifix; we should think it sinful to do so. Neither do I want to have an imaginary crucifix, by trying to set Christ before you so that you should picture Him mentally; but I want Your faith

to do much more than imagination can. The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually here in the midst of us, according to His gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"; and He hears me speaking these words at this moment, I am as sure of it as if I saw that mystic presence with my natural eyes. If I did see Him, I know that I should fall at His feet as dead, and the rest of this service would have to be spent in awe-struck silence by everyone that did behold Him. But, O thou Son of God and Son of Mary, Jesus Christ our Savior, we trust Thee wholly and alone to save us, and we love Thee with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and as we live by Thee, we pray thee to help us to live for thee, to live to thee, to live like thee, and by-and-by to live with Thee! We could almost wish that we might now fall down and kiss thy dear feet, but Thou art not here in visible presence; for Thou hast gone up into the glory; but Thou art here spiritually,, and we come to Thee, and say, "Lord, Thou art ours, and we are thine; we will hold to Thee, and will not let Thee go."

"Sun of my Soul, thou Savior dear,  
It is not night if thou be near."

Come, stay with me while yet the evening shade shall linger, till death's dark night comes on, and then, instead of night, let the morning break upon my gladdened eyes because it is Thyself that has come, the life, the resurrection, and not death at all! Come, beloved, can you not get nearer to your Lord? Can you not speak familiarly with Him? Can you not whisper into His ear the story of your love?

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,"  
and help us now to come near to Jesus! Amen and Amen.

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## **Jesus Angry With Hard Hearts**

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. - Mark 3:5

My text will really consist of these words: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." It is the divine Lord, the pitiful Jesus, the meek and lowly in heart, who is here described as being angry. Where else do we meet with such a statement while he was here among men? A poor man was present in the synagogue who had a withered hand: it was his right hand, and he who has to earn his daily bread can guess what it must be to have that useful member dried up or paralyzed. In the same synagogue was the Savior, ready to restore to that hand all its wonted force and cunning. Happy conjunction! The company that had gathered in the synagogue, professedly to worship God, would they not have special cause to do so when they saw a miracle of divine goodness? I can imagine them whispering one to another, "We shall see our poor neighbor restored to-day; for the Son of God has come among us with power to heal, and he will make this a very glorious Sabbath by his work of gracious power."

But I must not let imagination mislead me: they did nothing of the kind. Instead of this, they sat watching the Lord Jesus, not to be delighted by an act of his power, but to find somewhat of which they might accuse him. When all came to all, the utmost that they would be able to allege would be that he had healed a withered hand on the Sabbath. Overlooking the commendation due for the miracle of healing, they laid the emphasis upon its being done on the Sabbath; and held up their hands with horror that such a secular action should be performed on such a sacred day. Now, the Savior puts very plainly before them the question, "Is it right to do good on the Sabbath-day?" He put it in a form which only allowed of one reply. The question could, no doubt, have been easily answered by these Scribes and Pharisees, but then it would have condemned themselves, and therefore they were all as mute as mice. Scribes most skilled in splitting hairs, and Pharisees who could measure the border of a garment to the eighth of an inch, declined to answer one of the simplest questions in morals. Mark describes the Savior as looking

round upon them all with anger and grief, as well he might.

You know how minute Mark is in his record: his observation is microscopic, and his description is graphic to the last degree. By the help of Mark's clear words you can easily picture the Savior looking round upon them. He stands up boldly, as one who had nothing to conceal; as one who was about to do that which would need no defense. He challenged observation, though he knew that his opposition to ecclesiastical authority would involve his own death, and hasten the hour of the cross. He did not defy them, but he did make them feel their insignificance as he stood looking round upon them all. Can you conceive the power of that look? The look of a man who is much given to anger has little force in it: it is the blaze of a wisp of straw, fierce and futile. In many cases we almost smile at the impotent rage which looks out from angry eyes; but a gentle spirit, like the Savior's, commands reverence if once moved to indignation. His meek and lowly heart could only have been stirred with anger by some overwhelming cause. We are sure that he did well to be angry.

Even when moved to an indignant look, his anger ended there; he only looked, but spake no word of upbraiding. And the look itself had in it more of pity than of contempt; or, as one puts it, "more of compassion than of passion." Our Lord's look upon that assembly of opponents deserves our earnest regard. He paused long enough in that survey to gaze upon each person, and to let him know what was intended by the glance. Nobody escaped the searching light which that expressive eye flashed upon each malicious watcher. They saw that to him their base conduct was loathsome; he understood them, and was deeply moved by their obstinacy.

Note well that Jesus did not speak a word, and yet he said more without words than another man could have said with them. They were not worthy of a word; neither would more words have had the slightest effect upon them. He saved his words for the poor man with the withered hand; but for these people a look was the best reply: they looked on him, and now he looked on them. This helps me to understand that passage in the Revelation, where the ungodly are represented as crying to the rocks to

cover them, and the hills to hide them from the face of him that sat upon the throne. The Judge has not spoken so much as a single word; not yet has he opened the books; not yet has he pronounced the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed;" but they are altogether terrified by the look of that august countenance. Concentrated love dwells in the face of Jesus, the Judge; but in that dread day, they will see it set on fire with wrath. The wrath of a lion is great, but it is nothing compared with that of the Lamb. I wish I had skill to describe our Lord's look; but I must ask the aid of your understandings and your imaginations to make it vivid to your minds.

When Mark has told us of that look, he proceeds to mention the mingled feelings which were revealed by it. In that look there were two things—there were anger and grief—indignation and inward sorrow. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was angry that they should willingly blind their eyes to a truth so plain, an argument so convincing. He had put to them a question to which there could only be one answer, and they would not give it; he had thrown light on their eyes, and they would not see it; he had utterly destroyed their chosen pretext for opposition, and yet they would persist in opposing him. Evidently it is possible to be angry and to be right. Hard to many is the precept "Be ye angry, and sin not;" and this fact renders the Savior's character all the more admirable, since he so easily accomplished what is so difficult to us. He could be angry with the sin, and yet never cease to compassionate the sinner. His was not anger which desired evil to its object; no touch of malevolence was in it; it was simply love on fire, love burning with indignation against that which is unlovely.

Mingled with this anger there was grief. He was heart broken because their hearts were so hard. As Manton puts it, "He was softened because of their hardness." His was not the pitiless flame of wrath which burns in a dry eye; he had tears as well as anger. His thunder-storm brought a shower of pity with it. The Greek word is hard to translate. There is what an eminent critic calls a sort of togetherness in the word; he grieved with them. He felt that the hardness of their hearts would one day bring upon them an awful misery; and foreseeing that coming grief, he grieved with them by anticipation. He was grieved at their hardness because it

would injure themselves; their blind enmity vexed him because it was securing their own destruction. He was angry because they were wilfully rejecting the light which would have illuminated them with heavenly brightness, the life which could have quickened them into fullness of joy. They were thus determinedly and resolutely destroying their own souls out of hatred to him, and he was angry more for their sakes than his own.

There is something very admirable in our Savior even when we see him in an unusual condition. Even when he grows angry with men, he is angry with them because they will not let him bless them, because they will persevere in opposing him for reasons which they cannot themselves support, and dare not even own. If I had been one of the disciples who were with him in the synagogue, I think I should have burned with indignation to see them all sitting there, refusing to forego their hate, and yet unable to say a word in defense of it. I doubt not, the loving spirit of John grew warm. What a horrible thing that any creature in the shape of a man should act so unworthily to the blessed Son of God, as to blame him for doing good! What a disgrace to our race, for men to be so inhuman as to wish to see their fellow-man remain withered, and to dare to blame the gentle Physician who was about to make him perfectly whole! Man is indeed at enmity with God when he finds an argument for hate in a deed of love.

Our first question is, What was the cause of this anger and this grief? Then let us enquire, Does anything of this sort rest in us? Do we cause our Lord anger and grief? And, thirdly, let us ask, what should be our feeling, when we see that something about us may cause, or does cause him, anger and grief? Oh that the Holy Spirit may bless this sermon to all who hear me this day!

I. WHAT CAUSED THIS ANGER AND GRIEF? It was their hardness of heart. To use other words, it was the callousness of their conscience their want of feeling. Their hearts had, as it were, grown horny, and had lost their proper softness. The hand may furnish us with an illustration. Some persons have very delicate hands: the blind who read raised type with their fingers develop special sensitiveness, and this sensitiveness is of great value. But when men are put to pick oakum, or break stones, or do

other rough work, their hands become hard and callous: even so is it with the heart, which ought to be exceedingly tender; through continuance in sin it becomes callous and unfeeling. Use is second nature: the traveller's foot gets hardened to the way, his face becomes hardened to the cold, his whole constitution is hardened by his mode of life. Persons have taken deadly drugs by little and little till they have been hardened against their results: we read in history that Mithridates had used poison till at last he was unable to kill himself thereby, so hardened had he become. But hardening is of the worst kind when it takes place in the heart. The heart ought to be all tenderness; and when it is not, the life must be coarse and evil. Yet multitudes are morally smitten with ossification of the heart. Do we not know some men in whom the heart is simply a huge muscle? If they have any hearts they are made of leather, for they have no pity for anybody, no fellow-feeling even for their relatives. God save us from a hard heart: it leads to something worse than death! A heart of flesh may be gone out of a man, and instead thereof he may have a heart of stone: Scripture even calls it "an adamant stone"—unfeeling, unyielding, impenetrable, obstinate. Those enemies of our Lord who sat in the synagogue that Sabbath-day were incorrigible: they were desperately set on hating him, and they strengthened themselves in the resolve that they would not be convinced, and would not cease to oppose him, let him say or do whatever he might. Our Lord Jesus became angry, grieved, and sorrowful with them.

What was their exact fault?

First, they would not see, though the case was clear. He had set the truth so plainly before them that they were obliged to strain their understandings to avoid being convinced: they had to draw down the blinds of the soul, and put up the shutters of the mind, to be able not to see. There are none so blind as those that will not see, and these were of that blindest order; they were blind people that had eyes and boasted that they could see, and therefore their sin was utterly without excuse. Ah, me! I fear that we have many around us still, who know, but do not act on their knowledge; who do not wish to be convinced and converted, but harden themselves against known duty and plain right.

What was more, what these people were forced to see they would not acknowledge. They sullenly held their tongues when they were bound to speak. Does it not happen to many persons that the gospel forces itself upon their belief? They feel that they could not conjure up an argument against the divine truth which is set before them: the word comes with such demonstration that it smites them with sledge-hammer force; but they do not intend to admit its power, and so they brace themselves up to bear the blow without yielding. They shut their mouths against the water of life which is held up to them in the golden cup of the gospel. No child could shut his teeth more desperately against medicine than they against the gospel. Any man may take a horse to the water, but ten thousand cannot make him drink, and this is proved in many a hearer of the word. There sat these Scribes and Pharisees: it is a wonder that the stones did not cry out against them, they were so doggedly determined not to admit that which they could not deny. Are there none of that breed among us still?

More than that, while they would not see what was so plain, they were diligently seeking to spy out flaws and faults where there were none, namely, in the Lord Jesus. So there are many who profess that they cannot understand the gospel, but they have understanding enough to cavil at it, and cast slurs upon it. They have a cruelly keen eye for non-existent errors in Scripture: they find this mistake in Deuteronomy, and the other in Genesis. What great wisdom, to be diligent in making discoveries against one's own eternal interests! The gospel of the Lord Jesus is man's only hope of salvation: what a pity to count it the height of cleverness to destroy our only hope! Alas for captious sceptics! They are sharp-sighted as eagles against themselves, but they are blind as bats to those things which make for their peace. These Scribes and Pharisees tried to discover the undiscoverable, namely, some fault in Jesus, and yet they could not or would not see the wickedness of their own opposition to him.

They dared to sit in judgment upon the Lord, who proved himself by his miracles to be divine, and yet all the while they professed great reverence for God and for his law. Though they were fighting against God, they made the pretense of being very zealous for him, and especially for his



holy day. This is an old trick of the enemy, to fight true religion with false religion, to battle with godliness in the name of orthodoxy. This is a hollow sham, and we do not wonder that our ever sincere and truthful Lord felt indignant at it. You will know yourselves whether you ever do this. I fear that many do. By their zeal for the externals of religion they try to justify their opposition to the vital possession of it.

Brethren, I pray that none of us may be hypocrites, for the Lord Jesus cannot endure such. He cares not for whitewashed sepulchres, but proclaims woe unto all false professors. Here let me give you a parable:— In our fine old churches and cathedrals you see monuments raised to the dead. These are rich in costly marble and fine statuary, with here and there a touch of gold, and a Latin inscription flattering the dead. What a goodly show! Yet what does it all mean? Why, that corpses are underneath. Take down those marble slabs, remove a little earth, and you come to corruption and moving loathsomeness. Graves are fitter for cemeteries than for the place which is consecrated to the living God. I do not mean by this any censure upon the tombs, which are well enough; I only use them as a parable. What shall I say of those men and women of whom they are the type and emblem? They are dead while they live, and have a form of godliness but deny the power of it; they present a fair outside, but secretly practice all manner of abominations. What have these to do in the church of God? What a horror to know that there are such in the assemblies of the saints! O my hearers, dread the hardness which would permit you to be hypocrites! Shun above all things that deadness of soul which makes a false profession possible, for this is very grievous to the Lord.

A hard heart is insensible, impenetrable, inflexible. You can no more affect it than if you should strike your hand against a stone wall. Satan has fortified it, and made its possessor to be steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the works of sin. The enmity of such a heart leads it to resist all that is good; its hardness returns the efforts of love in the form of opposition. Our Savior saw before him persons who would oppose him whatever he did, and would not change their minds however they might be made to see their error. Let this suffice to explain the scene before us of our Lord grieved and angry.

II. I must now come closer home, while I enquire, IS THERE ANYTHING OF THIS SORT AMONG US? Oh, for help in the work of self-examination!

Remember, we may grieve the Savior because of the hardness of our hearts, and yet be very respectable people. We may go to the synagogue, as these did; we may be Bible-readers, as the Scribes were; we may practice all the outward forms of religion, as the Pharisees did; and yet the Lord Jesus may be grieved with us because of the hardness of our heart.

We may anger the Lord, and yet be strictly non-committal. I dare say there are some here who are not Christians, and yet they never say a word against Christianity. They are strictly neutral. They judge that the less they think or say about this great matter the better. Jesus was angry that men should be silent when honesty and candour demanded speech of them. You must not think you are going to escape by saying, "I am not a professor." There can be no third party in this case. In the eternal world there is no provision made for neutrals. Those who are not with Jesus are against him, and they that gather not with him are scattering abroad. You are either wheat or tares, and there is nothing between the two. O sirs, you grieve him though you do not openly oppose him! Some of you are especially guilty, for you ought to be amongst the foremost of his friends. Shame on you to treat the Lord so ill!

You may be very tender towards other people; in fact, you may have, like the old Jewish king, great tenderness towards everybody but the Lord. Did not Zedekiah say, "The king is not he that can do anything against you?" I know many who are so fond of pleasing others that they cannot be Christians. They have not the moral courage to oppose any one for the truth's sake. O sirs, this may well make Jesus look upon you with anger and grief; that you should be so self denying, so kind, and so considerate to others, and yet act so cruelly to him and to yourselves. To yourselves, it is a cruel kindness, to save yourselves from speaking out. Your fear is driving you to spiritual suicide. To save a little present trouble you are heaping up wrath and judgment.

Alas, this hardness of heart may be in us, though we have occasional meltings! I think that man has a very hard heart who is at times deeply moved, but violently represses his emotions. He hurries home to his chamber greatly distressed, but in a short time he rallies, and shakes off his fears. He goes to a funeral, and trembles on the brink of the grave, but joins his merry companions, and is at his sins again. He likes to hear a stirring sermon, but he is careful not to go beyond his depth while hearing it. He is on the watch against his own welfare, and is careful to keep out of the way of a blessing. By a desperate resolve he holds out against the pressure of the grace of God, as it comes to him in exhortations and entreaties. He is often rebuked, but he hardens his neck; he is occasionally on the verge of yielding, but he recovers his evil firmness, and holds on his way with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. How often have we hoped better things for some of you! How often have you blighted those hopes! You must be very hard in heart to hold out so long. It shows a strong constitution when a man has frequently been near to death, and yet has recovered; and it shows an awful vitality of evil when you have been driven to the verge of repentance, and then have deliberately turned back to the way of evil, sinning against conscience and conviction.

Yes, and we may have this hardness of heart, and yet keep quite clear of gross sins. I have wondered at some men, how they have guarded themselves in certain directions, and yet have been lax in other matters. While they have gone to excess in sins against God, they have been scrupulous in avoiding wrong towards man. Their sins have not been stones, but sand: I hope they do not forget that "sand is heavy," and that a vessel can as easily be wrecked upon a quicksand as upon a rock. Your outwardly moral man is often a hardened rebel against God. His pride of character helps to harden him against the gospel of grace. He condemns others who are really no worse than himself. There is an abominable kind of prudence which keeps some men out of certain sins: they are too mean to be prodigal, too fond of ease to plunge into risky sins. Many a man is carried off his feet by a sudden flood of temptation, and sins grievously, and yet at heart he may be by no means so hardened as the cool, calculating transgressor. Woe unto the man who has learned to sin

deliberately, and to measure out iniquity as if it were a lawful merchandize, to be weighed by the ounce and the pound! Why, sir, on account of the evident strength of your mind better things are expected of you. You cannot plead violence of passion, or feebleness of judgment. For you there will be reserved the deeper hell, though you escape present condemnation.

This hardness of heart may not overcome you to the full at present, and yet you may have grave cause to dread it. Hardness of heart creeps over men by insensible degrees. The hardest hearted man in the world was not so once; the flesh of his heart was petrified little by little. He that can now curse and blaspheme once wept for his boyish faults at his mother's knee, and would have shuddered at the bare idea of falling asleep without a prayer. There are those about us who would give worlds to be free from the bondage of habit, so as to feel as once they did. Their soul is as parched as the Sahara, it has forgotten the dew of tears; their heart is hot as an oven with evil passions, and no soft breath of holy penitence ever visits it. Oh that they could weep! Oh that they could feel! Repentance is hid from their eyes. There remains nothing sensitive about them, except it be the base imitation of it which comes over them when they are in a maudlin state through strong drink. What calamity can be greater? What can be said of sin that is more terrible than that it hardens and deadens? Well did the apostle say, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

I cannot forbear saying that among the hardened there are some who may be said especially to provoke the Lord. Among these we must mention those who, from their birth and education, received an unusually keen moral sense, but have blunted it by repeated crimes. Those sin doubly who have had double light, and special tenderness of nature. Judge, O ye sons of the godly, whether there are not many such among you! Esau was all the more a "profane person" because he was a son of Isaac, knew something about the covenant heritage, and had certain fine touches of nature which ought to have made him a better man.

This is also true of those who have been indulged by Providence. God has dealt with them with wonderful favor; they have continued long in good

health; they have been prosperous in business; their children have grown up around them; they have all that heart can wish; and yet God receives from them no gratitude; indeed, they hardly give a thought to him. Ingratitude is sure to bring a curse upon the man who is guilty of it. Alas, the ungrateful are numerous everywhere! Some who are well known to me should have remembered the Lord, for he has granted them a smooth path, a full wallet, and sunshine to travel in. If there were an honest heart in you, your hearts would cleave to the Lord in deep and hearty love. Silken cords of love are stronger with true men than fetters of iron are to thieves.

Let me not forget the obligations of others who have been often chastened, for this side of the question has its force also. Certain persons have endured many trials, they have often suffered pain of body, and have been brought at times to the verge of the grave; they have lost the beloved of their eyes with a stroke; they have followed their children to the grave: sorrows have been multiplied to them. Yet, after all, they are hard of heart. The fire of affliction has not softened their iron nature. Why should they be stricken any more? They will revolt more and more. The Lord himself cries, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" Long-suffering fails: mercy is weary. There are no more rods to use upon you, as the bullock kicks out against the goad, so do you resist the chastening of the Lord God. The Savior looks upon all such with that grieving anger of which the text speaks.

Alas! I dare not omit those towards whom the Savior must feel this anger very especially, because they have been the subjects of tender, earnest, faithful ministry. I will not say much of my own personal ministry, which has been spent for years upon many of you; but assuredly if it has not affected you, it is not for want of strong desire and intense longing to be of service to your souls. God is my witness that I have kept back nothing of his truth. I have never flattered you, neither have I occupied this pulpit to make it a platform for self-display. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. But, apart from this, certain of you have had the tender ministries of a holy mother who is now with God, of a wise father who lives still to pray for you, of affectionate teachers who instructed you aright, and loving friends who sought your good. Father,

your child has wooed you. Young man, your newly-converted wife has agonized for you, and is agonizing even now. Very select have been the agencies used upon you. Choice and musical the voices which have endeavored to charm you. If these do not reach you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. If Jesus himself were here again among men, how could even he reach you? If all the means he has already used have failed with you, I know not what is to be done with you. The Savior himself will, I fear, leave you; with a look of grief and anger he will turn from you because of the hardness of your heart. Stay, Lord Jesus, stay a little longer! Peradventure they will be won next time. Bid not thy Spirit take his everlasting flight. Do not swear in thy wrath that they shall not enter into thy rest, but be patient with them yet a little longer, for thy mercy's sake.

III. We must now close. Oh that my poor pleadings may not have been lost upon you! In many things which I have spoken there has been a loud voice to many of you; now hear me while I raise the question, **WHAT SHOULD BE OUR FEELING IN REFERENCE TO THIS SUBJECT?**

First, let us renounce for ever the habit of cavilling. These Scribes and Pharisees were great word-spinners, critics, fault-finders. They found fault with the Savior for healing on the Sabbath-day. He had not broken God's law of the Sabbath, he had only exposed their error upon that point. If the Sabbath had not furnished an opportunity for objection, they would soon have found another; for they meant to object: one way or another, they resolved to contradict. Multitudes of persons in this present day are most effectually hardening their hearts by the habit of cavilling. While others are struck by the beauty of the gospel which they hear, these people only remember a mispronunciation made by the preacher. Having commenced in this line they begin to sit in judgment on the gospel preached, and before long the Scriptures themselves are subjected to their alteration and correction. Reverence is gone, and self-sufficiency reigns supreme. They criticize God's word. Any fool can do that, but only a fool will do it. They give themselves the airs of literary men; they are not like common-place hearers: they require something more intellectual. They look down with contempt upon people who enjoy the gospel, and are proving the power of it in their lives. They themselves are persons of

remarkable mind; men of light and leading, and it gives them distinction to act the part of sceptics. They show their great learning by turning up their noses at the plain teachings of the Bible. It seems to be the great feature of a cultured man nowadays to wear a sneer upon his face when he meets with believers in inspiration. An idiot can attain in five minutes to a high degree of contempt of others; do not exhibit such folly. Pride of this sort ruins those who indulge it. To be unbelieving in order to show one's superiority is an unsatisfactory business. Let us never imitate that evil spirit, who in the garden of Eden proved himself to be the patron and exemplar of all sceptics. Remember how he raised the question, "Yea, hath God said?" Forget not how he went further, and, like a sage philosopher, hinted that there was a larger hope: "Ye shall not surely die," said he. Then he advanced to lay down a daring radical philosophy, and whispered, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." This old serpent has left his trail on many minds at the present day, and you can see it in the slimy questions and poisonous suggestions of the age. Get away from cavilling: it is of all labors the least remunerative.

Next, let us feel an intense desire to submit ourselves unto the Lord Jesus. If he be in the synagogue, let us ask him to heal us, and to do it in his own way. Let us become his disciples, and follow him whithersoever he goeth. Yield yourselves unto God. Be as melted wax to the seal. Be as the water of the lake, which is moved with every breath of the wind. All he wills is our salvation. Lord Jesus, let thy will be done!

Let us be careful to keep away from all hardening influences, whether of books, or men, or habits, or pleasures. If there be any company which deadens us as to spiritual things, which hinders our prayers, shakes our faith, or damps our zeal, let us get out of it, and keep out of it. If any amusement lessens our hatred of sin, let us never go near it; if any book clouds our view of Jesus, let us never read it. We grow hard soon enough through the needful contact with the world which arises out of work-day life and business pursuits; let us not increase these evils. Shun the idler's talk, the scorner's seat, and the way of the ungodly. Shun false doctrine, worldliness, and strife. Keep clear of frivolity and trifling. Be in earnest, and be pure; live near to God, and remove far off from the throne of

iniquity.

Lastly, use all softening influences. Ask to have your heart daily rendered sensitive by the indwelling of the quickening Spirit. Go often to hear the word: it is like a fire, and like a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. Dwell at the foot of the cross it is there that tenderness is born into human hearts. Jesus makes all hearts soft, and then stamps his image on them. Entreat the Holy Ghost to give you a very vivid sense of sin, and a very intense dread of it. Pray often according to the tenor of Charles Wesley's hymn, in which he cries -

"Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make!  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,  
And keep it still awake.

"Oh, may the least omission pain  
My well-instructed soul  
And drive me to the blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole!"

If such be the condition of our heart our Lord will not be angry with us. He will look round upon us with joy, and take a delight in us.

So far I have kept to the text, bearing all the while the burden of the Lord. If it be not heavy hearing to you, it is certainly painful preaching to me. That same love which made the loving Jesus grieved has driven me to speak after this fashion. Not that I love men as much as he did; but a spark from his fire has kindled in my soul, and is burning there according to the measure of grace given. But now, my dear hearers, let me indulge myself with a word of gospel. Surely there are some among you who desire to lose your hardness. You are crying to yourselves -

"Heart of stone, relent! relent!  
Melt by Jesus' love subdued!"

To you there is abundant cause of hope. He who made the heart can melt



it. Job said, "God maketh my heart soft." It is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to renew our nature; indeed, he makes us to be born again, working on the behalf of our Lord Jesus, whose royal word is, "Behold I make all things new." The Holy Ghost can work in us conviction of sin, the new birth, faith in the Lord Jesus, deep contrition, and holy tenderness. Do you desire that it should be so? Will you join me in a silent prayer that his melting operations may at this moment be felt in your soul?

To you is the word of this salvation sent. The Lord God has undertaken to glorify himself in redeeming his people from all iniquity. He has entered into covenant with his chosen, and all who believe in his Son Jesus are comprehended in that number. The covenant speaketh on this wise: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26.) See how this promise exactly meets your case! That kind of heart which you so greatly need shall be given you, though indeed it is a miracle of miracles to do it. A new arm or leg would be a wonder; but what shall be said of a new heart? The spirit which you also so greatly require is to be bestowed, your whole tone, temper, and tendency shall be altered in an extraordinary manner. The Lord can drive out the evil spirit, and then he can renew your spirit, and fill your being with his own Holy Spirit. As for that nature which refuses to feel or yield, or break or bend, the Lord is able to take this altogether away. What an operation to perform, and yet leave the patient alive! "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." None but he that made the heart could execute such delicate surgery as this. Do you think that it can never be done in your case? Remember that the Lord never speaks beyond his line; there is no boasting with him. His arm has not waxed short; he is still able to save unto the uttermost. When the old stony heart is gone, the Lord can fill up the empty space with the most gentle and sensitive affections, even as he says, "I will give you an heart of flesh." By this means we shall be made to stand in awe of God's word; we shall tremble before him; we shall also feel a childlike gratitude, a filial love, and a holy obedience. Instead of needing to be smitten with a hammer we shall feel the slightest touch of the divine finger, and shall answer to the faintest call of the divine voice. What a change!

Now this is matter of promise. See how the verse glitters with "I will," and "I will." The Lord, who is able to perform his word, has spoken in this fashion, and he will not run back from his promise. But please read the thirty-seventh verse of this thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, and mark it well. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Will you not enquire? Will you not ask the Lord to do this for you? If so, your prayer has begun to be answered. Your desire is a token that the stone is softening, and flesh is taking its place. O Lord, grant that it may be so! Believe in the Lord Jesus that he is able to do this unto you, and it shall be according to your faith.

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## **Jesus Appearing To Mary Magdalene**

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. - Mark 16:9

The doctrine of a risen Savior is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take us many a discourse to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but to know that he has risen, and to have fellowship with him as such,-communing with the risen Savior by possessing a risen life,-seeing him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Savior more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you rest not contented even there. Brethren and sisters in Christ, I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith, and though you may not touch him, yet may you be privileged to

converse with him and to know that he is risen, you yourselves being risen in him to newness of life. To know a crucified Savior as having crucified all my sins, is a rich kind of knowledge; and to know a risen Savior as having justified me, and to realize that he has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through his own newness of life this is a high style of experience: short of it, none of us ought to be satisfied to rest. In fine, I would have you this morning, like the blessed Magdalene, among those to whom Jesus Christ should manifest himself after his resurrection, as he doth not unto the world.

Let us come at once to the consideration of this first appearance of the Savior, after he had left the tomb. He appears to Mary Magdalene. There must have been some reason for the choice. We shall notice first of all, who she was; then, how she sought; and, thirdly, how she found

I. First, we shall have to take into consideration this morning who SHE WAS.

Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene." Why? One answer might be, because he chose to do so. For in his sovereignty he may reveal himself to whomsoever he wills, and he may withhold himself from whomsoever he shall please. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," may be a very grating truth to human ears, but it is truth for all that, and he who doth not acknowledge it, scarcely puts God into his true place as sitting upon the throne and doing as he wills with his own. I should he content to know that he appeared to Mary Magdalene first and not to ask another question if I thought it ill to ask it, for "he is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth him good;" and if he will reveal himself first to her, let it be so; herein I see his grace and say, let his name be magnified in the sovereignty of his love.

But we may go a little into the matter, I think, and perhaps find some reasons. He revealed himself first to Mary Magdalene, a woman. Was it not most meet that a woman should first see the risen Savior. She was first in the transgression, let her be first in the justification. In yon garden she was first to work our woe; let her in that other garden be the first to see him who works our weal. She takes the apple of that bitter tree which

brings us all our sorrow; let her be the first to see that mighty gardener, who has planted a tree which brings forth fruit unto everlasting life. A woman let it be, for woman was last at the cross, and last at the sepulcher; let her be earliest to return. The Marys embalmed the Savior, and put him into the tomb; let one of their company be selected to be the first to see him. Sisters in Christ Jesus, there is a curse which falls more heavily on you than on others—a curse which is peculiar to you; but herein you have reason to rejoice, since "Unto you a Child is born, unto you a Son is given." It is by that child-bearing which brings you sorrow, that we have been delivered, even through the birth of him, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us, whom you are privileged first to see, because he is peculiarly yours. "The seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head."

The text seems to indicate that the particular reason why he appeared to this woman first was, because out of her he had cast seven devils. Perhaps no person mentioned in the Scripture has been more singularly slandered than Mary Magdalene. It has been supposed that she was a harlot, and her name has been appended to societies which have the merciful object of endeavoring to reclaim the fallen. In that sense let me say Magdalene never was a "Magdalen." She was not an unchaste woman. I think I can show you that it is quite impossible that she could have been. She was a woman of substance, and ministered to Christ's necessities; she was possessed of wealth and property, and spent what she had upon the Savior, and was not likely, therefore, to have been one who earned her living by the pitiful trade of her sin. Moreover, she had seven devils, and that, of itself, rendered her utterly incapable, one would think, of having been guilty of the sins of the flesh. A woman, a demoniac, mad with seven devils! Who would dream that a poor creature under so dreadful a torture as this could have been a harlot! The thing is clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind. But mark you, I believe if Magdalene were here herself, she would not regret that her purer name has been appended to these poor fallen ones. Herein she has communion with her Lord and Master, who was "numbered with the transgressors," and who gave himself and all that he had in order that he might lift poor sinners from the degradation into which they have fallen. "No," Magdalene would say, "do not blot my name off from yonder building; do not take it from that

Rescue Society; I, though I have been kept from this iniquity, am well content to be the patron of all those who seek to win sinners from their sin." Nevertheless, there is this about it-and here is where the mistake first arose-the possession of a devil is typical, in the Word of God, of sin. When we want to translate the miracle into spiritual meaning we are always compelled to use the indwelling of a devil to be the metaphor, the picture of the indwelling of sin. Now as Mary Magdalene had seven devils, though she was not therefore any the greater sinner, for she could not help the devils being there, yet she was thereby the more polluted; she was sevenfold polluted, and she becomes most rightly the type of the great sinner, the representative, in fact, of the very class of sinners to whom her name has been given. She was not literally such a sinner, but she was typically so, for in her there were seven devils. Typically she stands at the head of those who are the greatest of all sinners against the law, and goodness, and grace of God, but she was not so except as a type.

Now, I think you see some reason why she should be selected as the first one to be seen by Christ, because she had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power. In her he had won a special and signal victory over the hosts of hell; a perfect number of those evil spirits had been entrenched within her, and Christ's victorious arm had driven them all out. She should ever be regarded as a most illustrious specimen of what the great Savior can achieve. In this sense, I say, she was fitted to be the first that Jesus Christ should look upon and speak to, because out of all his disciples who were daily with him, I know not of one who had experienced such a cure as that which had fallen to her lot. Let us learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should never make us think that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. If Magdalene was not a harlot, yet I say she stands as the type of those who are possessors of seven sins, and deadly and damnable sins too; and inasmuch as this woman is taken into the most intimate communion with Christ, and has the priority even above Peter, and James, and John, there is no reason, poor fallen sinner, why thou shouldst not have as rich a feast at the banquet of divine mercy, as the very best and most chaste, the most upright, pure, and clean. If thou comest to Christ, if the seven devils are cast out of thee, all these things shall never be mentioned against thee; but thou shalt stand on a par with

those, who were preserved by providence and restraining grace from going into gross sins. When the prodigal came back, he was not told that he might eat his father's bread, but it must be in the kitchen; he was not told that he might sit at the table, but it must be at the far end, below the salt. No, but he sits at the table as the most honored guest, and his father feasts with him as if he had never gone astray!

So is it evermore with my God, to the chief of sinners. You shall not be permitted to eat the crumbs that fall from the table, but the daintiest viands shall be yours, yea, and if you wish it, and will press forward and seek it, you shall have Benjamin's mess, you shall have more than others. Oh! though you have been black and vile, he can make you so white and fair that he will not blush to treat you as the man in the parable did his little ewe lamb. You shall drink of his cup and sleep in his bosom, and be very, very dear to him, sinner though you have been. This seems to be upon the very surface of the text, that Mary Magdalene was selected to be the first to see the Savior because she was a woman-a woman out of whom seven devils had been cast-a type of a great sinner.

Again, she was a woman in whom mighty grace had proved its power. It is a well known fact, that devils never went out of men in the Savior's day, willingly. They had always to be cast out. You find them foaming at the mouth as soon as Christ is seen, and when he says, "I command thee to come out of him," the devil tears the man, rolls him in the dust, and subjects him to unusual spasms of pain and agony, before he will depart. Thus seven devils had been driven out of Mary - forced out of her. Mary was no free-willer; her deliverance was achieved by irresistible, eternal, sovereign grace. And surely those are privileged to see most of Christ who know that their salvation is not of man, neither by man, but by the will and power of the gracious God alone. My brethren, there may be some of you who think that the devils went out of you; I know they did not go out of me. They had to be driven out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. There may be some who boast of the freeness of their wills, who think that they can come to Christ of themselves, but Mary did not, for no demoniacs ever sought to find Christ. They rather shunned the presence of the Savior, and cried, "What have we to do with thee; art thou come to torment us before the time." We rather hated grace and despised Christ;

offers of mercy were lost upon us; proclamations of pardon, though honestly given, we trampled under foot; it was only when the mighty Jesus, dressed in robes of love, came forth in the greatness of his strength, that we were compelled to yield, and our captivity was led captive by his might. I think that Mary Magdalene was thus selected, because she was a choice instance of irresistible grace.

As soon as the devils were cast out of Mary, she appears to have left whatever her earthly position may have been, and to have become a constant attendant on the Savior. If you will kindly turn to the eighth chapter of Luke, you will see that our Lord was attended not only by men, but by women. "It came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." It appears, then, that Magdalene was one who abode with Christ Jesus, his perpetual and constant companion. Some heard him occasionally she heard him always. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, entertained him with a feast now and then; she was always giving him of her substance. There were many like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who were on Christ's side, but did not take up Christ's cross; she did. In all his afflictions she was afflicted; when he was "despised and rejected of men," so was she. She was with him, bearing his cross, and suffering his reproach. I like the thought of her being with the Savior. How much she must have seen! She saw the most of his miracles. How much she must have heard! She heard, with her own ears, his choice words; yea, and in the secret conclave, where he opened up his parable to his favored disciples, Mary was privileged to be there, with a few other honorable women. I suppose her to have been a woman of ripe years, as probably most of the others were-a matron. She was neglecting no household duties; it is clear she never had any; a woman with seven devils could not have domestic duties. One would think her friends must have been exceedingly glad to have her under the teaching of our Lord; and so long as they knew that she was in health with the Savior, they probably thought her to be in the place most fitting for her, as mad people

are supposed to be most fitly attended, when they are accompanied by their keeper or their physician. Having been a demoniac, she was happily freed from all household ties and bonds; and now what if I say that Christ was her father, her brother, her husband, her friend, her children, her everything? He was her family, and there was she, daily with him. We read that when Christ preached a certain truth, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Not so the Magdalene. Let him preach whatever he might, the woman of Magdala still hung upon his lips. To her every word was honey, every syllable was a pearl. She treasured all, she fed upon all; she abode with Jesus. O dear friends, I wish we could get into this position, when our calling should be to serve Christ, and when our place should be always with Christ. I do not wonder that Christ appeared first to her, when I recollect that Christ had so long been her first, her chief delight. She had nothing in the world but Christ. It strikes me that very likely her being a demoniac had so separated her from all human sympathy that there were none that loved her, none that cared for her, except the disciples and the society she had found through being a follower of Christ; and Jesus, pitying her, would not send her away as he did the most of those whom he cured.

One thing we must not pass over, she spent her substance in relieving his wants. The bag was not often full, while Judas had the keeping of it; and while there were so many poor, and Christ had such a tender heart, I will be bound to say that no surplus was ever allowed to mould there; but this woman, and the other Marys, took care that it should never be quite empty, and that there should be something for the Savior when he wanted it. She was not the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment over Christ's head, but her whole life long, her constant income was her alabaster box, and she spent what she had, in ministering to the wants of her Lord. Brothers and sisters, if we would see much of Christ, let us serve him. Depend upon it, you that live unto yourselves, that save your wealth when you ought to give it, are not indulged with that fellowship with Jesus which others have, who have consecrated themselves and their substance wholly to the Lord. I am sure that by not giving, you miss infinite pleasure; I speak not now concerning your safety, I believe you are saved through faith in Christ Jesus; but if you do not devote yourselves and all that you have to the Master's cause,



you never will be admitted to those choicer joys, to those more intimate fellowships, which belong to those who live close to their Savior in consecration. Find me the happiest Christians, and I am sure they are those who are most attached to their Lord. Tell me who they are that sit oftenest under the banner of his love, and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. Perhaps for this reason Mary was privileged by the grace of God to be the first to see the risen Savior.

## II. The second enquiry was, HOW SHE SOUGHT.

If any of us would have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, how are we to obtain it? We will use her as our guide.

And first, Mary sought the Savior very early in the morning; by which we learn, that we must betimes begin to seek our Lord. If thou canst wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with him by-and-by, thou wilt never have fellowship at all; for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungering and a thirsting heart. If a man be hungry you cannot say to him "Be patient; wait!" "My hunger craves," says he, "give me food, I shall die if I am not fed." "But you must not be impatient; you must curb your appetite; wait; be still." But the poor man replies, "I cannot; my hunger is so sharp. Oh, give me bread; I famish, I expire." You may reason with him, but there is no reasoning with a hungry stomach; and when a man's soul begins to hunger and thirst after Christ, it is not "To-morrow I will see him," but "now! now! now!" To-day, which God calls "the accepted time," the Christian thinks to be the most acceptable time. I would have fellowship with Jesus now: while standing on this platform, mine eyes desire to see him; my head longs to place itself upon his bosom. My soul would cry with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." If, then, you want Jesus to reveal himself to you, seek him now where you are. This pew may be as good as the garden. Your own little quiet room when the service is over, will be quite as near to the Savior as was the sepulcher; only seek him at once, and suffer no delays. Come, Jesus come, for the night is far spent! Arise great Sun of Righteousness, and chase my gloom away!

She sought him also, as you will observe, with very great boldness. It is said, she stood at the sepulcher. The disciples had fled. Read the eighth verse, "They went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." But Mary, we are told in John's account, "stood" at the sepulcher. "They may run who will," said she, "nothing can frighten me when I seek the Lord." There go the women, Mary and Susanna the wife of Chuza; there they go, all frightened. There is Peter, the bold Peter; he takes to his heels; and even John, the loving John, follows after him; but Mary stands still. "Nay," says she, "let the worst come that can, nothing can be worse than losing my Master: if death itself should drag me away, it can only take me into the sepulcher where my Savior went, and perhaps I might find him there; and if so, death were welcome!" Consider how many fears this timid woman must have had. It is not always safe to go abroad early in the morning. Certainly it was not in the city of Jerusalem. When the city was crowded, for a feeble woman to rise early in the morning and go out to the tomb was not safe. And yet she was not afraid. Let the shadows of the morning be still on the earth, she heeds them not; the shadows in her own soul are worse to her. You might have supposed she would have fears of the angels. She was not. She had had dealings with devils, and she was not to be frightened by angels. Seven devils at once dwelt in her. She knew too much of the supernatural to be frightened at the fall of a leaf, or any noise that might make her weaker companions turn pale. If then you would have Christ to be with you, seek him boldly, beloved. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world; dare its pleasures; laugh at its threats; despise its promises. Count that "the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Press on where others flee. Be like a lion where others turn their backs, and Christ will then show himself to you.

She stood at the sepulcher, she sought Christ very faithfully. Some find it hard to stand by a living Savior, but she will stand by a dead one. All the disciples forsook him and fled when he was only in captivity, but she cleaves to him when his body is in the sepulcher. Brave woman! Thou wilt not only stand by the Master, but by the Master's sepulcher. True heroine! Thou lovest even the couch where his dead form sleeps. I would

that we sought Christ after this mode, willing to stand by the very form of sound words which has been delivered to us, standing by the doctrine as well as by the person, cleaving and clinging to the very least thing that has to do with Christ, feeling that if he has sanctioned it, it is ours to die for the sepulcher as well as for the man. Oh, if we sought Christ with such faithfulness, we should not long lack the comfort of his presence!

Still note further, John tells us, she "stood without at the sepulcher weeping," which makes me remark that she sought Jesus very earnestly, for as she stood there, not finding him, she wept. I do not read that the others did this. They loved the Savior, but they did not love so much. At any rate, they had not her sensitiveness and delicacy of soul. She wept. I think I know why she wept. "My Savior is gone," said she, "I cannot find him." Then the thoughts of his sad death came rushing full upon her soul. She thought she saw that dreadful scene over again that had made her heart ache and throb. She fancied she saw him again dragged through the howling populace, abused and despised, with his poor back all covered with gore. She thought she beheld once more that blessed body torn with the nails. She marked again the anguish of the fever which came upon him as he hung upon the tree. She had been the last to watch him. She stood and watched him with the other women, and now she cannot bear the thought of all that he has suffered, and the fear that he has gone, gone, gone for ever! She weeps; and the Savior could not bear to see her weep. Methinks those tear-droppings were as spells that bound the Savior captive, and made him come forth and show himself to her. If you want Christ's presence, you are sure to get it if you weep after it! If you have gone so far that you cannot be happy unless he come and say to you, "Thou art my beloved," -- if you cannot be contented without a kiss from those dear lips, you will have it. He cannot deny those tears; those are heart-breakers to him; those drops shall burn their way into his soul; you shall look into the face bedewed with tears, and see the comeliness and beauty of him who was "despised and rejected of men," if you stand without at the sepulcher weeping.

Nor have I quite done. Mary sought him perseveringly, for as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. She had been in it, and found nothing: what made her look again? Have not you, when you have

been seeking for something which you felt you must find, turned out a drawer, and looked through it carefully, turning over everything, and yet, being exceedingly anxious, you have gone to it once more? you were certain the object was not there, and yet you were so anxious to find it, that you looked again and again; and perhaps you returned six or seven times to the place which you had searched thoroughly well at first, for you were so desirous to find it. It was so with her. She thought, "perhaps my eyes may have been holden: possibly I may not have looked in the right corner: I will even look again;" and so she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher- the tears still flowing from her eyes. This showed her perseverance. Ay, and if we would know Christ, he is not to be found by those who merely call upon him once. Cry to him by the hour together, if he come not to thee. If going into thy chamber once does not give thee a sight of Jesus, go again, go again, go again; for mark me-if thou shouldst be kept waiting seven years for an interview with the great King, if thou shouldst once be favored to see him-if he shall stretch out the silver scepter to thee, thou wilt think thyself all too well rewarded. A thousand, a million years of seeking were well repaid, by one glance from his eyes and one look from his face. Therefore seek perseveringly patiently; anxiously desiring still that the risen Savior would manifest himself to thee.

We have almost done upon this point, but we must note that she sought the Savior only. All her thoughts were concentrated upon him. I think if I had been there, I should have been greatly gratified with a sight of the angels. It strikes me that I should have been for observing what were the forms of beauty which angelic spirits bear. But she seems to have taken no note of them at all, she says to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." What cared she for angels! If as many had come as the seventy thousand chariots of God, they could not have turned away Mary's thoughts from him. To the gardener, her speech is all full of her Lord, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Mary's heart was set on one object. Like an arrow shot from the bow, she sped right on to the target of her heart's desire. And, oh, if Christ be your one and only love, if your heart has cast out all rivals, if your spirit seeketh him, and crieth out for the Lord, even for the living God, you shall soon come and appear

before God.

To close this point, let me say there was much ignorance in Mary. How was it that she sought the living among the dead? There was very little faith in Mary, for faith would have told her that he had risen again on the third day according to his own word. But, oh, there was much love, and Jesus overlooked her want of knowledge and overlooked her weakness of faith, because of the strength of her love. It seems to me that she loved more than John did, for John says, "Then went in that other disciple, and he saw and believed." That is right, John; thou hast most faith. He believes, and then he goes away expecting he should see what he believed; but Mary, though she has far less faith, yet, you will perceive, has so much love, that she will not go away from the sepulcher, but just keeps her place there, watching at the post of his door, not satisfied till she can see him. What love was this! Brethren and sisters, if we would see Jesus, we must love him much. I would God I loved him as my heart desires to love him. I hope you can say,

"Yes, I love thee, and adore;  
Oh for grace to love thee more!"

Let us wake ourselves up to greater intensity of affection. He loved us before the stars were made; loved us with his whole heart; loved us to perfection; loved us unto death. Oh, my cold heart, why dost thou not melt? Oh, my adamant heart, why dost thou not dissolve? For such love as this, we ought to give Jesus our warmest affection blazing like coals of juniper; and if we did, we should not be long without finding him, for love would find him out and fetch him to our arms, and we should see him and rejoice in him.

III. The last point now comes, and that is, How SHE FOUND HIM. He was present, but she could not see him. Christian, Christ is present here this morning, though thou canst not, perhaps, perceive him. You have not to cry to the Savior to come from heaven to visit you: "Where two or three are met together in my name," saith he, "there am I in the midst of them." Jesus is here; in these aisles and pews, in this area and these galleries- Jesus is here. If thou hast no communion with him, believer, it is because unbelief darkens thine eye, or grief, or care, or sin makes thee blind.

But Jesus Christ was discovered to her by a word. I want you to notice that it was not a sermon, it was one word. It was not a long discourse, but just one word of two syllables, and that not a word of mystery, but a simple word: a word, however, which had this about it, it came from Jesus' lips; it was personal and went home to her. this is all you want, beloved, this morning. Fifty thousand words from me would only weary you, but listen to one word from the lip of the Savior, a personal word, waking the recollections of your spirit, proving that he remembers you, and cheerfully on the strength of that word, your soul may stay on earth and finish her threescore years and ten. That one word was her own name -- "Mary." It was spoken just as she had heard it in the days gone by; and, oh, if he would speak to me as he has spoken at the hill Mizar; if he would say of himself as he has done in days never to be forgotten, "I am thy salvation," we should not want any more, one word would be enough. Oh, beloved, keep on seeking Christ and you will find him in a moment. Do not complain if you have not an edifying ministry, or because perhaps this morning the discourse seems dull to you; do not complain because you are lax in prayer, and have not that enlargement you ought to have in divine things; one word will take you up as on the wings of an eagle, and give you joy and pence.

Notice that as soon as the one word was given, her heart owned allegiance by another word. She did not make a long speech. The Master's heart was too full to say more than one word, and so was hers. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. What then is the word which suggest itself as being best adapted to a soul in the highest state of devotion? It is a word implying obedience. She said "Master." You can never get into a state of mind for which this confession of allegiance will be a word too cold. No, when your spirit glows the most with heavenly fire, then you will say, "I would serve thee living, dying; thy love has bound me with cords to the horns of the altar; I am thy servant-I am thy servant-thou hast loosed my bonds." If you can say, "Master," this morning, you can say much. If your soul feels that his will is your will, that his law is your love; that you would, if you could, in all things be conformed to his image; then, whether you have ecstasies or no ecstasies, whether you have joys or no joys, you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, "Mary," or else you could not have said, "Rabboni."

After she had confessed allegiance, the next impulse was to seek close fellowship; but she made a mistake as we mostly do; she wanted a manifest, carnal fellowship; so she began to clasp him and to hold him by the feet, and then he said, "Touch me not." We are apt to seek for communion with Christ in a sensuous way. Let us be spiritual, brethren. We shall never have Christ say to us, "Touch me not," if the touch be a touch of faith, and love. He only says, "Touch me not," when we want to handle him with these hands, and see him with these eyes. Let us walk by faith and not by sight; and then we may take him in our arms and keep him there, and hold him and not let him go; and the more endearing we can be with him spiritually, the better he will like it; but we must shake off all those gross ideas which strive to mix with high and heavenly enjoyment. if you feel a panting this morning after near and close communion do not restrain it; press forward, put your hands into his side, and your finger into the print of the nails. I know that worldlings will not understand me, but believers will. Let me assure you there is a communion with Christ, which is quite as real, as if we had the privilege which Thomas had. My own soul has seen the Savior and talked with him; though these eyes cannot see him, though these lips cannot speak with him, and this ear cannot hear him, yet my soul's mouth has kissed him, and my soul's ear has heard him, and my heart's mouth has blessed him ten thousand times, and I hope to do it yet again, and will never be satisfied until I can do it continually. Press on, beloved: you may say as the Divine Song does, "Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee. "Oh, beloved, hold communion with him, feed on him, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

Further we may notice, as the result of her finding the Savior, she entered on his service, for he said, "Go tell my brethren;" and away she went to tell others that she had found the Savior. If you have the privilege of seeing Christ, do not eat the morsel behind the door. Hast thou found honey? Taste it thyself, but go and tell others. You cannot have seen much of the Savior, unless you desire to let others see him. Your piety is a lucre sham, a flash in the pan, a will-o'-the-wisp, if it does not lead to practical service. Are there not some Mary Magdalenes here who have had seven devils cast out of them? You have felt the power of divine grace in your

heart; you love your Savior; you long for communion with him. My dear sister, as soon as you have fellowship, let me charge you, in the Master's name, do not be afraid to speak to others what the Lord shall say in private to you. We do not want women to enter the pulpit, that is a violation both of grace and nature, it is as much an offense to good manners as it is to God's own law; but you have your own sphere, you have your own place of work, you can gather your own sex about you; there are your children, your servants; you have multitudes of opportunities; but do tell others that Jesus has risen, that there is a risen life; that you know it, and that you pant and long that others too should rise from the grave of sin to the new life in Jesus.

As for you, men and brethren, to whom it pertaineth more particularly to be teachers and pastors, I charge you, whatsoever ye have found within the circle of fire where the closest communion is, whatever you have seen in the deep mines of mystery, whatsoever Christ has revealed to you in hours of retirement when you have come nearest to him, tell it to his family, feed his flock with it, bring forth these things as choice dainties whereon the beloved of the Lord may feast even to the full, "Go, tell my brethren," said Christ, and so say we.

When the two disciples had journeyed to Emmaus, and at the evening meal after the toil of the day's journey was over, were resting themselves; you remember that the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them with his holy words, took bread, and brake it, and was known to them in the breaking of the bread, but he vanished out of their sight. Well, what happened then? They had constrained him to enter in and abide with them because the day was far spent, but though now much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yea, wings also, for they forgot the darkness and their despair; their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they began to journey back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reach the body of Christians in Jerusalem, and are received by a burst of joyful news, before they can tell their own tale. Now, brethren, these early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord. They made common property of their experiences; and so ought we to do. John's account of the sepulcher needs to be



supplemented by Peter, and Mary can speak of something further still. Combined, we have a full testimony, and nothing can be spared. Thus we have all peculiar gifts and special manifestations, but the one object God has in view is, the benefit of the whole body of Christ. We must therefore bring our possessions and lay them at the apostles' feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth, but speak that you do know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil, or darkness, or possible unbelief of your hearers weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul; and if you hear the sweet words of Christ, I can promise you a holy flame of bright and beaming joy as you speak of the truth to benefit the souls of others.

Finally, if there be any enquirers here, as I hope there are, if you are seeking Jesus this morning, and want to be saved by him and through him, remember, poor enquirer, that Jesus is near you now. There is nothing for you to do, no climbing to heaven, no going down to the depths to bring him up; he is nigh unto you now.

If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, if thou trustest thy soul to him, thou art saved. Jesus is here to every one who will simply give himself up to him to be saved by him. Jesus calls you this morning by your name: he gives you a special invitation to come to him. Listen to that name; respond this morning, - say "Master." Take Jesus to be your Lord: He deserves it. You are not your own, but you are bought with a price. Give yourself as a blood-bought one up to him. He asks you as he asks Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou?" He asks of each of you who are seeking him, "whom seekest thou?" Do you know what it is you seek? Do you seek some strange feeling? Do you seek signs and wonders, dreams and visions? Seek them no longer. Jesus is what you want; take him and be blest. There, close at your side, is the food your hungry spirit wants: look not up to heaven; look not down to earth-there is in Jesus all you want. Feed on, beloved: faith shall fill your mouth; love shall enjoy the sweet dainty, and your whole body, soul, and spirit shall be sanctified by the divine repast. May God bless you, dear friends, all of you, by giving you like Mary Magdalene to seek the Lord.

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## **Jesus Only**

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.  
- Matthew 17:8

The last words will suffice us for a text, "Jesus only." When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, "Master, it is good to be here," as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter, was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting society of "Jesus only." Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with "Jesus only," which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious, and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his

everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendor. "Jesus only," is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. "Jesus only," as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body, than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of "Jesus only," we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration; we shall then dwell on what did happen; and then, thirdly, we shall speak on what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day.

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things, either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, they might have seen nobody with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses, no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away; like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan

children left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! For those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone, and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God, for a while delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses nor Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel and perceives not its reality; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, any thing for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and the spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be revered, all to be respected, but nothing more; there is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century; we have got beyond all that. Ah! Brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual

phantoms; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other hand, say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church; we have seen him, though not with eyes; we have heard him, though not with ears; we have grasped him, though not with hands; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succors. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Saviour. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes they might have seen Moses only. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for man of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Saviour's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for

them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God, cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day; after the clear revelations of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts; yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows—a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not "Jesus only," but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fullness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some

here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the Gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness, and, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfuller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary, where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where "Jesus only" speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see "Jesus only."

But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, they might have seen Elijah only. Instead of the gentle Saviour, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God's own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, "Command fire from heaven," Elias would have consumed his foes; the Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end; Herod's blood, like Ahab's, would have been licked up by dogs; and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Saviour of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to "Jesus only." I am not myself fond of even using the term "preparing for Christ," for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith—a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! How many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longing and go no further. They never get so far as to behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees;



bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah's challenge, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;" but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Saviour. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you (ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Saviour is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. "Jesus only" is the way, the truth, and the life. "Jesus only" is the sinner's Saviour. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see "Jesus only."

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another: a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes—they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humble spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiring? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see "Jesus only," as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star; all those guardians and comforters of the night have

disappeared; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the moon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in Jesus; the law is honored and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in "Jesus only." And why should I wish to retain Elias? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in "Jesus only." It is better to see Moses and Elias in Christ, than to see Moses and Elias with Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie's English Grammar, or a Mavor's Spelling Book, or a Henry's First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath day, because all Sabbath in heaven. Thus, you see, the losing

of some things is gain: it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ himself. Like the traveller ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one born among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mount Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only!"

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon **WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.**

"They saw no man, save Jesus only." This was all they wanted to see for their comfort. They were sore afraid: Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word; yet when Jesus said, "Be not afraid," their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, not to prophecy: go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the Saviour they wanted. Those three men all

needed washing from sin; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah! brethren, all the Saviour we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen "Jesus only," and if Moses has gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. "Jesus only," is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a Master. "No man can serve two masters," and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower's mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain; in the day of difficulty, enough for their direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield, "One is our Master," and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as their power for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven: Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. "Jesus only." Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect,

and it must conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffer's fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ must constrain us, and we shall thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were we all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." In the point of motive, believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished, will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honor him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name. Here is a stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, "Jesus only." Brethren, it is all the gospel we have to preach—it is all the gospel we want to preach—it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion, even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach today what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the gospel towers above the wrecks of time: to us "Jesus only" remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else.

For "Jesus only" shall be our reward, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant that we may have a fullness of this, and "Jesus only" shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought, than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw "Jesus only," they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I fain would linger. Brethren, let us think of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be "Jesus only." I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments right, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only. Other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that any thing which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the religion of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian.

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I

want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Saviour. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat; it nailed him to the cross; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." you will best read your interest in Christ, by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it? But I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Saviour, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptized; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved. You see it is not by

looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fullness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at him! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet "Jesus only" shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, "Jesus only." May God bless you for the sake of "Jesus only." Amen.

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## **Jesus - All Blessing And All Blest**

Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. - Psalm 72:17

There are many famous names in human history; but many of them are connected with deeds which have brought no blessing upon mankind. To bless, and to be blessed, is the noblest sort of fame; and yet how few have thought it worth the seeking! Full many a name in the roll of fame has been written there with a finger dipped in blood. It would seem as if men loved those most who have killed the most of them. They call those greatest who have been the greatest cutthroats. They make their greatest illuminations over massacres of their fellows, calling them victories. To be set aloft upon a column, or represented by a public statue, or to have poets ringing out your name, it seems to be necessary to grasp the sword,



and to hack and slay your fellow-men. Is it not too sadly true that when men have been cursed by one of their leaders they henceforth call him great? O misery, that wholesale murder should be the shortest method of becoming illustrious!

There is one name that will last when all others shall have died out; and that name is connected with blessing, and only with blessing. Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to bless men. Men, as a race, find in him a blessing wide as the world. While he was here he blessed, and cursed not. All around him, both by speech, and act, and glance, and thought, he was an incarnate blessing. All that came to him, unless they wilfully rejected him, obtained blessings at his hands. The home of his infancy, the friends of his youth, the comrades of his manhood, he blessed unsparingly. To bless men, he labored. To bless men, he parted with everything, and became poor. To bless men, at last he died. Those outstretched hands upon the cross are spread wide in benediction, and they are fastened there as if they would remain outstretched till the whole world is blessed. Our Lord's resurrection from the dead brings blessings to mankind. Redemption from the grave, and life eternal, he has won for us. He waited on earth a while, until he ascended, blessing men as he went up. His last attitude below the skies was that of pronouncing a blessing upon his disciples. He is gone into the glory; but he has not ceased to bless our race. The Holy Spirit came among us soon after the ascension, because Jesus had received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also. The wonderful blessings which are comprised in the work, person, and offices of the Holy Spirit—all these come to us through Jesus Christ, the ever-blessed and ever-blessing One. Still he loves to bless. Standing at the helm of all affairs, he guides the tiller of Providence with a view to the blessing of his chosen. He spends his time still in making intercession for transgressors, that the blessing of God may rest upon them; while his Spirit, who is his Vicegerent here below, is evermore occupied with blessing the sons of men. Our Lord Jesus will soon come a second time, and in that glorious hour, though his left hand must deal out justice, still his right hand will lavish blessing. His chief end and bent in his coming will be that he may largely bless those loving hearts that watch for his appearing. Christ is all blessing. When you have written down his name, you have pointed to the fountain from which all blessings flow; you

have named that Sun of righteousness to whose beams we owe every good and perfect gift. From the beginning, throughout all eternity, the Lord Jesus blesses men.

"O'er every foe victorious,  
He on his throne shall rest;  
From age to age more glorious  
All blessing and all blest.  
The tide of time shall never  
His covenant remove  
His name shall stand for ever,  
That name to us is—Love."

I purpose, at this time, if the Lord shall help me, to speak very simply about the fullness of blessing which comes from our Master and Lord. First saying, dear friends, that we ourselves are living proofs of the statement that men shall be blessed in him; then, desiring to say, in the second place, that we have seen it to be true in others also; and, thirdly, expressing our conviction that it shall be true, on the largest scale, with the nations: "All nations shall be blessed in him," and therefore they shall call him blessed.

I. First, then, WE OURSELVES ARE LIVING WITNESSES THAT MEN ARE BLESSED IN CHRIST. You and I do not pretend to be great sages, famous philosophers, or learned divines; but we feel when a pin pricks us, or when a dog bites us. We have sense enough to know when a thing tastes well or ill in the eating. We know chalk from cheese, as the proverb hath it. We know somewhat about our own wants; and we also know when we get those wants supplied. We have not mastered the extraordinary, but in the common-place we feel at home. A man is none the worse witness in court because he does not know all the technical terms used in science. A judge is never better pleased than when he sees in the witness-box: some plain, blunt, honest fellow, who will blunder out the truth. We will speak the truth at this time, so far as we know it, whether we offend or please. Every man is to speak as he finds; and we will speak concerning Jesus Christ as we have found him. I will try, if I can, to be spokesman for all present who are believers in Christ, and I ask a patient hearing.

We bear witness that we have been blessed in him. How much, how deeply, how long, and in how many ways we have been blessed in him, I will not undertake to say; but this I will say most emphatically, for many of you now present, whose lives and histories I know almost as I know my own, we have in verity, beyond all question, been blessed in Jesus to the highest degree, and of this we are sure. We believe and faith grasps the first blessing—that we have received a great blessing in Christ by the removal of a curse which otherwise must have rested upon us. That curse did overshadow us once, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." We could not keep the law: we did not keep it: we gave up all hope of keeping it. Therefore, the dark thunder-cloud of that tremendous sentence hung over us, and we heard the voice of justice speaking out of it, like a volley of the dread artillery of God in the day of tempest. The thunder of the curse rolled heavily over our heads and hearts. How some of us cowered down and trembled! We can never forget the horror of our soul under the near apprehension of divine wrath. To be cursed of God meant all woes in one. Some of us were brought very low indeed by the frown of a guilty conscience. We gave up even the dream of hope. We thought ourselves effectually, finally, and everlastingly condemned; and so indeed we should have found it, had there not been a divine Interposer. But now that curse is taken from us, and we do not dread its return, for he was made a curse for us, of whose name we are speaking now—even he "who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." No curse now remaineth: only blessing abideth. Hallelujah! If our Lord had done nothing else for us but the rolling away of the curse, he would have blessed us infinitely, and we would have blessed him for ever. If he had accomplished nothing but the bearing away of our sin into the wilderness—as the scapegoat of old bore away the iniquity of Israel—he would have done enough to set our tongues for ever praising him. He has lifted from the world the weight of the eternal curse; therefore, let all the bells of our cities ring out his honor, and all the voices of the villages sing forth his praise. O ye stars of light, shine to his glory; for he is blessed beyond all earthly measure! Let our grateful hearts in silence mean and muse his praise.

The negative being removed, we have had a positive actual experience of blessing, for God has blessed us in Christ Jesus, and we know that none are more blest than we are. We are now not at all the men that we used to be as to our inward feelings. Some years ago, under the apprehension of divine wrath, we were unhappy and troubled, so that we could find no rest; but now we are blessed in Christ so greatly that we are at perfect peace, and our soul has dropped its anchor in the haven of content. Our joy is usually as great as formerly our sorrow used to be. We feared our sorrow would kill us: we now sometimes think that our joy is more likely to do so, for it becomes so intense that at times we can scarcely bear it, much less speak it. As we could get no rest before, so now, by faith, we feel as if we never lost that rest, for we are so quiet of heart, so calm, so settled, that we sing, "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed!" Not because temporal circumstances are quite as we would wish them, but because we have learned to leave off wishing, we are now more than satisfied. Getting God's blessing upon everything, we have learned to be content, and something more: we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We used to fret before we knew him; but his love has ended that. We thought we could do things better than God could, and we did not like his way of managing; but he has taught us to be like children, pleased with whatever our Father provides; and therefore we joyfully declare, "My soul is even as a weaned child: I have nothing to wish for. I want nothing but what my Father pleases to give me." Having God's sweet love, we would not give a snap of the finger for all that princes call their treasure, or all that great men reckon to be their honor. Unto us who believe, Christ is precious—both treasure and honor in one: in fact, Christ is all. It is a delightful calm of mind which the believer enjoys when he dwells in Christ. Humble faith puts the soul into the guardian hand of the Redeemer, and leaves it there in the restfulness of entire trust. Grace baptizes us into blessedness. It plunges us into that sea of everlasting rest in which we hope for ever to bathe our weary souls. Yes, blessed be his name, the Lord Jesus has made life worth living! It is no longer "something better not to be." We must speak well of the condition into which he has introduced us, since we have known his name. "Well, Jack, old fellow," said one who met a man who had lately joined the church, "I hear you have given up all your pleasures." "No, no," said Jack; "the fact lies the other way. I have just found all my pleasures, and I have only

given up my follies." Every Christian man can confirm that way of putting it. We who have believed in Jesus have lost no real pleasures, but we have gained immensely in that direction. If anything sinful was a pleasure to us once, it is not so now: when we discovered it to be evil, it ceased to be pleasure, and we thrust it away without regret. We have lost nothing by conversion that was worth the keeping; but what we gained by coming to Christ has been an inconceivable recompense to us. Is it not so, brethren? Are we not blessed in Christ?

Now, there are some of us who, if we were asked to tell what blessings we have received from Christ, would scarcely know where to begin, and when we had once begun, we should never leave off unless it were from sheer want of time or strength. Brethren, certain of us owe all that we have to the influence of the Lord Jesus. From our birth and childhood we were indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us now present had the great felicity to spring of godly parents: before we knew the meaning of language, that softly sweet name of Jesus Christ was sung in our ears. The kindness that we received in our earliest days was very much of it due to "Gentle Jesus," of whom our mothers taught us to sing. He found for us the first swaddling bands of love, and watched over our first sleep. Ah! those poor children of the back streets—children who are trained in infamy and blasphemy, how sad their start in life! But some of us had great advantages, which were granted us of sovereign grace by his dear pierced hand. We bless the Lord who saved our parents, and, through saving them, sent to our trembling infancy a mine and a mint of blessing. In our opening childhood we began to understand for ourselves the loving influence of an affectionate and anxious mother, and then golden showers of grace fell on us from the love of Jesus. We recollect, some of us, those hours on the Sabbath, when mother would talk with us of heavenly things; with tears in her eyes persuading her boy to give his heart to Jesus early, and not to let his first days be spent in sin. We remember a wise and prudent father, whose example and instruction all went the same way. The comforts of our home—and they were many—were owed them all to Jesus, for his love made our parents what they were, and created a holy, happy atmosphere around us. He might have left our father to frequent the drunkard's haunt, and might have suffered our mother to be what many mothers are, unworthy of the name, and then

our childhood would have been utter wretchedness, and our home the nursery of vice. Education in crime might have been ours: we might have been tutored for the gallows. Since that, we have had to shift for ourselves, and have left the parental roof; but I, for one, have been casting my thoughts back, to see if I could remember any good thing that I have which I do not owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know that I have anything that I cannot distinctly trace to him and his influence. I have many Christian friends—most valuable friends I find them: but my association with them commenced in the house of God; and the friendship between us has been cemented by common service yielded to our blessed Master. Many of you would hardly have had a friend in the world if it had not been that Jesus introduced you to his disciples, and they have been the best friends you have ever had, or ever will have. You used to know certain fine fellows who called themselves your friends, and as long as you had a shilling to bless yourself with, they stuck to you to have sixpence of it. You know the style of their friendship, and you must now have serious doubts as to its value. Well, they left you when you became Christians, and their departure has been a very gainful loss to you. When they cleared out altogether, you found that their removal was for your good, if not for their own. But those friends you have made in Christ have been really helpful to you. They have deeply sympathized with you, and as far as they could they have helped you. Many have been carried through sharp trials by the help of Christian hands. But, whatever you may have to say on the point, I am personally a debtor, over head and ears, to my Saviour. What is there—I repeat the question—that I do not owe to Jesus? I am again and again thinking, and thinking, and thinking; but if anything which I call my own be worth the having, I must trace it to him. And are you not, dear friends, many of you, compelled to say the same? Amongst the best things you have are your Sabbaths; but they are his days—his resurrection days. Your Bible, too, is a priceless treasure; but that is his Testament—his legacy of love. The mercy-seat is a storehouse of wealth; but he is that mercy-seat, and his own blood is sprinkled on it. You have nothing, dear friend, that you do not owe to Jesus, the fountain of salvation. You are blessed in him.

I might single out another class of persons, who, from quite another point of view, would be compelled to say that they, also, have been blessed in

Christ. They started in another way, and were upon a road which led to death, but they have been rescued. Some of you started life in the midst of an entirely worldly family. There was kindness—parental kindness, in the home, but it was unwise. Abundance of temporal enjoyment was always supplied, but there was a very scanty recognition of anything like religion; and, indeed, no knowledge whatever of personal piety. It is little wonder that young persons, who are trained in a godless manner, and allowed to do very much as they like, should plunge into this sin, and into that. That some young men are saved is a special miracle, for their circumstances make their ruin almost inevitable. I am addressing some of my Christian brethren, who remember what liberty to sin was, and how they availed themselves of it. They took large license to destroy themselves under the presence of seeing the world, and they were never content except when they were gratifying their passions, and obeying the commands of the devil. In their salvation they have been blessed indeed.

But you also who have gone to no great extent in open sin, you also have been signally blessed in Christ by gracious and unmistakable conversion. In receiving the Lord Jesus into your soul, what a change has been made! From what a bondage have you been rescued! Into what a new life have you been brought! What new scenes now open up before you! What new hopes, what new joys, what new prospects, are all your own! Do I speak to some who plunged into the very grossest sin, and yet can say, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified"? Blessed be our dear Master's name for grace to such individuals! Such indeed are blessed in him. I know that I am addressing those who had in their earliest days the very worst example; who have been brought into the house of God from the place where Satan's seat is; who cannot, after years of godliness, get out of their memory the recollection of the bad, depraved old times of their youth. In your salvation Jesus has wrought a blessed deed. You could drink as others drank. You could fall into sins of uncleanness as others did. Let us say very little about these open evils. I do not like to hear men talk about their old sins as if they were adventures: they are a shame and a sorrow to all right-minded persons. We humbly hint at them to the praise of the glory of his grace: for great grace it was in the case of some of us. Oh, but the day in which you first knew that dear name; felt repentance melting your hard heart; felt hope springing up in your formerly insensible spirit;

began to see that there was something nobler and better to live for than merely to gratify sensual passions; that you were an immortal spirit, and not meant to fatten like the swine, but were created to be a brother of the angels, and to be akin to God himself—that was a happy day—a day written in heaven, and made bright with the light of seven days! When Jesus changed your nature, and forgave your sins, and made you to be like himself, you were indeed blessed in him.

I want you now to look back again. I ought not to tire you, even if my talk should seem dull and commonplace, because to recollect what God has given, and to be grateful concerning it, ought to be a sweet pastime to each one of us. It is not only a duty, but a recreation to be grateful. I do not know any emotion which can give greater joy than that of thankfulness to the Most High. Dear friends, the Lord has greatly blessed us in the name of Jesus in times of very special trouble. I may not be able to describe your personal trial, but I will take one as a specimen. Depression of spirits comes upon the man. He scarcely knows how or why, but his soul melteth because of heaviness. There is, at the back of his sadness, probably, some real trial: this he is very apt to magnify, and make more of than need be, and also to expect a dark and terrible calamity to come which will not come; but yet the foreboding is as real a trial as if the catastrophe had actually occurred. The poor despondent creature cannot endure himself, but almost grows weary of life. Like the king of Israel, who had all that heart could wish—gardens, and palaces, and singing men, and singing women—who had all the appurtenances, both of folly and of wisdom, to make him happy, yet he cries "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Nothing will cheer this child of grief: he is downcast and desolate. If you have ever gone through that experience, it has been a very great delight to you when you have got alone, and thought of your Lord Jesus, whose everlasting love cannot cease towards you, whose fullness of grace cannot be exhausted, whose power and faithfulness will always stand you in good stead. If, by a sort of desperate resolve, you have cast yourself upon him, to sink or swim, to find everything in him, or else to have nothing, you have risen up a new man altogether. You have felt, "I can face the adversary; I can meet the trial; for Jesus is mine." Despair of spirit has fled when you have leaned hard on the Cross-bearer. I have been one of the cave-dwellers, and the dark



has shut me in, but Jesus has been my heaven below. I may have a degree of heaviness about me, but still I trust in the Lord, and I am not afraid, for the name of Jesus has caused me to be strong. Yes, men shall be "blessed in him" by the strength which he gives in the hour of need. You remember the loss of that dear little child. How blessed you were in Jesus when he came and solaced you! You remember your father's death, or the loss of your husband, or the death of the dearest earthly friend. Ay, then in such times you knew how precious Christ could be, and how blessed you were in him! Some of you have passed through the deserts of poverty. You have frequently been very hard pressed; but still, though you cannot tell how, you have had just enough. You are yet alive though death seemed certain. You have been "blessed in him," and so you have survived every storm. Some of you have had little enough of earthly comfort, and yet you have not been unhappy. I have sometimes admired a dog for his economical use of comforts. When it has been a long, rainy day, the sun has just peeped out, and there has been a gleam of sunlight on the floor: I have seen him get up and wag his tail, and shift his quarters so as to lie down where the bit of sunshine was. It is a fine thing to have just that state of mind—never to go sullenly into the shadow, but always cheerfully to accept the square yard of sunshine, and make the most of it. There is something, after all, to be thankful for—something for which to praise the name of God. And if the Lord Jesus Christ had taught us nothing else but that—the practice of lying down wherever there is a trace of sunshine, and, better still, of always finding sunshine in his dear name—I am sure we are bound to say that we have been "blessed in him."

Well, every year will teach us more and more fully how blessed we are in Jesus; and there will come a day the last of our earthly days, when we shall know on a higher scale how blessed we are in him. One of the pleasantest scenes that ever I see is the dying bed of a fine old Christian. I saw one but a few days ago, who, since I was at his bedside, has entered into rest. It was very pleasant to talk with him about what the Lord had done. He was ready to speak well of the dear name. There was much self-depreciation, but much more honoring of Christ by testimony concerning support given in the hour of affliction and succor in the time of need. Brother, you think it will be hard to die. You may not find it so. One, when he was dying, said, "Is this dying? Why, it is worth while going

through all the troubles of life, even for death's own sake, if it be like this, for I have such heavenly enjoyment as I never could have imagined." Some of God's saints are very needlessly anxious about dying. I knew one to whom it was always a burden, and he went to bed one night, and he never woke any more—thus answering his own fears, for he did not even know when he passed away, but died in his sleep. He was gone, gone, gone to heaven without a pang. When you see how believers pass away to be with their Lord in glory, you have a commentary upon the words of my text,—“Men shall be blessed in him.”

But do you see them? Their spirits have ascended unto God, their Father. How full of bliss they are! Disembodied they are, but they are not destroyed. Their poor earthly frames are still in the grave, yet are their liberated spirits supremely blest; for they are “for ever with the Lord,” and they are blessed in him. Wait ye but a very little while, and the trumpet shall ring out from the angel's mouth, “Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment;” and then shall men be blessed in him, if indeed “in him.” When the righteous, restored to their bodies, shall, in their perfect manhood, behold him face to face, and dwell with him world without end, “men shall be blessed in him.”

I do not feel satisfied with the style of my speech at this time; but we who speak the Word are by no means masters of ourselves. I cannot rise to the height of this great argument; and I do not think that, if I were to try a hundred times, I could ever satisfy myself when speaking upon this divinest theme. My Lord is the most blessed Master that ever a servant had; and he has blessed me personally so unspeakably that, if I were to bear my witness with the tongues of orators and angels by the space of a century, yet must I cease from the task, and humbly confess—I have not told you the half—nor can I tell you even the tithe of how good my Well-beloved is to me.” I suspect that you are most of you of my mind, and say, “Neither can we tell either.” I sometimes tell you the story of what happened to me when I declared, in a sermon, that, in the heaven of the grateful, I would sing the loudest of them all, because I owed more to the grace of God than anybody else. I meant it not out of any sense of superiority, but rather of inferiority. One good old soul, when I came down the pulpit stairs, remarked to me, You have made a great mistake in

your sermon." I answered, "No doubt I made a dozen." "Nay, but," she said, the great mistake was this: you said that you owed more to God than anybody else, but you do not owe anything like so much as I do. I have had more grace from him than you have. I have been a bigger sinner than ever you were. I shall sing the loudest. Well, well," I thought, "I will not quarrel with her; it shall make me the more glad to find myself outdone." I found that all the Christians were much of the same mind. Brethren, we will have it out when we get up yonder. But you shall praise God, indeed, if you praise him more than I will; and you must be double debtors to my Lord if you owe him more than I do. If you are more unworthy and more undeserving than I am, you must indeed be unworthy and undeserving; and if his rich, free, sovereign grace has exhibited itself more fully in you than it has in unworthy me, it has indeed overflowed all its banks. We will leave the loving contest for the present; but when all the birds of Paradise reach their nests above, there shall be a competition of adoring praise, and all of us will do our best to bless the name of the Lord.

II. Our second head was to be a practical one: we can only give a few minutes to it. WE HAVE SEEN OTHER MEN BLESSED IN CHRIST. Our observation confirms our experience. If this were the proper time, I could narrate many instances—which I could also confirm by producing the individuals—in which men have been remarkably blessed in Christ. What social changes we have seen in those who have believed in him! They have not been the same persons: in many respects they are new. I have known persons at whose houses I have visited—well, you could not have believed that the man who lodged in the house, where he was first found, could ever have risen to occupy a room in a house at all like that in which he came to reside. The room in which I conversed with him was a palace to the dog-hole in which he once existed. There was a change in his dwelling. There was a change in his wife. You would hardly know the woman; she is so different from the wretched slut and slave who called him "husband" with a sigh and a sneer. She is here now, sitting with him, and they are as happy as angels. I shall not point them out, but they are as good as any of you. We have known the case in which, from rags—absolute rags—the coming of Christ into the soul has lifted a man into competence, and respectability, and position. Godliness has a gain about it—an honest, worthy gain for the life which now is. It teaches men habits

of thrift, and prudence, and temperance; and delivers them from the thralldom of drunkenness, and other vices, by which the major part of poverty is occasioned. It is worth mentioning even such blessings as these, as the poor little children know. They used to run away when father came in, for they were afraid of him; but now, instead of that, they are watching for the time when his work is done, to go toddling down the street to meet dear father, for the luxury of being brought home in his arms. Our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed some men and some women at such a rate that the devil himself would not have the impudence to say it was not a blessing. Liar as Satan is, he could not deny that godliness has brought sunshine where there was none: the blessing has been too distinct and manifest for any to deny it.

What a moral change have we seen in some! They could not speak without an oath, but the habit of profane swearing ended in a minute, and they have never been tempted to it since. Rash, bad-tempered men, who would break up the furniture of the house in their passion, have become as gentle as lambs. Such furies usually become quiet, peaceable, and long-suffering: grace has a marvellous influence upon the temper. Men of hot passions, that used to give a word and a blow—but generally the blow first—now watch themselves, and guard against their infirmity! They take a little time to think before they do let fly a hard word or give a sharp look. The change that we have seen in some men has been as complete as that which could have been wrought by that fabled mill, into which the legend says that they put old men, and turned the handle, and ground them young again. Truly a far greater renovation is wrought in mind and heart where Jesus comes. Men are "blessed in him."

Then, as to mental blessing. What have we seen? This have I seen: here is one case out of many. A young man, who had fallen into sin, came to me in deep despair of mind. He was so desponding that his very face bore witness to his misery. He wore the aspect of one who could not live much longer as he then was. I had tried to set the gospel clearly before him on the previous Sabbath, but he told me that he could not grasp it, for that by his sin he had reduced his mind to such a state that he felt himself to be little better than an idiot. He was not speaking nonsense either, for there are vices which destroy the intellect. I told him that Jesus Christ

could save idiots—that even if his mind was in measure impaired as the result of sin, yet there was quite enough mind left to be made glad with a sense of pardon, seeing there was more than enough to make him heavy with a sense of guilt. I cheered that brother as best I could, but I could effect nothing by my own efforts. Soon the Lord Jesus Christ came to him, and he is now a happy, earnest, joyful Christian. Not long ago he sent an offering of thanksgiving to God for having lifted him up from the deeps into which he had fallen. I hope there is a long life of real usefulness before him.

We cannot mention one tithe of what we personally know. Eternity will open a great book of record. I call upon the spirits of the just made perfect to witness what the grace of God did for them; I call upon parents here to tell the pleasing story of the conversion of their sons and daughters; and I call upon those who watch for their fellowmen to say whether they have not met with many cases in which men have been blessed in Jesus, by being snatched from between the jaws of madness itself, by the sweet, calming influence of the ever dear and blessed name of our Redeemer. Yes, indeed and of a truth, men are, and shall be blessed in him.

The practical point is, brothers and sisters, since we want to do good, let us preach up our Lord Jesus Christ as the sovereign balm for every sinner's wound. If you want to be philanthropists, be Christians. If you would bless your fellow-men with the best of all blessings, convey to them the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Do not believe that there is anything you can do for your children which will be more effectual than teaching them about Jesus. Do not think that anything in the workshop can soften the vulgarities, silence the blasphemies, and end the profanities of your fellow-workmen, like setting Jesus Christ before them. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, they tried to tell the Greenlanders about the existence of a God, and they spent some months in such preliminary subjects before they came to the gospel; but they never gained the attention of the people. Discourses upon such necessary subjects as the Godhead, and the immortality of the soul, and the like, were flavourless to the Greenlanders. It happened one day that one of the missionaries, translating the gospel according to John, read out these

words: "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "What is that?" said the Greenlanders. "What is that? We never heard the like of that. Why have you not told us that before?" Nothing had been done till the missionaries came to the gospel itself. Then they reached the Greenlander's heart—awakened his dormant intellect, and led him to Jesus. Oh, let us keep on with the subject of Christ crucified! Whatever there is not in our shop window, let us always have Christ as the chief article of our heavenly commerce. Whatever there may lack of grace and beauty in our speech, and our outward appearance, may there be no lack of Jesus Christ, set forth among the sons of men; for "men shall be blessed in him," and not without him. Great schemes of socialism have been tried and found wanting; let us look to regeneration by the Son of God, and we shall not look in vain. Nothing has come of newfangled preaching, from the first day till now; but never has the old faith of Jesus failed. Men have been blessed in Jesus, and they shall be blessed in him as long as the race shall exist.

III. Lastly, this whole matter is to extend till THE ENTIRE WORLD SHALL BE BLESSED IN CHRIST. Even at this moment the whole world is the better for Christ. But where he is best known and loved, there is he the greatest blessing. What snatched many an island of the southern sea from barbarism and cannibalism? What, but Jesus Christ preached among them? Men have been blessed in him in Europe, America, Asia, and everywhere. Africa, and other lands still plunged in barbarism, shall receive light from no other source but that from which our fathers received it centuries ago—from the great Sun of righteousness.

Men shall be blessed in Christ, because where he comes oppression cannot live. You may tell me that the governor of such an empire is a despot. Oh, yes; but despots cannot long flourish where there is an open Bible. Tyrannies may last a generation or two, but all the world knows that their time is short. They will go down: they must go down where Christ is lifted up. That inspired Book is a testimony for human liberty, louder than all others. It is a declaration of the rights of men under King Jesus: despotism must fall before it sooner or later. We, in this country, owe our liberties, beyond everything, to the Christianity which is the

outflow of a present Christ among us. Slavery? What a plague-spot it was upon the fair hand of our sister nation across the Atlantic! The spot is washed away; and it was true religion which forced the washing. There would have been no freeing of the slave from fetters if it had not been for the Christianity which, after long silence, at last spoke out, and when it spake, it was as when a lion roareth. The Christianity of England is always pleading for the slave, for the aborigine, for the down-trodden. Leave our politicians alone, and we shall soon have all the infamies alive again. Slavery would be tolerated, if not encouraged, if there were not Christian souls upon the watch. What saves us from war at this moment? What influence is it that is always contrary to war, and always cries for peace? Why, it is the Christian element among us which counts anything better than bloodshed! Let the Christian element spread, and it will be a power to bless mankind. It shall, in proportion as it spreads, put down evil, and foster good. Already, many a monopoly has been ended, and many a liberty has been gained. Much religious intolerance has been subdued by the power of Jesus Christ over his people; and I do pray, dear friends, that we may live to see all nations more manifestly affected by the gospel of Jesus Christ. May every nation be ruled by just and righteous laws! May every nation be willing to submit exterior disputes to the arbitration of justice! It will be so one day. The nations shall be friends, and all men shall feel that they are members of one great family. "Do ye unto others as ye would that they should do to you," is the sum of the moral teaching of our divine Lord; and if that be followed, it will bring about a halcyon era, the like of which the world has never seen. If his Spirit will come and renew men's hearts, and teach them to love and to obey the Lord their God, then shall all nations call the Redeemer blessed, and from every corner of the whole earth, the song shall go up, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" Amen.

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## **Job's Regret And Our Own**

Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle. - Job 29:2-4

If Job here refers to the temporal prosperity which he had lost, we cannot condemn him for his complaint, neither can we commend him. It is but the expression of a natural regret, which would be felt by any man who had experienced such great reverses. But there is everywhere in the expressions which he uses such a strain of spirituality, that we are inclined to believe that he had more reference to the condition of his heart than to the state of his property. His soul was depressed; he had lost the light of God's countenance; his inward comforts were declining, his joy in the Lord was at a low ebb, this he regretted far more than anything besides. No doubt he deplored the departure of those prosperous days when, as he words it, his root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon his branch; but, much more did he bemoan that the lamp of the Lord no more shone upon his head, and the secret of God was not upon his tabernacle. As his spiritual regrets are far more instructive to us than his natural ones, we will turn all our attention to them. We may, without violence, appropriate Job's words to ourselves; for I fear that many of us can with great propriety take up our wailing and mourn for the days of our espousals, the happy days of our first love. I shall have to trouble you with many divisions this morning; but I shall be brief upon each one, and I hope that our thoughts may be led onward, and rendered practically serviceable to us, by the blessing of God's Spirit.

I. Let us begin by saying, that regrets such as those expressed in the text are and ought to be very BITTER. If it be the loss of spiritual things that we regret, then may we say from the bottom of our hearts, "Oh that I were as in months past."

It is a great thing for a man to be near to God; it is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion, and to become God's familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the light. The poor man who was always poor is scarcely poor, but he who has fallen from the summit of greatness into the depths of poverty is poor



indeed. The man who has never enjoyed communion with God knows nothing of what it must be to lose it; but he who has once been pressed upon the Savior's bosom will mourn, as long as he liveth, if he be deprived of the sacred enjoyment. The mercies which Job deplored in our text are no little ones. First, he complains that he had lost the consciousness of divine preservation. He says, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me." There are days with Christians when they can see God's hand all around them, checking them in the first approaches of sin, and setting a hedge about all their ways. Their conscience is tender, and the Spirit of God is obeyed by them; they are, therefore, kept in all their ways, the angels of God watching over them, lest they dash their foot against a stone. But when they fall into laxity of spirit, and walk at a distance from God, they are not so preserved. Though kept from final and total apostasy, yet they are not kept from very grievous sin; for, like Peter who followed afar off, they may be left to deny their Master, even with oaths and cursings. If we have lost that conscious preservation of God, which once covered us from every fiery dart; if we no longer abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and feel no longer that his truth is our shield and buckler, we have lost a joy worth worlds, and we may well deplore it with anguish of heart.

Job had also lost divine consolation, for he looks back with lamentation to the time when God's candle shone upon his head, when the sun of God's love was as it were in the zenith, and cast no shadow; when he rejoiced without ceasing, and triumphed from morning to night in the God of his salvation. The joy of the Lord is our strength, the joy of the Lord is Israel's excellency; it is the heaven of heaven, it is heaven even upon earth; and, consequently, to lose it, is a calamity indeed. Who that has once been satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord, will be content to go into the dry and thirsty land, and live far off from God? Will he not rather cry out with David, "My soul thirsteth for God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Surely his agonising prayer will be, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." Love to God will never be content if his face be hidden. Until the curtain be drawn aside and the King's face be seen through the lattices, the true spouse will spend her life in sighing; mourning like a dove bereaved of its mate.

Moreover, Job deplored the loss of divine illumination. "By his light," he says, "I walked through darkness," that is to say, perplexity ceased to be perplexity; God shed such a light upon the mysteries of providence, that where others missed their path, Job, made wise by heaven, could find it. There have been times when, to our patient faith, all things have been plain. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine;" but, if we walk far off from God, then, straightway, even the precious truth of God is no more clear to us, and the dealings of God with us in providence appear to be like a maze. He is wise as Solomon who walks with God, but he is a very fool who trusts his own understanding. All the wit that we have gathered by observation and experience will not supply us with sufficiency of common sense, if we turn away from God. Israel, without consulting God, made a league with her enemies; she thought the case most plain when she entered into hasty alliance with the Gibeonites, but she was duped by cunning because she asked not counsel of the Lord. In the simplest business we shall err, if we seek not direction from the Lord; yet, where matters are most complicated, we shall walk wisely, if we wait for a voice from the oracle, and seek the good Shepherd's guidance. We may bitterly lament, therefore, if we have lost the Holy Spirit's light. If now the Lord answereth us not, neither by his word, nor by his providence, if we wander alone, crying Oh that I knew where I might find him, we are in an evil case, and may well sigh for the days, when by his light we walked through darkness.

Moreover, Job had lost divine communion: so it seems, for he mourned the days of his youth, when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. Who shall tell to another what the secret of God is? Believing hearts know it, but they cannot frame to pronounce aright the words that could explain it, nor can they convey by language what the secret is. The Lord manifests himself unto his people as he doth not unto the world. We could not tell the love passages that there are between believers and their Lord; even when they are set to such sweet music as the Song of Solomon, carnal minds cannot discern their delights. They cannot plough with our heifer, and therefore they read not our riddle. As Paul in heaven saw things which it were unlawful for a man to utter, so the believer sees and enjoys in communion with Christ what it would not only be unlawful but impossible for him to tell to carnal men. Such pearls are not for swine.

The spiritual discerneth all things, but he himself is discerned of no man. Now, it is a high privilege, beyond all privileges, to enter into familiar intercourse with the Most High, and the man who has once possessed it, and has lost it, has a bitterer cause for regret than if, being rich, he had lost his wealth; or being famous, he had lost esteem; or being in health, he were suddenly brought to the bed of languishing. No loss can equal the loss of thee, my God! No eclipse is so black as the hiding of thy face! No storm is so fierce as the letting forth of thine indignation! It is grief upon grief to find that thou art not with me as in the days of old. Wherever, then, these regrets do exist, if the men's hearts are as they should be, they are not mere hypocritical or superficial expressions, but they express the bitterest experiences of our human existence. "Oh that I were as in months past" is no sentimental sigh, but the voice of the innermost spirit in anguish, as one who has lost his firstborn.

II. But, secondly, let me remind you that these regrets are NOT INEVITABLE; that is to say, it is not absolutely necessary that a Christian man should ever feel them, or be compelled to express them. It has grown to be a tradition among us, that every Christian must backslide in a measure, and that growth in grace cannot be unbrokenly sustained. It is regarded by many as a law of nature, that our first love must grow cold, and our early zeal must necessarily decline. I do not believe it for a moment. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and were we watchful and careful to live near to God, there is no reason why our spiritual life should not continuously make progress both in strength and beauty. There is no inherent necessity in the divine life itself compelling it to decline, for is it not written, "It shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life;" "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Grace is a living and incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever, and there is nowhere impressed upon the divine life a law of pining and decay. If we do falter and faint in the onward path, it is our sin, and it is doubly sinful to forge excuses for it. It is not to be laid upon the back of some mysterious necessity of the new nature that it should be so, but it is to be brought as a charge against ourselves. Nor do outward circumstances ever furnish a justification to us if we decline in grace; for, under the worst conditions, believers have grown in grace: deprived of

the joys of Christian fellowship, and denied the comforts of the means of grace, believers have nevertheless been known to attain to a high-degree of likeness to Christ Jesus: thrown into the midst of wicked companions, and forced to hear, like righteous Lot, the filthy conversation of the ungodly, yet Christian men have shone all the brighter for the surrounding darkness, and have been able to escape from a wicked and perverse generation. Certain is it, that a man may be an eminent Christian, and be among the poorest of the poor: poverty need not, therefore, make us depart from God; and, it is equally certain, that a man may be rich, and for all that may walk with God and be distinguished for great grace. There is no lawful position of which we may say, "It compels a man to decline in grace."

And, brethren, there is no period of our life in which it is necessary for us to go back. The young Christian, with all the strength of his natural passions, can by grace be strong and overcome the Wicked One; the Christian in middle life, surrounded with the world's cares, can prove that "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." The man immersed in business may still be baptised of the Holy Ghost. Assuredly, old age offers no excuse for decline: "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." No, brethren as Christ said to his disciples, when they would fain have sent the multitude away to buy meat, "they need not depart;" so would he say to the whole company of the Lord's people, "ye need not depart;" there is no compulsion for decline in grace." Your sun need not stand still, your moon need not wane. If you cannot add a cubit to your spiritual stature, at any rate, it need not decrease. There are no reasons written in the book of your spiritual nature why you, as a believer, should lose fellowship with God, and, if you do so, take blame and shame to yourself, but do not ascribe it to necessity. Do not gratify your corruptions by supposing that they are licensed to prevail occasionally, neither vex your graces by conceiving that they are doomed to inevitable defeat at a certain season. The spirit that is in us lusteth to evil, but the Holy Spirit is able to subdue it, and will subdue it, if we yield ourselves to him.

III. But, now, I am compelled to say that the regrets expressed in our text are exceedingly COMMON, and it is only here and there that we meet

with a believer who has not had cause to use them. It ought not to be so, but it is so. How grievously often will the pastor hear this among the other bleatings of the sheep: "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me:"

"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd,  
How sweet, their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill."

The commonness of this lamentation may be somewhat accounted for, by the universal tendency to undervalue the present and exaggerate the excellence of the past. Have you never noticed this in natural things, we are prone to cast a partial eye upon some imaginary "good old times?" It is gone, and therefore it was good; it is here, and therefore it is dubious. In the middle of the summer, we feel that the heat is so relaxing that a frost would be the most delightful thing conceivable; we love, we say, the bracing air of winter; we are sure it is much healthier for us: yet, usually, when winter arrives, and the extreme cold sets in, we are all most anxious for the advent of spring, and we feel that somehow or other the frost is more trying to us than the heat. Personally, I met with an illustration of this tendency the other day. I went down a steep cliff to the sea shore, and during the descent every step tried my weak knees, and I felt that going down hill was the most difficult travelling in the world. Soon I had to return from the sands, and climb the steep path again; and, when I began to pant and puff with the difficult ascent, I changed my opinion, and felt that I would a great deal sooner go down than come up. The fact is that whatever is with us we think to be the worse, and whatever was with us we conceive to be the better. We may, therefore, take some discount from our regrets; for, peradventure, were we more conscious of the benefit of the present state, and did we make less prominent the difficulty of it, we should not sigh to be as we were in months past.

Then, again, regrets may in some cases arise from a holy jealousy. The Christian, in whatever state he is, feels his own imperfection much, and laments his conscious shortcomings. Looking back, he observes with joy the work of grace in his soul, and does not perhaps so readily recollect the then existing deficiencies of nature; hence, he comes to think that the

past was better than the present. He is afraid of backsliding, and therefore he jealously fears that he is so; he is so anxious to live nearer to God, so dissatisfied with his present attainments, that he dares not believe that he advances, but fears that he has lost ground. I know this in my own experience, for when lying sick I have frequently lamented that pain has distracted my mind, and taken off my attention from the word of God, and I have longed for those seasons of health when I could read, meditate, and study with pleasure; but, now that I have risen up from the sick bed, and am growing strong again, I frequently look back to the long nights and quiet days spent in my sick chamber, and think that it was better with me then than now, for now I am apt to be cumbered with much serving, and then I was shut in with God. Many a man is really strong in Christ; but, because he does not feel all the juvenile vivacity of his early days, he fears that ritual decrepitude has come upon him. He is now far more solid and steadfast, if not quite so quick and impulsive; but, the good man in his holy jealousy marks most the excellencies of his juvenile piety, and forgets that there were grave deficiencies in it; while, in his present state, he notes the deficiencies, and fears to hope that he possesses any excellencies. We are poor judges of our own condition, and usually err on one side or the other. All graces may not flourish at the same time, and defalcations in one direction may be more than balanced by advantages in another. We may be deeper in humility if we are not higher in delight. We may not glitter so much, and yet there may be more real gold in us. The leaf may not be so green, but the fruit may be more ripe. The way may be rougher, and yet be nearer heaven. Godly anxiety, then, may be the cause of many regrets which are, nevertheless, not warranted by any serious declension.

And, let me add, that very often these regrets of ours about the past are not wise. It is impossible to draw a fair comparison between the various stages of Christian experience, so as to give a judicious preference to one above another. Consider, as in a parable, the seasons of the year. There are many persons who, in the midst of the beauties of spring, say, "Ah, but how fitful is the weather! These March winds and April showers come and go by such fits and starts, that nothing is to be depended upon. Give me the safer glories of summer." Yet, when they feel the heat of summer, and wipe the sweat from their brows, they say, "After all, with all the full-

blow of beauty around us, we admire more the freshness, verdure, and vivacity of spring. The snowdrop and the crocus, coming forth as the advance guard of the army of flowers, have a superior charm about them." Now it is idle to compare spring with summer; they differ, and have each its beauties. We are in autumn now, and very likely, instead of prizing the peculiar treasures of autumn, some will despise the peaceful Sabbath of the year, and mournfully compare you fading leaves to funeral sermons replete with sadness. Such will contrast summer and autumn, and exalt one above another. Now, whoever shall claim precedence for any season, shall have me for an opponent. They are all beautiful in their season, and each excels after its kind. Even thus it is wrong to compare the early zeal of the young Christian with the mature and mellow experience of the older believer, and make preferences. Each is beautiful according to its time. You, dear young friend, with your intense zeal, are to be commended and imitated; but very much of your fire I am afraid arises from novelty, and you are not so strong as you are earnest; like a newborn river, you are swift in current, but neither deep nor broad. And you, my more advanced friend, who are much tried and buffeted, to you it is not easy to hold on your way under great inward struggles and severe depressions, but your deeper sense of weakness, your firmer grasp of truth, your more intense fellowship with the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, your patience, and your steadfastness, are all lovely in the eyes of the Lord your God. Be thankful each of you for what you have, for by the grace of God you are what you are.

After making all these deductions, however, I cannot conceive that they altogether account for the prevalence of these regrets; I am afraid the fact arises from the sad truth that many of us have actually deteriorated in grace, have decayed in spirit, and degenerated in heart. Alas! in many cases, old corruptions have fought desperately, and for awhile caused a partial relapse. Grace has become weak, and sin has seized the occasion for attack; so that for a time the battle is turned, and Israel's banner is trailed in the mire. With many professors, I am afraid, prayer is neglected, worldliness is uppermost, sin has come to the front, nature leads the van, and grace and holiness are in the background. It should not be so, but I am afraid, ah, sadly afraid it is so.

IV. I will more fully speak upon this matter under the fourth head. Since these regrets are exceedingly common, it is to be feared that in some cases they are very sadly NEEDFUL. Now, let the blast of the winnowing fan be felt through the congregation. Behold, the Lord himself winnows this heap. Are there not many among us who once walked humbly with God, and near to him, who have fallen into carnal security? Have we not taken it for granted that all is well with us, and are we not settled upon our lees like Moab of old? How little of heart-searching and self-examination are practiced now-a-days! How little enquiry as to whether the root of the matter is really in us! Woe unto those who take their safety for granted, and sit down in God's house and say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion. Of all enemies, one of the most to be dreaded is presumption. To be secure in a Christ is a blessing, to be secure in ourselves is a curse. Where carnal security reigns, the Spirit of God withdraws. He is with the humble and contrite, but he is not with the proud and self-sufficient. My brethren, are we all clear in this respect? Do not many of God's people also need to bemoan their worldliness? Once Christ was all with you, brethren; is it so now? Once you despised the world, and contemned alike its pleasures and its frowns; but now, my brethren, are not the chains of worldly custom upon you? Are you not many of you enslaved by fashion, and eaten up with frivolity? Do you not, some of you, run as greedily as worldlings after the questionable enjoyments of this present life? Ought these things to be so? Can they remain so and your souls enjoy the Lord's smile? "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You cannot be Christ's disciples, and be in fellowship with the ungodly. Come ye out from among them; be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing; then shall ye know right joyfully that the Lord is a Father to you, and that you are his sons and daughters. But, brethren, have ye gone unto Jesus without the camp, and do ye abide there with him? Is the line of your separation visible—ay, is it existing? Is there any separation at all? Is it not often the case that the professed people of God are mixed up with the sons of men so that you cannot discern the one from the other? If it be so with anyone of us, let him humble himself, and let him cry in bitterness, "Oh that I were as in months past."



Brethren and sisters feel ye the breath of the winnowing fan again. How is it with you as to private prayer? Are there not believers, and we hope true believers too, who are lax in devotion? The morning prayer is brief, but alas! it is not fervent; the evening prayer is too often sleepy; ejaculations are few and far between; communion with heaven is distant, suspended, almost non-existent in many cases. Look ye to this, my brethren; let each man commune with his own heart, and be still. Think not of others just now, but let each one consider his ways. How is it with your love to the souls of sinners? There was a time when you would have done anything to bring a man to Christ, when any exertion you could have put forth would have been made spontaneously, without the need of incessant exhortations; are you as ready to speak for Jesus now as you once were? Do you watch to bring souls to him? Does the tear tremble in your eye, now, as it once did for lost souls, perishing without Christ? Alas, upon how many has a hardening influence operated. Ah, and this is true even of us, ministers. We have grown professional in our service, and now we preach like automatons, wound up for a sermon, to run down when the discourse is over, and we have little more care for the souls of men than if they were so much dirt. Trifles of criticism, fancies of speculation, or fopperies of oratory, fascinate too many who should be wise to win smile. God forgive us if we have fallen into so deplorable a state.

Ah, and how many of God's people must confess that their conscience is not so tender now as it used be. The time was when, if you said half a word amiss, you would hide away to weep over it; when, in business, if there had been a little mistake, and anything that might be construed into want of integrity, you would have felt ashamed for a week that such a thing had happened; but now ah, professors hear ye this—some of you can be dishonest and speak words that border on lasciviousness, and be as others are, yet your heart does not smite you, but you come to the communion table and feel you have a right to be there, and listen to the Word of God, and take comfort from it, when rather you should be ashamed and confounded.

Let me enquire whether there are not many of us whose zeal is almost gone? We once loved the Savior intensely, and his cause we eagerly sought to serve, but now we take matters easily, and do not travail in

birth for souls. Some rich men were wont to give most freely to the cause of God, but now covetousness has palsied the hand of generosity. Even poor Christians are not always so ready with their two mites as they were in better days. You were wont to labor, too, but that Sunday School class sees you no longer; no street preaching now; no tract distributing now; all forms of Christ's service you have renounced, for you fancy you have done enough. Alas, poor sluggard! Has the sun shone long enough? Has God given you your daily bread long enough? Oh, cease not working, brethren, till God ceases to be merciful to you. "On, on, on," "forward, forward, forward," is the very motto of the Christian life. Let none of us talk of finality, for we have not yet attained. Till life is over, our zeal should still glow, and our labors for Christ should multiply.

>Are there but other signs of declension, that some of us might, with but a very slight examination, discover in ourselves? Is not brotherly love, in many Christians, very questionable? Have they not forgotten, altogether, the family ties which bind all Christians to one another? And, with brotherly love, has not love to the Gospel gone too, so that now with many, one doctrine is almost as good as another? If a man can talk well, and is an orator, they enjoy his ministry whether he advocates truth or error. Once they could go to the little meeting house, where Christianity was preached faithfully though in an uncouth style, but now they must have the help of organs or they cannot praise God; and there must be millinery and genuflexions, or else they cannot pray to him; and they must listen to oratory and elocution, or else they cannot accept God's word. He is sickly who cannot dine without made dishes and spiced meats, but he is a healthy man of God who can eat heaven's bread and heaven's meat, even when it is not served on a lordly dish. Might not many of us blush, if we were to think how low our graces are, how weak our faith, how few our good works, and our gracious words with which we should bear testimony to his name. Yes, in thousands of cases, Christians need not be stopped if they were to commence this mournful cry, "Oh that I were as in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle."

V. But, I must pass on to observe that these regrets **BY THEMSELVES ARE USELESS**. It is unprofitable to read these words of Job, and say,

"Just so, that is how I feel," and then continue in the same way. If a man has neglected his business, and so has lost his trade, it may mark a turn in his affairs when he says, "I wish I had been more industrious;" but if he abides in the same sloth as before, of what use is his regret? If he shall fold his arms and say, "Oh that I had dug that plot of land; oh that I had sown that field;" no harvest will come because of his lamentations. Up, man, up and labor, or you will have the sluggard's reward, rags and poverty will still be your portion. If a man be in declining health, if drunkenness and riot have broken down his constitution, it may mark a salutary reform in his history if he confesses his former folly; but if his regrets end in mere expressions, will these heal him? I trow not. So neither will a man, affected by spiritual decline, be restored by the mere fact of his knowing himself to be so. Let him go to the beloved physician, drink of the waters of life again, and receive the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations. Inactive regrets are insincere. If a man really did lament that he had lost communion with God, he would seek to regain it. If he doth not seek to be restored he is adding to all his former sins this of lying before God, in uttering regrets that he does not feel in his soul.

I have known some, I fear who even satisfied themselves with expressions of regrets. "Ah," say they, "I am a deep experienced man, I can go where Job went; I can mourn and lament as Job did." Remember, many have been on Job's dunghill, who knew nothing of Job's God; many have imitated David in his sins, who never followed him, in his repentance. They have gone from their sin into hell by the way of presumption, whereas David went from it to heaven by the road of repentance and forgiveness. Never let us; merely because we feel some uneasiness within, conclude that this suffices. If in the dead of the night you should hear thieves in your house, you would not congratulate yourself because you were awake to hear them. You would waive all such comfortable reflections till the rogues were driven out and your property was safe; and so, when you know things are amiss with you, do not say "I am satisfied, because I know it is so." Up, men, and with all the strength that God's Holy Spirit can give you, strive to drive out these traitors from your bosom, for they are robbing your soul of her best treasures.

VI. Brethren, these regrets when they are necessary are very HUMBLING. Meditate now for a minute. Think, dear brother, what was thy position in thy happiest times, in those days that are now past. Had you any love to spare then? You were zealous; were you too zealous? You were gracious; were you too gracious? Nay, in our best estate, we were very far short of what we ought to be, and yet we have gone back from even that. It was a poor attainment at the best, have we fallen even from that. During the time we have been going back, we ought to have gone forward. What enjoyments we have lost by our wanderings! What progress we have missed! As John Bunyan well puts it, when Christian fell asleep and lost his roll, he had to go back for it, and he found it very hard going back, and, moreover, he had to go on again, so that he had to traverse three times the road he need only have traveled once, and then he came in late at the gates of the palace Beautiful, and was afraid of the lions, of which he would have had no fear had not the darkness set in. We know not what we lose, when we lose growth in grace.

Alas, how much the church has lost through us, for if the Christian becomes poor in grace, he lessens the church's wealth of grace. We have a common exchequer as a church, and every one who takes away his proportion from it robs the whole. Dear brethren, how accountable are many of us for the low tone of religion in the world, especially those of us who occupy the foremost ranks. If grace be at a low ebb with us, others say, "Well, look at so and so; I am as good as he." So much in the church do we take the cue from one another, that each one of us is in a measure responsible for the low state of the whole. Some of us are very quick to see the faults of others; may it not be that these faults are our own children? Those who have little love to others generally discover that there is little love in the church, and I notice that those who complain of the inconsistencies of others, are usually the most inconsistent persons themselves. Shall I be a robber of my fellow Christians? Shall I be an injury to the cause of Christ? Shall I be a comfort unto sinners in their sin? Shall I rob Christ of his glory,—I, who was saved from such depths of sin,—I, who have been favored with such enjoyments of his presence,—I, that have been on Tabor's top with him, and seen him transfigured,—I, that have been in his banqueting house, and have drunk out of the flagons of his love,—shall I be so devoid of grace, that I shall even injure his

children, and make his enemies to blaspheme? Wretch that I am, to do this! Smite your breast, my brother, if such has been your sin; go home and smite your breast again, and ask God to smite it, till, with a broken heart, you cry repentingly for restoration, and then again go forth as a burning and a shining light, to serve your Master better than before.

VII. These regrets, then, are humbling, and they may be made very PROFITABLE in many other ways. First, they shew us what human nature is. Have we gone back so far? O, brethren, we might have gone back to perdition: we should have done so, if it had not been for the grace of God. What a marvel it is that God has borne with our ill manners, when he might justly have laid the reins on our necks, and suffered us to rush on in the road which we so often hankered after. See you not, dear brethren, what a body of death we carry with us, and what a terrible power it possesses? When you see the mischief that corruption has already done, never trust yourself, but look for new grace every day.

Learn again to prize what spiritual blessings yet remain. If you have such bitter regrets for what you have lost, hold fast what is still yours. Slip back no further, for if these slips have cost you so much, take heed that they do not ruin you. To continue presumptuous may be a proof that our profession is rotten throughout: only a holy jealousy can remove the suspicion of insincerity. Let your previous failings teach you to walk cautiously for the future. Be jealous, for you serve a jealous God. Since grey hairs may come upon you, here and there, and you may not know it, search, watch, try yourself day by day, lest you relapse yet more.

This should teach us to live by faith, since our best attainments fail us. We rejoice to-day, but we may mourn to-morrow. What a mercy it is that our salvation does not depend on what we are or what we feel. Christ has finished our salvation; no man can destroy what he has completed. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and is safe there; none can pluck us out of Jehovah's hands. Since we so frequently run aground, it is clear that we should be wrecked altogether, if we went to sea in a legal vessel with self for our pilot; let us keep to the good ship of free grace, steered by immutable faithfulness, for none other can bring us to the desired haven. But oh, let that free grace fill us with ardent gratitude. Since Christ has kept us, though we could not keep ourselves, let us bless his name, and,

overwhelmed with obligations, let us rise with a solemn determination that we will serve him better than we have ever done before; and may his blessed Spirit help us to make the determination a fact.

VIII. So, to close; these regrets OUGHT NOT TO BE CONTINUAL: they ought to be removed, decidedly, removed, by an earnest effort, made in God's strength, to get back to the position which we occupied before, and to attain something better still.

Dear brethren and sisters, if any of you desire now to come into the higher life, and to feel anew your first love, what shall I say to you? Go back to where you started. Do not stay discussing whether you are a Christian or not. Go to Christ as a poor guilty sinner. When the door to heaven seems shut to me as a saint, I will get through it as a sinner, trusting in the precious blood of Jesus. Come and stand again, as though all your sins were on you still, at the cross's foot, where still may be seen the dropping blood of the infinitely precious atonement. Savior, I trust thee again: guilty, more guilty than I was before, a sinful child of God, I trust thee: "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and purge me from my sin." You will never have your graces revived, unless you go to the cross. Begin life again. The best air for a man to breathe when he is sickly is said to be that of his birthplace: it was at Calvary we were born; it is only at Calvary we can be restored when we are declining. Do the first works. As a sinner, repair to the Savior, and ask to be restored. Then, as a further means of health, search out the cause of your declension. Probably it was a neglect of private prayer. Where the disease began, there must the remedy be applied. Pray more earnestly, more frequently, more importunately. Or, was it a neglect of hearing the word? Were you enticed by novelty or cleverness away from a really searching and instructive ministry? Go back, and feed on wholesome food again perhaps that may cure the disease. Or, have you been too grasping after the world? Brother, you loved God when you had but one shop, you have two now, and are giving all your time and thoughts to business, and your soul is getting lean. Man alive, strike off some of that business, for it is a bad business that makes your soul poor. I would not check industry or enterprise for a single moment; let a man do all he can, but not at the expense of his soul. Push, but do not push down your soul. You may buy

gold too dear, and may attain a high position in this world at a cost which you may have to rue all your days. Where the mischief began, there apply the remedy. And oh, I urge upon you, and most of all upon myself, do not make excuses for yourselves; do not palliate your faults; do not say it must be so; do not compare yourselves among yourselves, or you will be unwise; but to the perfect image of Christ let your hearts aspire, to the ardor of your divine Redeemer, who loved not himself, but loved you; to the intense fervor of his apostles, who laid themselves upon the altar of God for his sake, for Christ's sake, and for yours. Aspire to this, and may we as a church live near to God, and grow in grace, then shall the Lord add to us daily of such as shall be saved.

There are some here who will say, "I do not comprehend this sermon: I have no cause to look back with regret. I have always been much the same as I am. I know nothing of religion." The day shall come when you will envy the least and most trembling believer. To you careless, Christless sinners, the day shall come when you will cry to the rocks for mercy, and beg them to conceal you from the eyes of him whom now you dare despise. I beseech you be not high minded, lift not up your horn on high, speak not so exceeding proudly, bow before the Christ of God, and ask him to give you the new life; for even if that new life have declined and become sickly, it is better than the death in which you dwell. Go and seek grace of him who alone can give it, and he will grant it to you this day, for his infinite mercy's sake. Amen.

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## Job's Sure Knowledge

For I know that my Redeemer liveth - Job 19:25

I daresay you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and his resurrection being found in this verse, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament, and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Others say that, while there is, no doubt, a reference to the person and the resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version; yet it has occurred to me that, possibly, Job himself may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation, and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained; and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, "I shall be vindicated one day; I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator liveth. I am sure that, there is One who will vindicate me; and if he never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God, in heaven, who will see me righted; and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the far-off ages, I shall be vindicated." He, throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates, and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is alive even now, a Goel, a



Kinsman, an Avenger, who will stand up for him, and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done as for a man, who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low, and then to be stung with such unfounded accusations; he is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere, and he appeals to that last dread tribunal, which he dimly sees in the far-off future, and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that be the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that, if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause, and if the wicked prosper, then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this, and rectify the apparent inequalities of his providence here. Job realized that; and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another revelation to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being, concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the garden of Eden itself, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He felt sure that, for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no "Daysman"—to stand between them both; but now he asks for an Advocate, and he feels that there must be one, yea, he knows that there is, and he declares that, somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may. So, possibly, Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed, and shows himself strong, on their behalf, at the right hand of God.

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. I shall speak first upon this point,—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AND HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.

These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter, they were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left; so he said, "I know that my Goel liveth." That is the Hebrew word; I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him, who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him, and endeavored to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt, and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him; and hence we get the word "redeemer." Or if estates became mortgaged through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible; so again we get the idea of redeemer. But the word "goel" is more comprehensive than the word redeemer, so we will begin with its first meaning.

Job, in the midst of his false friends, had One whom he called his kinsman. "I know," he said, "that my Kinsman liveth." We interpret that word "Kinsman" as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ, and we sing,—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,  
Arrayed in majesty and blood,  
Thou art our life, our souls in thee  
Possess a full felicity."

I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in him, for he is indeed the nearest akin to you of any,—bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is; for, often, you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another, and may not be able to enter into each other's trials at all; but this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart; he knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick, for in all your afflictions he was afflicted. Thus he is nearer to you than the nearest of

earthly kin can possibly be, for he enters more fully into the whole of your life; he seems to have gone through it all, and he still goes through it all in his constant sympathy with you.

Christ's kinship with his people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet, who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them, and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ's relationship to us is no accident of birth; it was voluntarily assumed by him. He would be one with us because he loved us; nothing could satisfy him till he had come to this earth, and been made one flesh with his Church. "For this cause," it is said concerning marriage, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery," said Paul; "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, verily, so was it with Christ, as the poet sings,—

"'Yea,' saith the Lord, 'with her I'll go  
Through all the depths of care and woe;  
And on the cross will even dare  
The bitter pangs of death to bear.'"

This he did because he would be one flesh with his people, and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so,—not by force; but by voluntary choice.

And, further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed. We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother, and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates; but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones, those who are ridiculed as being fools, "They are my brethren." The Prince of glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value,

calls the poor bedridden woman, who, is a child of God, his sister, and calls the humble, toiling, laboring man, who walks with him, his brother; and he is not ashamed to do so. Think, beloved, with intensest gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours, who is so near of kin to you,—voluntarily near of kin, and not ashamed to own the kinship.

Remember, too, that your Kinsman liveth in this respect,—that he will always be your Kinsman. The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in heaven. There cannot be, "for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that, will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here; but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother. We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed, and more clearly manifested up there than it ever can be here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly. So I want all of you, who truly love, the Lord Jesus Christ, to interpret my text in this way: "I know that my Kinsman liveth," and to feel how honored you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is. Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz, who was not content, for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife; and your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed unto him for ever, and he will bring you to his heavenly home at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

There was a second meaning to the word goel, arising out of the first,—Job's kinsman would become his Vindicator. It was the kinsman's duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, "I know that my Vindicator liveth;" and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator of his people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented; certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, and tortured, and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think; yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying,—it always has done so, and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment; there are some of God's best children who lie under reproach

by the year together. The very things which they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge, and they are thought to be guilty of them, and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them, though they are perfectly innocent all the while. Well, beloved, ever remember that your Vindicator liveth. Do not, be too much concerned to clear your own character; above all, do not attempt to vindicate yours in a court of law, but say to yourself, "I know that my Vindicator liveth." When he cometh, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." His people may be under a cloud now; but, when he appeareth, the cloud shall break, and their true glory shall be seen. The greater the obloquy under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honor which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us. All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator liveth.

There is another most comforting thought,—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the true ones that really concern us: can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that he can. Remember how the apostle John writes, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." You see, it is not merely, if we have been said to sin when we did not, but if we really sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father." O blessed Advocate, how dost thou clear thy people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way; he took it up himself,—the awful load of their guilt,—and suffered the full penalty for it. So there he stands before the eternal throne, to plead their cause; and, as he does so, he says, "Those sins, committed by my people,—I have taken them upon myself, and suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all who will believe in me." O thou blessed Kinsman, how glorious art thou in thy grace, in that thou hast so completely undertaken our cause that thou hast been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee! Yes, beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of his precious blood and his spotless righteousness; and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood, and shall not be remembered against us any more for ever.

In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here, and the Lord says to him, as he did concerning Joshua the high priest, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee! "We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him, and are sore beset, that our Vindicator liveth, and we may quote to him that grand promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent's head, still liveth. The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master's, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head; and whatsoever other adversary of your soul there may be, at any time, rest you in quiet confidence. Even if that adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say unto him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." So you have two meanings of the word goel,—my Kinsman, my Vindicator, liveth. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried, and you who are persecuted and oppressed, will catch that second meaning, and commit your cause unto God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Be slow to anger; fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospereth in his evil way, and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors. In patience and quietness possess your souls, knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator liveth.

Then the third meaning of the word goel certainly is redeemer, so Job could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." As I have already said, the next of kin, in the process of vindicating his poor Kinsman, was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the law of God, we were in bondage to that law; we had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we, who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, "I am carnal, sold under sin;" but Christ has come, and broken the power of sin in us, so that its reigning

power is subdued; and though it still striveth to get the mastery, and often maketh us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are two redemptions,—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ hath wrought for us;—by price, by his sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary; and by power, by his Divine Spirit coming into our heart, and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who hath redeemed us from under the law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken, and who hath also redeemed us from the power of sin? "I know that my Redeemer liveth," then I know that I am a free man; for if the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed. I know that he paid the price for my soul's eternal redemption, then may my soul continually exult in him, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith he hath made me free.

But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage, and we could not even meet the interest on it; but the whole estate is unmortgaged now, even to paradise itself. Does someone ask, "Is there not any mortgage even upon paradise?" I answer,—No; for Christ said to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so it is clear that he has entered paradise, and claimed it on his people's behalf. Jesus Christ hath said, in the words of the psalmist, "I restored that which I took not away." Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord's sovereign grace, you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ be accepted by you as your Goel and Redeemer. He hath restored to you the estates which your first father, Adam, had lost; and he hath made you heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, through the wondrous redemption which he wrought for you upon the cross of Calvary.

Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three glorious truths, and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the words of the text, "'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I know that he lives who will vindicate my character, and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that he lives who hath redeemed me from sin and hell; and even though I die, I know

that he will redeem me from the power of the grave, and that he will enable me to say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'"

Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper, and then let us pass on to another thought, at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.

## II. The second point, is this,-JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.

Job had lost everything,—every stick and stone that he possessed, he had lost his children, and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job, he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer. Notice, he does not say, "I know that my wife and my children live;" but he says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Ah! "my Redeemer,"—he has not lost him, so he has the best of all possessions still left. Looking up to him, by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, "Yes, he is my Redeemer, and he still lives; I accept him as mine, and I will cling to him for ever." Can you, beloved friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as the Redeemer, but also as your Redeemer? Have you personally accepted him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted him with your soul, wholly and really; and do you already feel in your own heart, a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon his great redemption? Another man's redemption is of no value to my soul; the sweetness lies in the little word "my"—"my Redeemer." Luther used to say that the marrow of the gospel is found in the pronouns, and I believe it is: "my Redeemer." Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself,—

"My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.

"My soul looks back to see  
The burdens thou didst bear,



When hanging on the cursed tree  
And hopes her guilt was there."

If you really do rely upon Christ's atoning sacrifice, and so take him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may know that it was. There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that. Thou, who knowest not where thou wilt have a lodging to-night, if thou canst truly say, "my Redeemer," thou needest not envy the very angels of God, for, in this respect, thou art ahead even of them, for they can call him "Lord", but not "Redeemer." He is not so near akin to them as he is to thee, "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took your nature and mine, beloved, for Christ became a man.

So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.

III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word "liveth": "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This teaches us that **JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.**

All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the patriarch's heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one, and the parents have many others left; but it is a far worse bereavement when the children, who are taken away, are grown up, as Job's were. They were evidently a very united family, who used to meet in each other's houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family, and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them, lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family, —seven sons and three daughters;—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one's family at once, like that, is a heavy stroke that nose can measure but those who have felt it. All were! gone,—the whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, "Though my children are all dead, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' He, is not dead, and in him I find more than all that I have lost."

Look at your Lord, dear friend, if you are mourning, just now, the sons of loved ones, and see whether he is not better to you than ten sons and daughters. See whether there is not, in his heart, room enough for that affection, which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul want something to cling to, and to twist around; then let them swine around him. Rejoice that he lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit, like the music of angels, "These are dead, but 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,'—liveth on, liveth in power, liveth in happiness, liveth with a life which he communicates to all who trust him. He lives, and therefore I shall live with him. He lives, and therefore the dead, who are in him, shall live for ever." O blessed truth!

You will yourself die soon, dear friend; no, I must correct myself, you will not die, for it is not death for one who knows the Saviour to die. You will fall asleep in him, one of these days, at the very hour that God has appointed; and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death-chamber, you will not be on the bed of sickness. Methinks you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings. "What is this I hear?" you will say. "Such music as this has never charmed me before, and what is that I see?". "But you will not need to enquire, for you will know that face at once. You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived; but you will know it better then, when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight, and get into the pure spirit state, and then see HIM. Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment; that first glimpse of him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive rapture. I do verily think that some, saints, whom I have known, have done just that,—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear brother, by whose bedside I sate for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, "I shall be home to-night, pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went; but I shall be home to-night, and see the face of Jesus." I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old negro said, "Our minister is dying full of life." That is the way to die,—full of life. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also, and we may well die full of life because of our union to him.

#### IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this, JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.

He said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now. I should not have liked to insure Job's sheep, and oxen, and asses, and camels, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty; yet there was one thing, concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly, and say, "'I know.' The winds may rage, and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. 'I know.' 'I know.' 'I know.'" Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody. But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away, and every earthly comfort be threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain, something, that is stable,—Jesus your Redeemer lives. Rest on him, and you will never fail. Let your faith in him be firm, and confident; you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave, to die no more, and that you, in him, must also live eternally. Something may be wrong with you, for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you for ever, and "all's well that ends well." There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal felicity, but all is right there for ever and ever. There may be losses and crosses, there may be tossings and shipwrecks, but all is right for ever with all who are in Christ Jesus. "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,"—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape "safe to land." There are uncertainties innumerable, but there is this one certainty: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Spring on this rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap on to this rock, Jesus lives. Trust the living Christ; and, because he lives, you shall live also. I could cheerfully take my place with Job, if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then he is your Redeemer, and you are saved for ever. If he is the only hope that you have, and you cling to him as the limpet clings to the

rock, then all is right with you for ever, and you may know that he is your Redeemer as surely as Job knew that he was his. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Joint Heirs And Their Divine Portion**

Joint heirs with Christ. - Romans 8:17

The apostle has proceeded through a simple but exceedingly forcible train of reasoning till he gains this glorious point—"Joint heirs with Christ." He begins thus—"Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." This is a fact which he takes for granted because he has perceived it in the hearts of believers. We do cry, "Abba, Father." From this he infers that if God has given us the Spirit whereby we call him "Father," then we are his children, which is plain, fair, and clear reasoning. Then he adds—"If children then heirs"—though this does not hold true in all families, because all children are not heirs, frequently the first-born may take all the estate; but with God so long as they are children they have equal rights. "If children then heirs." He goes on to say, "Heirs of God;" for if they are heirs they inherit their Father's property. God is their Father, they are therefore God's heirs! Well, but God hath another Son, one who is the first-born of every creature. Exactly so, therefore if we be heirs, as Christ Jesus is the heir of all things, we are "joint heirs with Christ." I think you will see that, like links in a chain, these different truths draw each other on—the spirit of adoption proves the fact of adoption; by the act of adoption we are children; if children then heirs; if heirs, heirs of God; but since there is another heir, we must therefore be joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Blessed is the man to whom this reasoning is not abstract, but experimental. Happy is he who can follow the apostle step by step, and say, "Yes, I have this morning the spirit of a son; I know that my

heart loves God, and I look to him as my Father, with trust, with confidence, and with love; then I am surely his son, because I have the Spirit a son; then I am his heir; I am the heir of God; and thus my faith lays hold upon the thrice-precious words of this glorious text—I am joint heir with Christ."

I would invite you, my brethren in Christ Jesus, this morning, to do three things; first, let us consider the terms of the will—"joint heirs with Christ;" secondly, let us go forth and view the estates—what it is of which we are joint heirs; and when we have done so, let us proceed at once to administer, for God hath made his children administrators as well as heirs.

I. First, then, there is A LEGAL TERM IN THE WILL UPON WHICH THE WHOLE MATTER WILL HINGE. We are called "joint heirs with Christ"—what meaneth this?

1. It means, first of all, that our right to the divine heritage stands or falls with Christ's right to the same inheritance. We are co-heirs; if he be truly an heir, so are we; and if he be not, neither are we. Our two interests are intertwined and made one, we have neither of us any heirship apart from the other; we are joint heirs, Christ jointly with us; ourselves jointly with Christ. So, then, it follows that if there be any flaw in the will, so that it be not valid, if it be not rightly signed, sealed, and delivered, then it is no more valid for Christ than it is for us. If there be some points in the covenant of grace where wisdom has been deficient, and therefore by error it may miscarry, or by lack of legal right may prove null and void, it is as surely null towards Christ as towards ourselves, for he is jointly concerned therein. If according to law we are only heirs-presumptive, whose rights may be superseded, then our great joint heir, so far as he is co-heir with us, is superseded also. If it be possible that by some decree in heaven's high court, it should be certified and determined that the inheritance is not rightly ours, because some one part of the covenant was left in a precarious state so that it became void and of no effect, then, thine inheritance, O thou King of kings, has failed thee in the very day when it hath failed us. I trust you will lay hold upon that thought; if Christ as God's heir has a perfect right to what his Father has bestowed upon him, even so have we, for our rights are nonexistent. If our title be

true and just, so is his, and if his rights of heritage be true and just, so are ours. Oh! blessed thought for the believer! Jesus must lose the reward of his agonies before we can lose the fruits of them. Jesus the Mediator must lose the glory which his finished work has procured for him, ere one of his co-heirs can miss of it; he must come down from that glory which he now inhabiteth, and cease to be honored as "the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood," if any one of his people shall be deprived of that glory, and be cast into hell. The will, if valid for one, is valid for all.

But perhaps there may be a suit in law made against the will; some antagonist may set up a counter claim; an enemy to the entire family may proceed at once to attack the will with venom and with malice; he may take it into the Heavenly Court of Chancery, and there, before the great Judge, the question may be tried as to whether the inheritance be legally and lawfully ours. Very well, be it so; but then it is Christ's interest that is at stake as well as mine; he will be co-respondent in the suit. When Satan stood forth to accuse Joshua, the high priest, he did in effect accuse Christ as well as that chosen disciple, and the Lord was not slow to put in his rejoinder to the objection: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" If Satan bring an accusation before God against any of the Lord's redeemed, that accusation is made against the Redeemer himself, for God's people are so one with Christ, that you must first bring the charge against Christ himself ere you dare to lay it against any of his elect. Do not say you: can charge the members with sin; you may do so in the inferior courts of earth, but the bill will be ignored in the supreme court of heaven, since before that bar the accepted substitute appears to answer an demands. You must enter your suit against the Head if you would attack the members, for verily the action at law which can be pleaded against the member of the body must be pleaded against the Head itself, for no court can allow a distinction between the body and the head in an notion at law. If it be possible that the malice and the graft of hell could invent some scheme by which the covenant could he put out of court, and the promise of grace could be made to fail, then Christ fails with his people, and the heir of all things loses his inheritance as soon as one single one of the other heirs shall have his right to the inheritance

disproved. Our rights are joint rights, and most be either jointly acknowledged or jointly denied. "We are joint heirs with Christ."

Yet, further, to illustrate the full meaning of the joint heirship—suppose, after the via had been proved and acknowledged to be right, it shall be found in winding up the affairs of the testator, that nothing is left to distribute—suppose, after all this boast and talk about being heirs, the property should be nil, or there should even be found a debt against the estate—what then? Why, my brethren, if we get nothing, Christ gets nothing; if there should for us, there is no heaven for Christ. If there should be no thrones for us, there would be no throne for him; if the promise should utterly fail of fulfillment to the least of the joint heirs, it must also fail of accomplishment to our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Be the property much or little, we are co-heirs; if there be infinite treasures, Christ hath them, and we have them; but if there be no treasure whatever, and faith should end in disappointment, and hope in despair, the calamity which impoverishes us must also impoverish our great co-heir. When we are poor, and in eternity have no shelter; when we in the next world shall find no heaven and no bliss,—then, wandering as outcast orphans, we shall see our Elder Brother an outcast orphan too; if we be portionless and penniless, the Firstborn among many brethren must be portionless and penniless also, for with him we stand or we fall.

And then suppose that, in winding up the estates, it should be found that, though there be something left, yet it be a mere trifle, scarcely worth an acknowledgment: enough to excite appetite but not sufficient to satisfy it —what if it should come out at last, that heaven is not the infinite joy we have been taught to expect; suppose its bliss should be but inferior joy, such as might be found even in this world below—suppose that the harps have no melody, the crowns but little glory, and heaven's streets but slight magnificence—what then? What they are to us they are to our co-heir. Saints with little glory, then Christ with little glory; believers with a narrow heaven, then Christ with a narrow heaven. If they drink but little from the river of pleasure, his draughts must be shallow too, for their joy is his joy, and his glory he has given them. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, and ye who long for his appearing shall be satisfied also when ye wake up in his likeness.

I have been dwelling upon the black side in order to bring the bright one out by contrast. We are joint heirs. So you see if there be any flaw, if there be any action to set aside the will, or if there be found no effects, or if the effects be slender, the loss falleth upon the co-heirs; not on one alone, nor on the other alone, but on the two, since they are jointly designated heirs in the will, and they are only heirs as they stand in relationship with one another. But oh! my brethren, let us revel with delight for a moment in the contrast which I might present to you. There is no flaw in God's will with regard to Christ. The heathen may rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, but God saith, "I will declare the decree, yet have I set my Son upon any holy hill of Zion." There is no fear whatever that, by any accident or by mistake, Christ should miss the honor to which his Father hath ordained him, he must be with his Father where he is. Just as little fear is there for you and for me if we be heirs of God. Thus runs the decree, and thus shall the fulfillment follow—"I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." No suit in law can stand against Christ; it were idle to dream it for a moment He has satisfied God's law, magnified it and made it honorable; he has discharged all the debts which as surety he took upon himself. Who shall accuse the Redeemer? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of him who rose again from the dead? Nor can any creature accuse his saints, nor can heaven, or earth, or hell disprove our rights or infringe upon our title so long as his title stands undisputed and indisputable. We shall see his face; the devils in hell cannot hinder it; we shall possess the promised rest, still the fiends that are beneath shall not rob us of the heirloom. And, believer, there is no fear that Christ shall be the possessor of nothing or heir of little things. He is the Son of God the infinitely rich, and God will not give to his Son a petty dowry or a trifling portion. "Ask of me," saith he, and he gives him unlimited permission to ask, not as Herod who would give only the half of his kingdom, but as one who would give everything to his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom he make the worlds. And O my soul, thy portion cannot be slender nor thy dowry narrow, since it is the same inheritance which Christ has from his Father's hands. Weigh the riches of Christ in scales and his treasures in balances and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of Christ's sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. Overleap the boundaries of Christ's



possession if you can, and then dream of ending a limit to the possessions of the elect of God. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

2. There is another point under the first head which I must not omit. Then it appears if we are called joint heirs with Christ, we legally and strictly have no inheritance apart from him. Soul, this suggests to thee a solemn enquiry, "Art thou in Christ or not?" Think not that thou canst ever be a partaker of the fullness of God Unless thou art in Christ—with him vitally and personally, one. One of two joint heirs has no right apart from the other. The signature of the one will not avail to alienate the estate, nor can he sell it by his own right, nor have it all at his own separate disposal, or in his own sole possession or holding. He has, in fact, no right at all, except as he is taken in connection with his co-heir. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself; your right lieth in Christ. If you be pardoned, it is through his blood; if you be justified, it is through his righteousness; if you be sanctified, it is because he is made of God unto you sanctification; if you be taught in the ways of God, it is because he becomes your wisdom; if you shall be kept from falling it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are perfected, it is because you are complete in him, and if you be glorified at the last, it will be because God the Father hath glorified his Son Jesus. The promises are yea and amen to thee, but only in Christ Jesus, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh at things after the counsel of his own will. Make thou thyself assured, then, that thou art in union with Christ, for out of him thou hast no rights whatever.

3. The title of joint heir contains another mystery which I cannot withhold, although it must be judiciously handled—Christ, as coheir, has (of his own free grace) so identified himself with what his rights as coheir are not to be separated or viewed apart from ours. As God, by his own right, the Lord Jesus is possessor of all things, since he made and supports all things; but as Jesus, the mediator, the federal head of the covenant of grace, he hath no rights apart from his people. See, brethren, he enters into glory, but not for himself alone, for it is written, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered." Hbr 6:20 Does he stand in the presence

of God—he appears in the presence of God for us; Hbr 9:24 Adam's death was not simply his own private loss, for in Adam all died, and Christ's life and all the consequences of his obedience are not merely his own, but the joint riches of all who are in him, of whom he is the federal head, and on whose behalf he accomplished the divine will. When Christ gave himself for us, he gave us all the rights and privileges which went with himself, so that now he has, as our Brother, no heritage apart from us, although, as Eternal God, he hath essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend.

Yet one more remark before we leave this point. While dwelling upon this joint heirship, let us remark what an honor is conferred upon us. To have anything to do with a great man is thought by some persons to be a distinguished mark of honor; to be set down in a will as co-heir with some great prince or noble would be considered indeed a great thing; but what honor is conferred on thee, believer, to be joint heir with the King of kings, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! Thou camest here to-day from thy toil, and thy bones have scarce forgotten yesterday's weariness; but thou art coheir with him who rules all heaven; thou art come here in poverty and thou wilt go home to a scant meal in a narrow room, but thou art co-heir with him who made the worlds, by whom: all things consist; you have come here weak and feeble, doubting, distrustful, and cast down, but I tell thee, weak though thou be, and in thine own judgment less than the least of all yet the same hand that wrote Christ heir of all things wrote thy name with his, and till a hand can be found that can blot out thy Redeemer's name thine shall stand and abide fair ever and ever. Come, lift up thine head; envy no man his dukedom; think no man's princship worth thy coveting; thou art greater than the greatest, for thou art joint heir with Christ; in dignified relationship thou hast no superior upon earth; and except those who are joint heirs with thee, thou hast not an equal, since thou art joint heir with Christ. And wilt thou think, yet again, what cause there is that thou shouldst realize to-day thy union with Christ, since thou art joint heir with him. Soul, thou art linked with Christ in the Eternal business of the Eternal Father. When he decreed Christ to be blessed above all the blessed, he decreed thee to be a partaker with him. Christ was always considered as having you in him, and you were always considered by God

as being in Christ. I pray you consider yourself as being in Christ. Look to-day upon thine own being, not as a stray spark, but as a portion of Christ's fire, not as a solitary drop, but as a part of that deep sea of love which we can Christ Jesus. Think of thyself now, not as a man or separate individual, but as a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. These are blessed subjects, though I cannot speak upon them as I would. I always find when I have to deal with these "fat things full of marrow," that words fail us; and perhaps it is well, for then the excellency of the power is proved to be not by words of man but in the weight, and fullness, and richness of gospel matter. Joint heirs with Christ Jesus! I defy you to exhaust that topic, though you should think about it all the days of the next week, nay, though you should muse upon it till eternity commences with your soul.

II. IN VIEWING THE ESTATES we must remark that to our present apprehension they are divided into two parts, the first part of the inheritance is one which flesh and blood would fain do without—it is the inheritance of suffering. When Christ was God's heir, and was here on earth, he was heir of the cross, heir of shame, and spitting, and cruel mockings, and scourgings. If we are joint heirs with him, we, too, must partake of the same. Come with me, believer, to your estates, and behold, just on the edge of your Father's great inheritance, lies the swamp and morass of affliction. Now this is yours. If this be not yours, neither are the rest, for they are in the same indenture, and they are beg seethed to you in the same will. The same legacy that left peace with you, also left tribulation with you, while you are in this world. Come now, though this be an exceedingly noisome spot, though it be a piece of ground which thou wouldst fain leave out and give to thine enemies, yet there is a possibility of getting great treasure and great riches out of it; therefore do not scorn it. But if thou scorn it, remember, thou scornest the rest of the inheritance, for they are all one and indivisible in your Father's will. Christ's cross is entailed on all heirs of God. Will you take the cross? What! do thy shoulders forbid, and refuse themselves the pain of bearing it? Then, remember, thy head must deny itself the pleasure of wearing the crown. No cross no crown. If you are joint heir and would claim one part of the estate, you must take the rest. Are you ready to throw up your own claim, and say, "I will not be heir of anything?" Be it so, then; but until

you are, you must be ready to suffer in this world the afflictions of the chosen ones, for they are a part of the inheritance. But, remember, Christ is co-heir with you in this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." Added to this you must also be the heir of persecution. Christ had to be persecuted and so must you. If you, for fear of shame, and out of the love of the flesh, will not follow Christ through an evil generation, neither shall you follow him when he marches through the streets of heaven in triumph, amidst the acclamations of angels. You must endure persecution; but then, remember, he will be joint heir with you. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "He had not persecuted Christ," you say, "it was only some poor men and women that he had haled to prison, or scourged in the synagogues, to compel them to blaspheme." Ay, but Christ was co-heir with theirs, and when Saul persecuted the poor servants of Jesus, he persecuted the Master too. Will you be sharers with him? Will you be scoffed at for his sake? Will you be willing to endure the revilings of slanderous tongues?—for if not, inasmuch as you reject one part of the inheritance you reject the rest. There is a third black portion, too, namely, temptation. You must be tempted of Satan, you must be tried by the world, the flesh, of the devil. Do you shrink from it? Do you say, "I would not be a Christian, if I must always be on my guard, and always fighting against temptation from without and from within?" Remember, in this, too, Christ is your co-heir. "He was tempted in all points like as we are." "We have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Do you shrink from being tempted? Would you take Job's jewels, but not his dung-hill? Would you have David's crown, but not his caves of Adullam, and rocks of the wild goats? Would you have your Master's throne, but not his temptation in the wilderness? Then, remember, it cannot be; when you refuse the one, you relinquish all claim to the other. The co-heir is heir to the entire estate; and if he says, "No, not to that portion," then he is not heir to any; and if he makes exemption anywhere, he makes exemption to the whole. The joint heirship reaches from the gloomy patina of deep affliction up to the bright ineffable splendor of the throne of bliss, nor can any man reverse the record. "If so be that we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together."

Now, let us march with joyful footsteps onward to the other part of the

inheritance. As this is a legal question, and as in matters of wills everything should be proven and sworn to, let us have, concerning our inheritance, the evidence of God: that cannot lie. Now, first, brethren, as co-heirs with Christ, we are heirs of God—so the text tells us. Oh! who can tell what God is? The finite cannot grasp the infinite. We who are but babes cannot hold the great ocean of Godhead in our infantile palms. We know not what God is, nor the measure of his attributes. But, remember, the text tells us that all God is, is ours. Is he omnipotent? Thine omnipotence is ours, O God, to be our defense. Is he omniscient? Thine infinite wisdom, O God, is mine to guide me. Is he eternal? Thine eternity, O God, is mine to keep me in existence, that I may ever be preserved. Is he full of love and grace? Then all thy love, as though there were not another to be loved, is mine, O God, and all thy grace, as though there were never another sinner to partake of it, is mine. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."— Psa 16:5 "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."— Psa 63:26 Take another passage. Turn to Rom 4:13 and you will find that there the promise that was made to the seed was that he should be heir of the world. "Ask of me," said his rather, "and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "This world is ours," says the apostle in another place, and ours because it is Christ's by right of inheritance. There is nothing here below which does not belong to a believer. If he hath wealth, let him use it in his Master's service, for it is his. If he hath poverty, it is better for him, for poverty is his to help him, to be sanctified, and to long for heaven. Whatever happens to him—sickness or health, adversity or prosperity, everything is his here below. You may walk the broad acres of this round globe, and never look upon a single spot that is not yours. You may cast your eye to the remotest star, or send your thoughts beyond into the untraversed leagues of space, but look where you will, as all is Christ's, so all is yours. You have not come of age, so you do not possess it yet, but the day shall come when Christ shall come to this earth, and take possession of it, and then his saints shall reign with him. "The meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves with the abundance of peace." In Hbr 1:2, we are told that God has appointed Christ heir of all things. Then we are heirs of all things—heaven and earth, time and eternity, anything that you can conceive of the things that can be named and cannot be named, things conceivable

and inconceivable, finite and infinite, human and divine. Christ's property extends to all, and we are co-heirs. Therefore, our rights and our property extend to all things whatsoever they may be. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Then in Jam 2:5, we are spoken of as being heirs of the kingdom. Christ hath a kingdom that shall never be moved. He ruleth over all. Doth he call himself a King? he hath made us kings. Is Christ a priest? We are priests unto our God. Dries he sit upon a throne? We shall overcome and sit down with him upon his throne. Will he judge the nations? Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world! Will he be received with triumph by his Father? So shall we when his Father shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Will he be ruler over many things? So shall we be when he shall say unto us, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Hath he joy? We shall have joy too, for we shall have his joy. Is he glorious? So must we be, for we shall be made like him. Is he everlasting? So shall we be, for because he lives, we shall live also. Brethren, I pray you, if your thoughts now can bring themselves to the matter, gather up all the honors, glories, treasures, riches, that your thought have ever conceived as belonging to Christ, and while the hymn is ringing in your ear—"Crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all;" remember that you are co-heirs with him. Oh! it is a glorious truth. Oratory may stand back, and eloquence may hold her tongue. The doctrine must be stated in its naked truth. She is, "when unadorned, adorned the most." This glorious truth is most sweet when earth's honeyed words are taken away, and most lustrous when we no longer attempt to illuminate her with human language. We are heirs with Christ. All that he has, all that he is, therefore, belongeth to us.

III. Now, thirdly, and this is the practical part of the discourse, let us proceed to ADMINISTER TO THE EFFECTS. How can we do that, say you? Well, in the first place, there is one part of the property which we may enjoy at once. Behold, I present to you the fair cross of your once crucified Elder Brother. When you came here this morning you were troubled, and as you came in you were envying your neighbor. You were saying of such-and-such an ungodly person, "Everything seems to go well with him, but as for me, all the day long am I plagued, and chastened

every morning." You were murmuring at the dispensations of God. Now, you have heard your Father's will read, and you find that you are joint heirs with Christ. You discover that Christ had his cross, and you are asked to administer to the will. Come, take your cross up and bear it with joy. You will have to carry it. Whether you take it up or not, your murmuring will not lighten your afflictions. You can make your wooden cross into an iron one, if you choose, by being of a fretful disposition. Resignation to God's will takes the weight out of the cross, but a proud spirit that will not bow to God's will change a wooden cross into an iron one. Now which shall it be! You must be chastened, you must feel the goad; will you kick against the pricks and so wound yourself more than you would have been by the goad itself? Why will you inflict more sorrow on yourself than God indicts? Be patient, and you only feel the rod as it is in God's hands, but when you are impatient and clutch at the rod, you bring it down with the weight of God's hand and your own hand too. Now be quiet. Not only be quiet, but be glad. Say, "I count it to be my joy to be permitted to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. I will count it to be my highest glory if I may be made a knight of the cross, and may carry that cross upon my shoulder: to the world a badge of dishonor, but to me the ensign of glory, the escutcheon of honor. I cannot of course picture what your precise trouble is. Some of you have a trouble perhaps, in her who is dearest to you. Others of you have affliction in your children, many of you are tried in your business, and some of you in your bodies with chronic or acute diseases. I know you have an a cross, or if you have not, I hope you will soon have one, for where there is no cross there is no Christ. The cross and Christ are nailed together by four nails, and they will never be disassociated in the experience of any Christian. All the sheep of the Great Shepherd are marked with the cross, and this not only in the fleece, but in the flesh. "If ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. "Now, I say begin at once to administer, by shouldering the cross and bearing your troubles and your persecutions with patience and with joy.

But next: why cannot we administer also to the blessed part of the glorious testament! Brethren, faith can do wonders. While sense is grovelling down below, faith with eagle wing cuts through the cloud and mounts to heaven. If you have faith enough brethren, you may this

mourning be raised up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Come, faith, and help me now to lay my fingers among the strings of the golden harp. Yea, that harp is mine, and my soul by faith would make every string resound with melody. Glory be unto thee, O God, glory be unto thee; my soul is in heaven, I with the cherubim and seraphim would bow, and sing, and rejoice with them I veil my face in this most joyful moment wiping every tear from my poor eyes, I bid them look upon thy glory in Christ. My soul would even now take her seat upon the throne; where my treasure is, there shall my heart be also.

"Even now I will adore him,  
With the glorious hosts above,  
Who for ever bow before him,  
And unceasing sing his love.

I will begin the music here.  
And so my soul shall rise;  
Oh! for some heavenly note to, bear  
My passions to the skies.

E'en now by faith I join my hands  
With those that went before.  
All hail! ye blood-besprinkled bands  
Upon the eternal shore."

Oh! holy Immanuel, exalted as thou art, thy co-heirs here below begin by faith to partake of thy glory. Methinks my head wears the crown; the white robe is girt about me, and my feet tread no more the battle fields, but the streets of peaceful bliss. Jerusalem, my spirit is come to thee, and unto thy glorious assembly. O ye first-born whose names are written in heaven, I take my seat with you and join your rapturous adoration. O God, thou Judge of all, my spirit meets thee robed in my Saviour's righteousness, and salutes thee as my Father and my all. O eternity, eternity eternity!—time is gone, and change is over, and I am floating on thy pacific waves where winds can never howl and tempests never lower. My soul hath made me like the chariots of Aminadib, and I have gotten me away to the hills of myrrh and the mountains of frankincense.



Last of all, I have another practical point. God has given Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, and we are co-heirs with him. Brethren, let us advance to take the property. But how! Why some of you can do so by preaching the gospel to poor sinners in the streets. Others, this afternoon, by teaching your children in the class. You can say, "God has given these souls to Christ, I am going to take them in Christ's name." Others of you who can do little yourselves, can this day assist by sending forth men of God to preach the gospel of Christ. Germany belongs not to the cloudy philosopher, but to Christ. Holland, Belgium, Russia, and Poland, belong not to their kings and czars, Christ is the King of kings, these lands belong to us. Go up; take them. Say not, "There are giants in the land," ye are strong enough to smite them. Say not, "Lutheranism and Popery are mighty." So they are, but he that is with you is mightier far. As Jonathan of old, with his armor, climbed up the steep place in the cleft of the rock and began to mow down his enemies, so, believer, alone or with your friend, as God has called you, climb up, for verily the possession is yours, and you may take it. All that the Church wants to-day is courage and devotion. Let but the Church know her rights and claim them, let her cease to assimilate herself to the sons of earth, let her cease from her accursed fornication with the state, and she shall become the pure, chaste bride of Christ. Let her, then, as Christ's queen, claim the earth as hers, and send her heralds forth from sea to sea to bid all men bow before him, and confess him to be their King. God's power will be with her heralds, God's might shall be with her armies, and the earth shall soon submit, and Christ shall reign for ever and ever. "Say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Say it, Christians, say it this morning; say it by your prayer, your deeds, your constant energy, say it by your benefactions, demand the earth for Christ, demand it for yourselves, for ye are "joint heirs with Christ." I pray you take the possession now.

Poor prodigal sinner, may our Father bring thee home, for there is an inheritance even for thee. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved."

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## **Joseph Attacked By The Archers**

The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength; and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. - Genesis 49:23-24

It must have been a fine sight to see the hoary-headed Jacob sitting up in his bed whilst he bestowed his parting benediction upon his twelve sons. He had been noble in many instances during his life - at the sleeping place of Bethel, the brook of Jabbok, and the halting of Peniel. He had been a glorious old man; one before whom we might bow down with reverence, and truly say, "There were giants in those days." But his closing scene was the best. I think if ever he stood out more illustrious than at any other time, if his head was at any one season more than another, encircled with a halo of glory, it was when he came to die. Like the sun at setting, he seemed then to be the greater in brilliance, tinging the clouds of his weakness with the glory of grace within. Like good wine, which runs clear to the very bottom, unalloyed by dregs, so did Jacob till his dying hour continue to sing of love, of mercy, and of goodness, past and future. Like the swan, which (as old writers say) singeth not all its life until it comes to die, so the old patriarch remained silent as a songster for many years; but when he stretched himself on his last couch of rest, he stayed himself up in his bed, turned his burning eye from one to another, and although with a hoarse and faltering voice, he sang a sonnet upon each of his offspring, such as earthly poets, uninspired, cannot attempt to imitate. Looking upon his son Reuben, a tear was in his eye, for he recollected Reuben's sin; he passed over Simeon and Levi, giving some slight rebuke; upon the others he sung a verse of praise, as his eyes saw

into the future history of the tribes. By-and-by his voice failed him, and the good old man, with long-drawn breath, with eyes pregnant with celestial fire, and heart big with heaven, lifted his voice to God, and said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God," rested a moment on his pillow, and then again sitting up, recommenced the strain, passing briefly by the names of each. But oh! when he came to Joseph, his youngest son but one - when he looked on him, I picture that old man as the tears ran down his cheeks. There stood Joseph, with all his mother Rachel in his eyes - that dear loved wife of his - there he stood, the boy for whom that mother had prayed with all the eagerness of an Eastern wife. For a long twenty years she had tarried a barren woman and kept no house, but then she was a joyful mother, and she called her son "Increase." Oh! how she loved the boy; and for that mother's sake, though she had been buried for some years, and hidden under the cold sod, old Jacob loved him too. But more than that, he loved him for his troubles. He was parted from him to be sold into Egypt. His father recollected Joseph's trials in the round-house and the dungeon, and remembered his royal dignity as prince of Egypt; and now, with a full burst of harmony, as if the music of heaven had united with his own, as when the widened river meets the sea, and the tide coming up doth amalgamate with the stream that cometh down, and swelleth into a broad expanse, so did the glory of heaven meet the rapture of his earthly feelings, and giving vent to his soul, he sung, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall; the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel); even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb; the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." What a splendid stanza with which to close! He has only one more blessing to give; but surely this was the richest which he conferred on Joseph.

Joseph is dead, but the Lord has his Josephs now. There are some still

who understand by experience - and that is the best kind of understanding - the meaning of this passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."

There are four things for us to consider this morning. First of all, the cruel attack - "the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him;" secondly, the shielded warrior - "but his bow abode in strength;" thirdly, his secret strength - "the arms of his hands were made strong by the mighty power of the God of Jacob;" and fourthly, the glorious parallel drawn between Joseph and Christ - "from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel."

I. First, then, we commence with THE CRUEL ATTACK. "The archers have sorely grieved him." Joseph's enemies were archers. The original has it, "masters of the arrows;" that is, men who were well skilled in the use of the arrows. Though all weapons are alike approved by the warrior in his thirst for blood, there seems something more cowardly in the attack of the archer than in that of the swordsman. The swordsman plants himself near you, foot to foot, and lets you defend yourself, and deal your blows against him; but the archer stands at a distance, hides himself in ambuscade, and, without you knowing it, the arrow comes whizzing through the air, and perhaps penetrates your heart. Just so are the enemies of God's people. They very seldom come foot to foot with us; they will not show their faces before us; they hate the light, they love darkness; they dare not come and openly accuse us to our face, for then we could reply; but they shoot the bow from a distance, so that we cannot answer them; cowardly and dastardly as they are, they forge their arrow-heads, and aim them, winged with hell-birds feathers, at the hearts of God's people. The archers sorely grieved poor Joseph. Let us consider who are the archers who so cruelly shot at him. First, there were the archers of envy; secondly, the archers of temptation; and thirdly, the archers of slander and calumny.

1. First, Joseph had to endure the archers of ENVY. When he was a boy, his father loved him. The youth was fair and beautiful; in person he was to be admired; moreover, he had a mind that was gigantic, and an

intellect that was lofty; but, best of all, in him dwelt the Spirit of the living God. He was one who talked with God; a youth of piety and prayerfulness; beloved of God, even more than he was by his earthly father. O! how his father loved him! for in his fond affection, he made him a princely coat of many colors, and treated him better than the others - a natural but foolish way of showing his fondness. Therefore his brethren hated him. Full often did they jeer at the youthful Joseph, when he retired to his prayers; when he was with them at a distance from his father's house, he was their drudge, their slave; the taunt, the jeer, did often wound his heart, and the young child endured much secret sorrow. On an ill day, as it happened, he was with them at a distance from home, and they thought to slay him; but upon the entreaty of Reuben, they put him into a pit, until, as Providence would have it, the Ishmaelites did pass that way. They then sold him for the price of a slave, stripped him of his coat, and sent him naked, they knew not, and they cared not, whither, so long as he might be out of their way, and no longer provoke their envy and their anger. Oh! the agonies he felt - parted from his father, losing his brethren, without a friend, dragged away by cruel man-sellers, chained upon a camel it may be, with fetters on his hands. Those who have borne the gyves and fetters, those who have felt that they were not free men, that they had not liberty, might tell how sorely the archers grieved him when they shot at him the arrows of their envy. He became a slave, sold from his country, dragged from all he loved. Farewell to home and all its pleasures - farewell to a father's smiles and tender cares. He must be a slave, and toil where the slave's task-master makes him; he must be stripped in the streets, he must be beaten, he must be scourged, he must be reduced from the man to the animal, from the free man to the slave. Truly the archers sorely shot at him. And, my brethren, do you hope, if you are the Lord's Josephs, that you shall escape envy? I tell you, nay; that green-eyed monster, envy, lives in London as well as elsewhere, and he creeps into God's church, moreover. Oh! it is hardest of all, to be envied by one's brethren. If the devil hates us, we can bear it; if the foes of God's truth speak ill of us, we buckle up our harness, and say, "Away, away, to the conflict." But when the friends within the house slander us; when brethren who should uphold us, turn our foes; and when they try to tread down their younger brethren; then, sirs, there is some meaning in the passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and

hated him." But, blessed be God's name, it is sweet to be informed that "his bow abode in strength." None of you can be the people of God without provoking envy; and the better you are, the more you will be hated. The ripest fruit is most pecked by the birds, and the blossoms that have been longest on the tree, are the most easily blown down by the wind. But fear not; you have naught to do with what man shall say of you. If God loves you, man will hate you; if God honors you, man will dishonor you. But recollect, could ye wear chains of iron for Christ's sake, ye should wear chains of gold in heaven; could ye have rings of burning iron round your waists, ye should have your brow rimmed with gold in glory; for blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's name's sake; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. The first archers were the archers of envy.

2. But a worse trial than this was to overtake him. The archers of TEMPTATION shot at him. Here I know not how to express myself. I would that some one more qualified to speak were here, that he might tell you the tale of Joseph's trial, and Joseph's triumph. Sold to a master who soon discovered his value, Joseph was made the bailiff of the house, and the manager of the household. His wanton mistress fixed her adulterous love on him; and he, being continually in her presence, was perpetually, day by day, solicited by her to evil deeds. Constantly did he refuse; still enduring a martyrdom at the slow fire of her enticements. On one eventful day she grasped him, seeking to compel him to crime; but he, like a true hero as he was, said to her, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Like a wise warrior, he knew that in such a case fleeing was the better part of valor. He heard a voice in his ears: "Fly, Joseph, fly; there remains no way of victory but flight;" and out he fled, leaving his garment with his adulterous mistress. Oh, I say in all the annals of heroism there is not one that shall surpass this. You know it is opportunity that makes a man criminal; and he had abundant opportunity; but importunity will drive most men astray. To be haunted day by day by solicitations of the softest kind - to be tempted hour by hour - oh! it needs a strength super-angelic, a might more than human, a strength which only God can grant, for a young man thus to cleanse his way, and take heed thereto according to God's word. He might have reasoned within himself, "Should I submit and yield, there lies before me

a life of ease and pleasure; I shall be exalted, I shall be rich. She shall prevail over her husband, to cover me with honors; but should I still adhere to my integrity, I shall be cast into prison, I shall be thrown into the dungeon; there awaits me nothing but shame and disgrace." Oh! there was a power indeed within that heart of his; there was an inconceivable might, which made him turn away with unutterable disgust, with fear and trembling, while he said, "How can I? how can I - God's Joseph - how can I - other men might, but how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God." Truly the archers sorely grieved him and shot at him; but his bow abode in strength.

3. Then another host of archers assailed him; these were the archers of MALICIOUS CALUMNY. Seeing that he would not yield to temptation, his mistress falsely accused him to her husband, and his lord, believing the voice of his wife, cast him into prison. It was a marvelous providence that he did not put him to death; for Potiphar, his master, was the chief of the slaughtermen; he had only to call in a soldier, who would have cut him in pieces on the spot. But he cast him into prison. There was poor Joseph. His character ruined in the eyes of man, and very likely looked upon with scorn even in the prison-house; base criminals went away from him as if they thought him viler than themselves, as if they were angels in comparison with him. Oh! it is no easy thing to feel your character gone, to think that you are slandered, that things are said of you that are untrue. Many a man's heart has been broken by this, when nothing else could make him yield. The archers sorely grieved him when he was so maligned - so slandered. O child of God, dost thou expect to escape these archers? Wilt thou never be slandered? Shalt thou never be calumniated? It is the lot of God's servants, in proportion to their zeal, to be evil spoken of. Remember the noble Whitefield, how he stood and was the butt of all the jeers and scoffs of half an age; while his only answer was a blameless life.

"And he who forged, and he who threw the dart,  
Had each a brother's interest in his heart."

They reviled him and imputed to him crimes that Sodom never knew. So shall it be always with those who preach God's truth, and all the followers of Christ - they must all expect it; but, blessed be God, they have not said

worse things of us than they said of our Master. What have they laid to our charge? They may have said, "he is drunken and a wine-bibber;" but they have not said, "he hath a devil." They have accused us of being mad, so was it said of Paul. Oh, holy infatuation, heavenly furor, would that we could bite others until they had the same madness. We think, if to go to heaven be mad, we will not choose to be wise; we see no wisdom in preferring hell; we can see no great prudence in despising and hating God's truth. If to serve God be vile, we purpose to be viler still. Ah! friends, some now present know this verse by heart, "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." Expect it; do not think it a strange thing; all God's people must have it. There are no royal roads to heaven - they are paths of trial and trouble; the archers will shoot at you as long as you are on this side the flood.

II. We have seen these archers shoot their flights of arrows; we will now go up the hill a little, behind a rock, to look at the SHIELDED WARRIOR and see how his courage is while the archers have sorely grieved him. What is he doing? "His bow abideth in strength." Let us picture God's favorite. The archers are down below. There is a parapet of rock before him; now and then he looks over it to see what the archers are about, but generally he keeps behind. In heavenly security he is set upon a rock, careless of all below. Let us follow the track of the wild goat and behold the warrior in his fastness.

First, we notice that he has a bow himself, for we read that "his bow abode in strength." He could have retaliated if he pleased, but he was very quiet and would not combat with them. Had he pleased, he might have drawn his bow with all his strength, and sent his weapon to their hearts with far greater precision that they had ever done to him. But mark the warrior's quietness. There he rests, stretching his mighty limbs; his bow abode in strength; he seemed to say, "Rage on, aye, let you arrows spend themselves, empty your quivers on me, let your bow-strings be worn out, and let the wood be broken with its constant bending; here am I, stretching myself in safe repose; my bow abides in strength; I have other work to do besides shooting at you; my arrows are against yon foes of God, the enemies of the Most High; I cannot waste an arrow on such pitiful sparrows as you are; ye are birds beneath my noble shot; I would



not waste an arrow on you." Thus he remains behind the rock and despises them all. "His bow abideth in strength."

Mark well his quietness. His bow "abideth." It is not rattling, it is not always moving, but it abides, it is quite still; he takes no notice of the attack. The archers sorely grieved Joseph, but his bow was not turned against them, it abode in strength. He turned not his bow on them. He rested while they raged. Doth the moon stay herself to lecture every dog that bayeth at her? Doth the lion turn aside to rend each cur that barketh at him? Do the stars cease to shine because the nightingales reprove them for their dimness? Doth the sun stop in its course because of the officious cloud which veils it: Or doth the river stay because the willow dippeth its leaves into its waters? Ah! no; God's universe moves on, and if men will oppose it, it heeds them not. It is as God hath made it; it is working together for good, and it shall not be stayed by the censure nor moved on by the praise of man. Let your bows, my brethren, abide. Do not be in a hurry to set yourselves right. God will take care of you. Leave yourselves alone; only be very valiant for the Lord God of Israel; be steadfast in the truth of Jesus and your bow shall abide.

But we must not forget the next word. "His bow abode IN STRENGTH." Though his bow was quiet it was not because it was broken. Joseph's bow was like that of William the Conqueror; no man could bend it but Joseph himself; it abode in "strength." I see the warrior bending his bow - how with his mighty arms he pulls it down and draws the string to make it ready. His bow abode in strength; it did not snap, it did not start aside. His chastity was his bow, and he did not lose that; his faith was his bow, and that did not yield, it did not break; his courage was his bow, and that did not fail him; his character, his honesty was his bow, nor did he cast it away. Some men are so very particular about reputation. They think, "surely, surely, surely they shall lose their character." Well, well, if we do not lose them through our own fault, we never need care about anybody else. You know there is not a man that stands at all prominent, but what any fool in the world can set afloat some bad tale against him. It is a great deal easier to set a story afloat than to stop it. If you want truth to go round the world you must hire an express train to pull it; but if you want a lie to go round the world, it will fly: it is as light as a feather, and a

breath will carry it. It is well said in the old proverb, "A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on." Nevertheless, it does not injure us; for if light as feather it travels as fast, its effect is just about as tremendous as the effect of down, when it is blown against the walls of a castle; it produces no damage whatever, on account of its lightness and littleness. Fear not, Christian. Let slander fly, let envy send forth its forked tongue, let it hiss at you, your bow shall abide in strength. Oh! shielded warrior, remain quiet, fear no ill; but, like the eagle in its lofty eyrie, look thou down upon the fowlers in the plain, turn thy bold eye upon them and say, "Shoot ye may, but your shots will not reach half-way to the pinnacle where I stand. Waste your powder upon me if ye will; I am beyond your reach." Then clap your wings, mount to heaven, and there laugh them to scorn, for ye have made your refuge God, and shall find a most secure abode.

III. The third thing in our text is THE SECRET STRENGTH. "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." First, notice, concerning his strength, that it was real strength. It says, "the arms of his hands," not his hands only. You know some people can do a great deal with their hands, but then it is often fictitious power; there is no might in the arm - there is no muscle; but of Joseph it is said; "the arms of his hands were made strong. It was real potency, true muscle, real sinew, real nerve. It was not simply sleight of hand - the power of moving his finger very swiftly - but the arms of his hands were made strong. Now that strength which God gives to his Josephs is real strength; it is not a boasted valor, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, an airy dream, an unsubstantial unreality, but it is real strength. I should not like to have a combat with one of God's Josephs. I should find their blows very heavy. I fear a Christian's strokes more than any other man's for he has bone and sinew, and smites hard. Let the foes of the church expect a hard struggle if they attack an heir of life. Mightier than giants are men of the race of heaven; should they once arouse themselves to battle they could laugh at the spear and the habergeon. But they are a patient generation, enduring ills without resenting them suffering scorn without reviling the scoffer. Their triumph is to come when their enemies shall receive the vengeance due; then shall it be seen by an assembled world that the "little flock" were men of high estate, and the "offscouring of all

things" were verily men of real strength and dignity.

Even though the world perceive it not, the favored Joseph has real strength, not in his hands only, but in his arms - real might, real power. O ye foes of God, ye think God's people are despicable and powerless; but know that they have true strength from the omnipotence of their Father, a might substantial and divine. Your own shall melt away, and droop and die, like the snow upon the low mountain top, when the sun shines upon it, it melteth into water; but our vigor shall abide like the snow on the summit of the Alps, undiminished for ages. It is real strength.

Then observe that the strength of God's Joseph is divine strength. His arms were made strong by God. Why does one of God's ministers preach the gospel powerfully? Because God gives him assistance. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. The strength of a Christian is divine strength. My brethren, I am more and more persuaded every day that the sinner has no power of himself, except that which is given him from above. I know that if I were to stand with my foot upon the golden threshold of heaven's portal, if I could put this thumb upon the latch, I could not open that door, after having gone so far towards heaven, unless I had still supernatural power communicated to me in that moment. If I had a stone to lift, to work my own salvation, without God's help to do that, I must be lost, even though it were so little. There is naught that we can do without the power of God. All true strength is divine. As the light cometh from the sun, as the shower from heaven; so doth spiritual strength come from the Father lights, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of a turning.

Again: I would have you notice in the text in what a blessedly familiar way God gives this strength to Joseph. It say, "the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus it represents God as putting his hands on Joseph's hands, placing his arms on Joseph's arms. In old times, when every boy had to be trained up to archery, if his father were worth so many pounds a year, you might see the father putting his hands on his boy's hands and pulling the bow for him, saying, "there, my son, in this manner draw the bow." So the text represents God as putting his hand on the hand of Joseph, and laying his broad arm along the arm of his chosen child, that he might be made strong. Like as a

father teacheth his children; so the Lord teaches them that fear him. He puts his arms upon them. As Elijah laid with his mouth upon the child's mouth, with his hand upon the child's hand, with his foot upon the child's foot, so does "God put his mouth to his children's mouth, his hand to his ministers' hand, his foot to his people's foot; and so he makes us strong. Marvelous condescension! Ye stars of glory, have ye ever witnessed such stoops of love? God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from his throne and lays his hand upon the child's hand, stretching his arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong.

One more thought, and I have done. The strength was covenant strength, for it is said, "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you may know that that respects God's covenant with Jacob. Ah! I love to talk about God's everlasting covenant. Some of the Arminians cannot bear it, but I love a covenant salvation - a covenant not made with my father, not between me and God, but between Christ and God. Christ made the covenant to pay a price, and God made the covenant that he should have the people. Christ has paid the price and ratified the covenant; and I am quite sure that God will fulfil his part of it, by giving every elect vessel of mercy into the hands of Jesus. But, beloved, all the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, we have through the covenant. If there were no covenant; if we could rend the everlasting charter up; if the king of hell could cut it with his knife, as the king of Israel did the roll of Baruck, then we should fail indeed; for we have no strength, except that which is promised in the covenant. Covenant mercies, covenant grace, covenant promises, covenant blessings, covenant help, covenant everything - the Christian must receive, if he would enter into heaven.

Now, Christian, the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you; but your bow abides in strength, and the arms of your hands are made strong. But do you know, O believer, that you are like your Master in this?

IV. That is our fourth point - A GLORIOUS PARALLEL. "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." Jesus Christ was served just the same; the shepherd, the stone of Israel, passed through similar trials; he was

shot at by the archers, he was grieved and wounded, but his bow abode in strength; his arms were made strong by the God of Jacob, and now every blessing rests "upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brethren." I shall not detain you long, but I have a few things to tell you; first about Christ as the shepherd, and then about Christ the stone.

Christ came into the world as a shepherd. As soon as he made his appearance, the Scribes and Pharisees said, "Ah! we have been the shepherds until this hour; now we shall be driven from our honors, we shall lose all our dignity, and our authority." Consequently, they always shot at him. As for the people, they were a fickle herd; I believe that many of them respected and admired Christ, though, doubtless, the vast majority hated him, for wherever he went he was a popular preacher; the multitude always thronged him and crowded round him, crying, "Hosanna." I think, if you had walked up to the top of that hill of Calvary, and asked one of those men who cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him," "What do you say that for? Is he a bad man?" "No," he would have said, "he went about doing good." "Then why do you say 'crucify him?'" "Because Rabbi Simeon gave me a shekel to help the clamor." So the multitude were much won by the money and influence of the priests. But they were glad to hear Christ after all. It was the shepherds that hated him, because he took away their traffic, because he turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple, diminished their dignity and ignored their pretensions; therefore, they could not endure him. But the Shepherd of Israel mounted higher and higher; he gathered his sheep, carried the lambs in his bosom; and he now stands acknowledged as the great shepherd of the sheep, who shall gather them into one flock and lead them to heaven. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale, in his "Village Dialogues," about a certain Mr. Tiplash, a very fine intellectual preacher, who, in one of his flights of oratory, said, "O Virtue, thou art so fair and lovely, if thou wert to come down upon earth, all men would love thee," with a few more pretty, beautiful things. Mr. Blunt, an honest preacher, who was in the neighborhood, was asked to preach in the afternoon, and he supplemented the worthy gentleman's remarks, by saying, "O Virtue, thou didst come on earth, in all thy purity and loveliness; but instead of being beloved and admired, the archers sorely shot at thee and grieved

thee; they took thee, Virtue, and hung thy quivering limbs upon a cross; when thou didst hang there dying they hissed at thee, they mocked thee, they scorned thee; when thou didst ask for water they gave thee vinegar to drink, mingled with gall; yea, when thou diedst thou hadst a tomb from charity, and that tomb, sealed by enmity and hatred." The Shepherd of Israel was despised, incarnate virtue was hated and abhorred; therefore fear not, Christians, take courage; for if your Master passed through it, surely you must.

To conclude: the text calls Christ the stone of Israel. I have heard a story - I cannot tell whether it is true or not - out of some of the Jewish rabbis; it is a tale, concerning the text, "The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the headstone of the corner." It is said that when Solomon's temple was building, all the stones were brought from the quarry ready cut and fashioned, and there were to be put. Amongst the stones was a very curious one; it seemed of no describable shape, it appeared unfit for any portion of the building. They tried it at this wall, but it would not fit; they tried it in another, but it could not be accommodated; so, vexed and angry, they threw it away. The temple was so many years building, that this stone became covered with moss, and grass grew around it. Everybody passing by laughed at the stone; they said Solomon was wise, and doubtless all the other stones were right; but as for that block, they might as well send it back to the quarry, for they were quite sure it was meant for nothing. Year after year rolled on, and the poor stone was still despised, the builders constantly refused it. The eventful day came when the temple was to be finished and opened, and the multitude was assembled to see the grand sight. The builders said, "Where is the top-stone? Where is the pinnacle?" They little thought where the crowning marble was, until some one said, "Perhaps that stone which the builders refused is meant to be the top-stone." They then took it, and hoisted it to the top of the house; and as it reached the summit they found it well adapted to the place. Loud hosannas made the welkin ring, as the stone which the builders refused, thus became the headstone of the corner. So is it with Christ Jesus. The builders cast him away. He was a plebeian; he was of poor extraction; he was a man acquainted with sinners, who walked in poverty and meanness; hence the worldly-wise despised him. But when God shall gather together, in one, all things that

are in heaven and that are in earth, then Christ shall be the glorious consummation of all things.

"Christ reigns in heaven the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise."

He shall be exalted; he shall be honored; his name shall endure as long as the sun, and all nations shall be blessed in him, yea, all generations shall call him blessed.

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## **Joy, A Duty**

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. - Philippians 4:4

There is A marvelous medicinal power in joy. Most medicines are distasteful; but this, which is the best of all medicines, is sweet to the taste, and comforting to the heart. We noticed, in our reading, that there had been a little tiff between two sisters in the church at Philippi;—I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about; I am usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects;—but, as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offence or to take offence. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord. Should it not be so? What is this joy but the concord of the soul, the accord of the heart, with the joy

of heaven? Joy in the Lord, then, drives away the discords of earth.

Further, brethren, notice that the apostle, after he had said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," commanded the Philippians to be careful for nothing, thus implying that joy in the Lord is one of the best preparations for the trials of this life. The cure for care is joy in the Lord. No, my brother, you will not be able to keep on with your fretfulness; no, my sister, you will not be able to weary yourself any longer with your anxieties, if the Lord will but fill you with his joy. Then, being satisfied with your God, yea, more than satisfied, overflowing with delight in him, you will say to yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." What is there on earth that is worth fretting for even for five minutes? If one could gain an imperial crown by a day of care, it would be too great an expense for a thing which would bring more care with it. Therefore, let us be thankful, let us be joyful in the Lord. I count it one of the wisest things that, by rejoicing in the Lord, we commence our heaven here below. It is possible so to do, it is profitable so to do, and we are commanded so to do.

Now I come to the text itself, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

I. It will be our first business at this time to consider THE GRACE COMMANDED, this grace of joy; "Rejoice in the Lord," says the apostle.

In the first place, this is a very delightful thing. What a gracious God we serve, who makes delight to be a duty, and who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy. That is the meaning of the precept, that we should be cheerful; more than that, that we should be thankful; more than that, that we should rejoice. I think this word "rejoice" is almost a French word; it is not only joy, but it is joy over again, re-joyce. You know re usually signifies the reduplication of a thing, the taking it over again. We are to joy, and then we are to re-joy. We are to chew the cud of delight; we are to roll the dainty morsel under our tongue till we get the very essence out of it. "Rejoice." Joy is a delightful thing. You cannot be too happy, brother. Nay, do not suspect yourself of being wrong



because you are full of delight. You know it is said of the divine wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Provided that it is joy in the Lord, you cannot have too much of it. The fly is drowned in the honey, or the sweet syrup into which he plunges himself; but this heavenly syrup of delight will not drown your soul, or intoxicate your heart. It will do you good, and not evil, all the days of your life. God never commanded us to do a thing that would really harm us; and when he bids us rejoice, we may be sure that this is a delightful as it is safe, and as safe as it is delightful. Come, brothers and sisters, I am inviting you now to no distasteful duty when, in the name of my Master, I say to you, as Paul said to the Philippians under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

But, next, this is a demonstrative duty: "Rejoice in the Lord." There may be such a thing as a dumb joy, but I hardly think that it can keep dumb long. Joy! Joy! Why, it speaks for itself! It is like a candle lighted in a dark chamber; you need not sound a trumpet, and say, "Now light has come." The candle proclaims itself by its own brilliance; and when joy comes into a man, it shines out of his eyes, it sparkles in his countenance. There is a something about every limb of the man that betokens that his body, like a well-tuned harp, has had its strings put in order. Joy—it refreshes the marrow of the bones; it quickens the flowing of the blood in the veins; it is a healthy thing in all respects. It is a speaking thing, a demonstrative thing; and I am sure that joy in the Lord ought to have a tongue. When the Lord sends you affliction, sister, you generally grumble loudly enough; when the Lord tries you, my dear brother, you generally speak fast enough about that. Now when, on the other hand, the Lord multiplies his mercies to you, do speak about it, do sing about it. I cannot recollect, since I was a boy, ever seeing in the newspapers columns of thankfulness and expressions of delight about the prosperity of business in England. It is a long, long time since I was first able to read newspapers—a great many years now; but I do not recollect the paragraphs in which it was said that everybody was getting on in the world, and growing rich; but as soon as there was any depression in business, what lugubrious articles appeared concerning the dreadful times which had fallen upon the agricultural interest and every other interest! Oh, my dear brethren, from the way some of you grumble, I might imagine you were all ruined if I did

not know better! I knew some of you when you were not worth twopence, and you are pretty well-to-do now; you have got on uncommonly well for men who are being ruined! From the way some people talk, you might imagine that everybody is bankrupt, and that we are all going to the dogs together; but it is not so, and what a pity it is that we do not give the Lord some of our praises when we have better times! If we are so loud and so eloquent over our present woes, why could we not have been as eloquent and as loud in thanksgiving for the blessings that God formerly vouchsafed to us? Perhaps the mercies buried in oblivion have been to heaven, and accused us to the Lord, and therefore he has sent us the sorrows of to-day. True joy, when it is joy in the Lord, must speak; it cannot hold its tongue, it must praise the name of the Lord.

Further, this blessed grace of joy is very contagious. It is a great privilege, I think, to meet a truly happy man, a graciously happy man. My mind goes back at this moment to that dear man of God who used to be with us, years ago, whom we called "Old Father Dransfield." What a lump of sunshine that man was! I think that I never came into this place with a heavy heart, but the very sight of him seemed to fill me with exhilaration, for his joy was wholly in his God! An old man and full of years, but as full of happiness as he was full of days; always having something to tell you to encourage you. He constantly made a discovery of some fresh mercy for which we were again to praise God. O dear brethren, let us rejoice in the Lord, that we may set others rejoicing! One dolorous spirit brings a kind of plague into the house; one person who is always wretched seems to stop all the birds singing wherever he goes; but, as the birds pipe to each other, and one morning songster quickens all the rest, and sets the groves ringing with harmony, so will it be with the happy cheerful spirit of a man who obeys the command of the text, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." This grace of joy is contagious.

Besides, dear brethren, joy in the Lord is influential for good. I am sure that there is a mighty influence wielded by a consistently joyous spirit. See how little children are affected by the presence of a happy person. There is much more in the tone of the life than there is in the particular fashion of the life. It may be the life of one who is very poor, but oh, how poverty is gilded by a cheerful spirit! It may be the life of one who is well

read and deeply instructed; but, oh, if there be a beauty of holiness, and a beauty of happiness added to the learning, nobody talks about "the blue stocking," or "the bookworm" being dull and heavy. Oh, no, there is a charm about holy joy! I wish we had more of it! There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar; and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by happy Christians than by doleful Christians. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live; and, mayhap, some weary sinner, who has discovered the emptiness of sinful pleasure, will say to himself, "Why, after all, there must be something real about the of these Christians; let me go and learn how I may have it." And when he comes and sees it in the light of your gladsome countenance, he will be likely to learn it, God helping him, so as never to forget it. "Rejoice in the Lord alway," says the apostle, for joy is a most influential grace, and every child of God ought to possess it in a high degree.

I want you to notice, dear friends, that this rejoicing is commanded. It is not a matter that is left to your option; it is not set before you as a desirable thing which you can do without, but it is a positive precept of the Holy Spirit to all who are in the Lord: "Rejoice in the Lord alway." We ought to obey this precept because joy in the Lord makes us like God. He is the happy God; ineffable bliss is the atmosphere in which he lives, and he would have his people to be happy. Let the devotees of Baal cut themselves with knives and lancets, and make hideous outcries if they will; but the servants of Jehovah must not even mar the corners of their beard. Even if they fast, they shall anoint their head, and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, for a joyous God desires a joyous people.

You are commanded to rejoice, brethren, because this is for your profit. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life's machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labour. Holy joy will beautify you, and, as I have already said, give you an influence over the lives of others. It is upon this point that I would most of all insist, we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. If you cannot speak the gospel, live the gospel by your cheerfulness; for what is the gospel? Glad tidings of great joy; and you who believe it must show by its effect upon you that it is glad tidings of great joy to you. I do believe that a man of God—under trial and difficulty

and affliction, bearing up, and patiently submitting with holy acquiescence, and still rejoicing in God—is a real preacher of the gospel, preaching with an eloquence which is mightier than words can ever be, and which will find its secret and silent way into the hearts of those who might have resisted other arguments. Oh, do, then, listen to the text, for it is a command from God, "Rejoice in the Lord alway!"

May I just pause here, and hand this commandment round to all of you who are members of this church, and to all of you who are truly members of Christ? You are bidden to rejoice in the Lord alway; you are not allowed to sit there, and fret, and fume; you are not permitted to complain and grown. Mourner, you are commanded to put on beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. For this purpose your Saviour came, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him for this very end, that he might make you to rejoice. Therefore, sing with the prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

II. Now we come to the second head, on which I will speak but briefly; that is, THE JOY DISCRIMINATED: "Rejoice in the Lord."

Notice the sphere of this joy: "Rejoice in the Lord." We read in Scripture that children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." We read of men and women being married "only in the Lord." Now, dear friends, no child of God must go outside that ring, "in the Lord." There is where you are, where you ought to be, where you must be. You cannot truly rejoice if you get outside that ring; therefore, see that you do nothing which you cannot do "in the Lord." Mind that you seek no joy which is not joy in the Lord; if you go after the poisonous sweets of this world, woe be to you. Never rejoice in that which is sinful, for all such rejoicing is evil. Flee from it; it can do you no good. That joy which you cannot share with God is not a right joy for you. No; "in the Lord" is the sphere of your joy.

But I think that the apostle also means that God is to be the great object of your joy: "Rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Father, you Father who is in heaven, your loving, tender, unchangeable God. Rejoice, too, in the

Son, your Redeemer, your Brother, the Husband of you soul, your Prophet, Priest, and King. Rejoice also in the Holy Ghost, your Quickener, your Comforter, in him who shall abide with you for ever. Rejoice in the one God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; in him delight yourselves, as it is written, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." We cannot have too much of this joy in the Lord, for the great Jehovah is our exceeding joy. Or if, by "the Lord" is meant the Lord Jesus, then let me invite, persuade, command you to delight in the Lord Jesus, incarnate in your flesh, dead for your sins, risen for your justification, gone into the glory claiming victory for you, sitting at the right hand of God interceding for you, reigning over all worlds on your behalf, and soon to come to take you up into his glory that you may be with him for ever. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus. This is a sea of delight; blessed are they that dive into its utmost depths.

Sometimes, brethren and sisters, you cannot rejoice in anything else, but you can rejoice in the Lord; then, rejoice in him to the full. Do not rejoice in your temporal prosperity, for riches take to themselves wings, and fly away. Do not rejoice even in your great successes in the work of God. Remember how the seventy disciples came back to Jesus, and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name," and he answered, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Do not rejoice in your privileges; I mean, do not make the great joy of your life to be the fact that you are favoured with this and that external privilege or ordinance, but rejoice in God. He changes not. If the Lord be your joy, your joy will never dry up. All other things are but for a season; but God is for ever and ever. Make him your joy, the whole of your joy, and then let this joy absorb your every thought. Be baptized into this joy; plunge into the deeps of this unutterable bliss of joy in God.

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE TIME APPOINTED for this rejoicing: "Rejoice in the Lord always."

"Always." Well, then, that begins at once, certainly; so let us now begin to rejoice in the Lord. If any of you have taken a gloomy view of religion, I beseech you to throw that gloomy view away at once. "Rejoice in the Lord always," therefore, rejoice in the Lord now. I recollect what a damper I

had, as a young Christian, when I had but lately believed in Jesus Christ. I felt that, as the Lord had said, "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life," I, having believed in him, had everlasting life, and I said so, with the greatest joy and delight and enthusiasm, to an old Christian man; and he said to me, "Beware of presumption! There are a great many who think they have eternal life, but who have not got it," which was quite true; but, for all that, is there not more presumption in doubting God's promise than there is in believing it? Is there any presumption in taking God at his word? Is there not gross presumption in hesitating and questioning as to whether these things are so or not? If God says that they are so, then they are so, whether I feel that they are so or not; and it is my place, as a believer, to accept God's bare word, and rest on it. "We count cheques as cash," said one who was making up accounts. Good cheques are to be counted as cash, and the promises of God, though as yet unfulfilled, are as good as the blessings themselves, for God cannot lie, or make a promise that he will not perform. Let us, therefore, not be afraid of being glad, but begin to be glad at once if we have hitherto taken a gloomy view of true religion, and have been afraid to rejoice.

When are we to be glad? "Rejoice in the Lord always;" that is, when you cannot rejoice in anything or anyone but God. When the fig-tree does not blossom, when there is no fruit on the vine and no herd in the stall, when everything withers and decays and perishes, when the worm at the root of the gourd has made it to die, then rejoice in the Lord. When the day darkens into evening, and the evening into midnight, and the midnight into a seven fold horror of great darkness, rejoice in the Lord; and when that darkness does not clear, but becomes more dense and Egyptian, when night succeedeth night, and neither sun nor moon nor stars appear, still rejoice in the Lord always. He who uttered these words had been a night and a day in the deep, he had been stoned, he had suffered from false brethren, he had been in peril of his life, and yet most fittingly do those lips cry out to us, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Ay, at the stake itself have martyrs fulfilled this word; they clapped their hands amid the fire that was consuming them. Therefore, rejoice in the Lord when you cannot rejoice in any other.

But also take care that you rejoice in the Lord when you have other things

to rejoice in. When he loads your table with good things, and your cup is overflowing with blessings, rejoice in him more than in them. Forget not that the Lord your Shepherd is better than the green pastures and the still waters, and rejoice not in the pastures or in the waters in comparison with your joy in the Shepherd who gives you all. Let us never make gods out of our goods; let us never allow what God gives us to supplant the Giver. Shall the wife love the jewels that her husband gave her better than she loves him who gave them to her? That were an evil love, or no love at all. So, let us love God first, and rejoice in the Lord always when the day is brightest, and multiplied are the other joys that he permits us to have.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, if you have not rejoiced before, begin to do so at once; and when you have long rejoiced, keep on at it. I have known, sometimes, that things have gone so smoothly that I have said, "There will be a check to this prosperity; I know that there will. Things cannot go on quite so pleasantly always."

"More the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests lowering overhead."

One is apt to spoil his joy by the apprehension that there is some evil coming. Now listen to this: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord always." Do not anticipate trouble. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Take the good that God provides thee, and rejoice not merely in it, but in him who provided it. So mayest thou enjoy it without fear, for there is good salt with that food which is eaten as coming from the hand of God.

"Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, when you get into company, then rejoice in the Lord. Do not be ashamed to let others see that you are glad. Rejoice in the Lord also when you are alone. I know what happens to some of you on Sunday night. You have had such a blessed Sabbath, and you have gone away from the Lord's table with the very flavour of heaven in your mouths; and then some of you have had to go home where everything is against you. The husband does not receive you with any sympathy with your joy, or the father does not welcome you with any fellowship in your delight. Well, but still, "Rejoice in the Lord always." When you cannot get anybody else to rejoice with you, still continue to

rejoice. There is a way of looking at everything which will show you that the blackest cloud has a silver lining. There is a way of looking at all things in the light of God, which will turn into sweetness that which otherwise had been bitter as gall. I do not know whether any of you keep a quassia cup at home. If you do, you know that it is made of wood, and you pour water into the bowl, and the water turns bitter directly before you drink it. You may keep this cup as long as you like, but it always embitters the water that is put into it. I think that I know some dear brethren and sisters who always seem to have one of these cups handy. Now instead of that, I want you to buy a cup of another kind that shall make everything sweet, whatever it is. Whatever God pleases to pour out of the bowl of providence shall come into your cup, and your contentment, your delight in God, shall sweeten it all. God bless you, dear friends, with much of this holy joy!

IV. So now I finish with the fourth head, which is this, **THE EMPHASIS LAID ON THE COMMAND:** "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." What does that mean, "Again I say, Rejoice"?

This was, first, to show Paul's love for the Philippians. He wanted them to be happy. They had been so kind to him, and they had made him so happy, that he said, "Oh, dear brethren, do rejoice; dear sisters, do rejoice. I say it twice over to you, 'Be happy, be happy,' because I love you so well that I am anxious to have you beyond all things else to rejoice in the Lord always."

I also think that, perhaps, he said it twice over to suggest the difficulty of continual joy. It is not so easy as some think always to rejoice. It may be for you young people, who are yet strong in limb, who have few aches and pains, and none of the infirmities of life. It may be an easy thing to those placed in easy circumstances, with few cares and difficulties; but there are some of God's people who need great grace if they are to rejoice in the Lord always; and the apostle knew that, so he said, "Again I say, Rejoice." He repeats the precept, as much as to say, "I know it is a difficult thing, and so I the more earnestly press it upon you. Again I say, Rejoice."

I think, too that he said it twice over, to assert the possibility of it. This was as much as if he had said, "I told you to rejoice in the Lord always."



You opened your eyes, and looked with astonishment upon me; but, "Again I say, Rejoice." It is possible, it is practicable; I have not spoken unwisely. I have not told you to do what you never can do; but with deliberation I write it down, "Again I say, Rejoice.' You can be happy. God the Holy Ghost can lift you above the down-draggings of the flesh, and of the world, and of the devil; and you may be enabled to live upon the mount of God beneath the shinings of his face. "Again I say, Rejoice."

Do you not think that this was intended also to impress upon them the importance of the duty? "Again I say, Rejoice." Some of you will go and say, "I do not think that it matters much whether I am happy or not, I shall get to heaven, however gloomy I am, if I am sincere." "No," says Paul, "that kind of talk will not do; I cannot have you speak like that. Come, I must have you rejoice, I do really conceive it to be a Christian's bounden duty, and so, "Again, I say, Rejoice."

But do you not think, also, that Paul repeated the command to allow of special personal testimony? "Again I say, Rejoice. I, Paul, a sufferer to the utmost extent for Christ's sake, even now an ambassador in bonds, shut up in a dungeon, I say to you, Rejoice." Paul was a greatly-tried man, but he was a blessedly happy man. There is not one of us but would gladly change conditions with Paul, if that were possible, now that we see the whole of his life written out; and to-night, looking across the ages, over all the scenes of trouble which he encountered, he says to us, "Brethren, rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

Did you ever notice how full of joy this Epistle to the Philippians is? Will you spare me just a minute while I get you to run your eye through it, to observe what a joyful letter it is? You notice that, in the first chapter, Paul gets only as far as the fourth verse when he says, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." Now he is in his right vein; he is so glad because of what God has done for the Philippians that, when he prays for them, he mixes joy with his prayer. In the eighteenth verse, he declares that he found joy even in the opposition of those who preached Christ in order to rival him. Hear what he says: "The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth,

Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." And he does not finish the chapter till, in the twenty-fifth verse, he declares that he had joy even in the expectation of not going to heaven just yet, but living a little longer to do good to these people: "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." You see it is joy, joy, joy, joy. Paul seems to go from stave to stave of the ladder of light, as if he were climbing up from Nero's dungeon into heaven itself by way of continual joy. So he writes, in the second verse of the second chapter, "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." When he gets to the sixteenth verse, he says, "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

But I am afraid that I should weary you if I went through the Epistle thus, slowly, verse by verse. Just notice how he begins the third chapter: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." The word is sometimes rendered "farewell." When he says, "Rejoice," it is the counterpart of "welcome." We say to a man who comes to our house, "Salve," "Welcome." When he goes away, it is our duty to "speed the parting guest," and say "Farewell." This is what Paul meant to say here. "Finally, my brethren, fare you well in the Lord. Be happy in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord." And I do not think that I can finish up my sermon better than by saying on this Sabbath night, "Finally, my brethren, fare you well, be happy in the Lord."

"Fare thee well! a if for ever  
Still for ever, fare thee well."

May that be your position, so to walk with God that your fare shall be that of angels! May you eat angels' food, the manna of God's love! May your drink be from the rock that flows with a pure stream! So may you feed and so may you drink until you come unto the mount of God; where you shall see his face unveiled, and standing in his exceeding brightness, shall know his glory, being glorified with the saved. Till then, be happy. Why, even -

"The thought of such amazing bliss,  
Should constant joy create."

Be happy. If the present be dreary, it will soon be over. Oh, but a little while, and we shall be transferred from these seats below to the thrones above! We shall go from the place of aching brows to the place where they all wear crowns, from the place of weary hands to where they bear the palm branch of victory, from the place of mistake and error and sin, and consequent grief, to the place where they are without fault before the throne of God, for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Come, then, let us make a solemn league and covenant together in the name of God, and let it be called, "The Guild of the Happy"; for the—

"Favourites of the Heavenly King  
May speak their joys abroad;"

ay, they must speak their joys abroad; let us endeavour to do so always, by the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen and Amen.

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## **Joy Born At Bethlehem**

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. - Luke 2:10-12

We have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas: first, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it be said or sung in Latin or in English; and, secondly, because we find no

Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Saviour; and, consequently, its observance is a superstition, because not of divine authority. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Saviour's birth, although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. Fabricius gives a catalogue of 136 different learned opinions upon the matter; and various divines invent weighty arguments for advocating a date in every month in the year. It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the church celebrated the nativity of our Lord; and it was not till very long after the Western church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. Because the day is not known, therefore superstition has fixed it; while, since the day of the death of our Saviour might be determined with much certainty, therefore superstition shifts the date of its observance every year. Where is the method in the madness of the superstitious? Probably the fact is that the holy days were arranged to fit in with heathen festivals. We venture to assert, that if there be any day in the year, of which we may be pretty sure that it was not the day on which the Saviour was born, it is the twenty-fifth of December. Nevertheless since, the current of men's thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the bark of our discourse upon that stream, and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction. Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other men's superstitions to render such a meditation improper for to-day. Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of his dear son.

In our text we have before us the sermon of the first evangelist under the gospel dispensation. The preacher was an angel, and it was meet it should be so, for the grandest and last of all evangels will be proclaimed by an angel when he shall sound the trumpet of the resurrection, and the children of the regeneration shall rise into the fullness of their joy. The key-note of this angelic gospel is joy—"I bring unto you good tidings of great joy." Nature fears in the presence of God—the shepherds were sore afraid. The law itself served to deepen this natural feeling of dismay; seeing men were sinful, and the law came into the world to reveal sin, its tendency was to make men fear and tremble under any and every divine

revelation. The Jews unanimously believed that if any man beheld supernatural appearances, he would be sure to die, so that what nature dictated, the law and the general beliefs of those under it also abetted. But the first word of the gospel ended all this, for the angelic evangelist said, "Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings." Henceforth, it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker; redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendor of his majesty, since he appears no more a judge upon his throne of terror, but a Father unbending in sacred familiarity before his own beloved children.

The joy which this first gospel preacher spoke of was no mean one, for he said, "I bring you good tidings"—that alone were joy: and not good tidings of joy only, but "good tidings of great joy." Every word is emphatic, as if to show that the gospel is above all things intended to promote, and will most abundantly create the greatest possible joy in the human heart wherever it is received. Man is like a harp unstrung, and the music of his soul's living strings is discordant, his whole nature wails with sorrow; but the son of David, that mighty harper, has come to restore the harmony of humanity, and where his gracious fingers move among the strings, the touch of the fingers of an incarnate God brings forth music sweet as that of the spheres, and melody rich as a seraph's canticle. Would God that all men felt that divine hand.

In trying to open up this angelic discourse this morning, we shall note three things: the joy which is spoken of; next, the persons to whom this joy comes; and then, thirdly, the sign, which is to us a sign as well as to these shepherds—a sign of the birth and source of joy.

I. First, then, THE JOY, which is mentioned in our text—whence comes it, and what is it?

We have already said it is a "great joy"—"good tidings of great joy." Earth's joy is small, her mirth is trivial, but heaven has sent us joy immeasurable, fit for immortal minds. Inasmuch as no note of time is appended, and no intimation is given that the message will ever be reversed, we may say that it is a lasting joy, a joy which will ring all down the ages, the echoes of which shall be heard until the trumpet brings the resurrection; aye, and onward for ever and for ever. For when God sent

forth the angel in his brightness to say, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which be to all people," he did as much as say, "From this time forth it shall be joy to the sons of men; there shall be peace to the human race, and goodwill towards men for ever and for ever, as long as there is glory to God in the highest." O blessed thought! the Star of Bethlehem shall never set. Jesus, the fairest among ten thousand, the most lovely among the beautiful, is a joy for ever.

Since this joy is expressly associated with the glory of God, by the Words, "Glory to God in the highest," we may be quite clear that it is a pure and holy joy. No other would an angel have proclaimed, and, indeed, no other joy is joy. The wine pressed from the grapes of Sodom may sparkle and foam, but it is bitterness in the end, and the dregs thereof are death; only that which comes from the clusters of Eschol is the true wine of the kingdom, making glad the heart of God and man. Holy joy is the joy of heaven, and that, be ye sure, is the very cream of joy. The joy of sin is a fire-fountain, having its source in the burning soil of hell, maddening and consuming those who drink its fire-water; of such delights we desire not to drink. It were to be worse than damned to be happy in sin, since it is the beginning of grace to be wretched in sin, and the consummation of grace to be wholly escaped from sin, and to shudder even at the thought of it. It is hell to live in sin and misery, it is a deep lower still when men could fashion a joy in sin. God save us from unholy peace and from unholy joy! The joy announced by the angel of the nativity is as pure as it is lasting, as holy as it is great. Let us then always believe concerning the Christian religion that it has its joy within itself, and holds its feasts within its own pure precincts, a feast whose viands all grow on holy ground. There are those who, to-morrow, will pretend to exhibit joy in the remembrance of our Saviour's birth, but they will not seek their pleasure in the Saviour: they will need many additions to the feast before they can be satisfied. Joy in Immanuel would be a poor sort of mirth to them. In this country, too often, if one were unaware of the name, one might believe the Christmas festival to be a feast of Bacchus, or of Ceres, certainly not a commemoration of the Divine birth. Yet is there cause enough for holy joy in the Lord himself, and reasons for ecstasy in his birth among men. It is to be feared that most men imagine that in Christ there is only seriousness and solemnity, and to them consequently

weariness, gloom, and discontent; therefore, they look out of and beyond what Christ allows, to snatch from the tables of Satan the delicacies with which to adorn the banquet held in honor of a Saviour. Let it not be so among you. The joy which the gospel brings is not borrowed but blooms in its own garden. We may truly say in the language of one of our sweetest hymns—

"I need not go abroad for joy,  
I have a feast at home,  
My sighs are turned into songs,  
My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the Blessed Dove  
Has come into my breast,  
To witness his eternal love,  
And give my spirit rest."

Let our joy be living water from those sacred wells which the Lord himself has digged; may his joy abide in us, that our joy may be full. Of Christ's joy we cannot have too much; no fear of running to excess when his love is the wine we drink. Oh to be plunged in this pure stream of spiritual delights!

But why is it that the coming of Christ into the world is the occasion of joy? The answer is as follows:—First, because it is evermore a joyous fact that God should be in alliance with man, especially when the alliance is so near that God should in very deed take our manhood into union with his godhead; so that God and man should constitute one divine, mysterious person. Sin had separated between God and man; but the incarnation bridges the separation: it is a prelude to the atoning sacrifice, but it is a prelude full of the richest hope. From henceforth, when God looks upon man, he will remember that his own Son is a man. From this day forth, when he beholds the sinner, if his wrath should burn, he will remember that his own Son, as man, stood in the sinner's place, and bore the sinner's doom. As in the case of war, the feud is ended when the opposing parties intermarry, so there is no more war between God and man, because God has taken man into intimate union with himself. Herein, then, there was cause for joy.

But there was more than that, for the shepherds were aware that there had been promises made of old which had been the hope and comfort of believers in all ages, and these were now to be fulfilled. There was that ancient promise made on the threshold of Eden to the first sinners of our race, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; another promise made to the Father of the faithful that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and promises uttered by the mouths of prophets and of saints since the world began. Now, the announcement of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds was a declaration that the covenant was fulfilled, that now in the fullness of time God would redeem his word, and the Messiah, who was to be Israel's glory and the world's hope; was now really come. Be glad ye heavens, and be joyful O earth, for the Lord hath done it, and in mercy hath he visited his people. The Lord hath not suffered his word to fail, but hath fulfilled unto his people his promises. The time to favor Zion, yea the set time, is come. Now that the scepter is departed from Judah, behold the Shiloh comes, the Messenger of the covenant suddenly appears in his temple!

But the angel's song had in it yet fuller reason for joy; for our Lord who was born in Bethlehem came as a Saviour. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." God had come to earth before, but not as a Saviour. Remember that terrible coming when there went three angels into Sodom at night-fall, for the Lord said, "I will go now and see whether it be altogether according to the cry thereof." He had come as a spy to witness human sin, and as an avenger to lift his hand to heaven, and bid the red fire descend and burn up the accursed cities of the plain. Horror to the world when God thus descends. If Sinai smokes when the law is proclaimed, the earth itself shall melt when the breaches of the law are punished. But now not as an angel of vengeance, but as a man in mercy God has come; not to spy out our sin, but to remove it; not to punish guilt, but to forgive it. The Lord might have come with thunderbolts in both his hands he might have come like Elias to call fire from heaven; but no, his hands are full of gifts of love, and his presence is the guarantee of grace. The babe born in the manger might have been another prophet of tears, or another son of thunder, but he was not so: he came in gentleness, his glory and his thunder alike laid aside.



"'Twas mercy filled the throne,  
And wrath stood silent by,  
When Christ on the kind errand came  
To sinners doomed to die."

Rejoice, ye who feel that ye are lost; your Saviour comes to seek and save you. Be of good cheer ye who are in prison, for he comes to set you free. Ye who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that he has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and he has come to be the bread of life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners, everywhere for the restorer of the castaways, the Saviour of the fallen is born. Join in the joy, ye saints, for he is the preserver of the saved ones, delivering them from innumerable perils, and he is the sure prefecter of such as he preserves. Jesus is no partial Saviour, beginning a work and not concluding it; but, restoring and upholding, he also prefects and presents the saved ones without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing before his Father's throne. Rejoice aloud all ye people, let your hills and valleys ring with joy, for a Saviour who is mighty to save is born among you.

Nor was this all the holy mirth, for the next word has also in it a fullness of joy:—"a Saviour, who is Christ," or the Anointed. Our Lord was not an amateur Saviour who came down from heaven upon an unauthorized mission; but he was chosen, ordained, and anointed of God; he could truly say, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me." Here is great comfort for all such as need a Saviour; it is to them no mean consolation that God has himself authorized Christ to save. There can be no fear of a jar between the mediator and the judge, no peril of a nonacceptance of our Saviour's work; because God has commissioned Christ to do what he has done, and in saving sinners he is only executing his Father's own will. Christ is here called "the anointed." All his people are anointed, and there were priests after the order of Aaron who were anointed, but he is the anointed, "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" so plenteously anointed that, like the unction upon Aaron's head, the sacred anointing of the Head of the church distils in copious streams, till we who are like the skirts of his garments are made sweet with the rich perfume. He is "the anointed" in a threefold sense: as prophet to preach the gospel with power; as priest to

offer sacrifice; as king to rule and reign. In each of these he is preeminent; he is such a teacher, priest, and ruler as was never seen before. In him was a rare conjunction of glorious offices, for never did prophet, priest, and king meet in one person before among the sons of men, nor shall it ever be so again. Triple is the anointing of him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, a prophet like unto Moses, and a king of whose dominion there is no end. In the name of Christ, the Holy Ghost is glorified, by being seen as anointing the incarnate God. Truly, dear brethren, if we did but understand all this, and receive it into our hearts, our souls would leap for joy on this Sabbath day, to think that there is born unto us a Saviour who is anointed of the Lord.

One more note, and this the loudest, let us sound it well and hear it well—"which is Christ the Lord." Now the word Lord, or Kurios, here used is tantamount to Jehovah. We cannot doubt that, because it is the same word used twice in the ninth verse, and in the ninth verse none can question that it means Jehovah. Hear it, "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." And if this be not enough, read the 23rd verse, "As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Now the word Lord here assuredly refers to Jehovah, the one God, and so it must do here. Our Saviour is Christ, God, Jehovah. No testimony to his divinity could be plainer; it is indisputable. And what joy there is in this; for suppose an angel had been our Saviour, he would not have been able to bear the load of my sin or yours; or if anything less than God had been set up as the ground of our salvation, it might have been found too frail a foundation. But if he who undertakes to save is none other than the Infinite and the Almighty, then the load of our guilt can be carried upon such shoulders, the stupendous labor of our salvation can be achieved by such a worker, and that with ease: for all things are possible with God, and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Ye sons of men perceive ye here the subject of your joy. The God who made you, and against whom you have offended, has come down from heaven and taken upon himself your nature that he might save you. He has come in the fullness of his glory and the infinity of his mercy that he might redeem you. Do you not welcome this news? What! will not your hearts be thankful for this? Does this matchless love awaken

no gratitude? Were it not for this divine Saviour, your life here would have been wretchedness, and your future existence would have been endless woe. Oh, I pray you adore the incarnate God, and trust in him. Then will you bless the Lord for delivering you from the wrath to come, and as you lay hold of Jesus and find salvation in his name, you will tune your songs to his praise, and exult with sacred joy. So much concerning this joy.

II. Follow me while I briefly speak of THE PEOPLE to whom this joy comes. Observe how the angel begins, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day." So, then, the joy began with the first who heard it, the shepherds. "To you," saith he; "for unto you is born." Beloved hearer, shall the joy begin with you to-day?—for it little avails you that Christ was born, or that Christ died, unless unto you a child is born, and for you Jesus bled. A personal interest is the main point. "But I am poor," saith one. So were the shepherds. O ye poor, to you this mysterious child is born. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." "He shall judge the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." But I am obscure and unknown," saith one. So were the watchers on the midnight plain. Who knew the men who endured hard toil, and kept their flocks by night? But you, unknown of men, are known to God: shall it not be said, that "unto you a child is born?" The Lord regardeth not the greatness of men, but hath respect unto the lowly. But you are illiterate you say, you cannot understand much. Be it so, but unto the shepherds Christ was born, and their simplicity did not hinder their receiving him, but even helped them to it. Be it so with yourself: receive gladly the simple truth as it is in Jesus. The Lord hath exalted one chosen out of the people. No aristocratic Christ have I to preach to you, but the Saviour of the people, the friend of publicans and sinners. Jesus is the true "poor men's friend;" he is "a covenant for the people," given to be "a leader and commander to the people." To you is Jesus given. O that each heart might truly say, to me is Jesus born; for it I truly believe in Jesus, unto me Christ is born, and I may be as sure of it as if an angel announced it, since the Scripture tells me that if I believe in Jesus He is mine.

After the angel had said "to you," he went on to say, "it shall be to all

people." But our translation is not accurate, the Greek is, "it shall be to all the people." This refers most assuredly to the Jewish nation; there can be no question about that; if any one looks at the original, he will not find so large and wide an expression as that given by our translators. It should be rendered "to all the people." And here let us speak a word for the Jews. How long and how sinfully has the Christian church despised the most honorable amongst the nations! How barbarously has Israel been handled by the so-called church! I felt my spirit burn indignantly within me in Rome when I stood in the Jew's quarter, and heard of the cruel indignities which Popery has heaped upon the Jews, even until recently. At this hour there stands in the Jew's quarter a church built right in front of the entrance to it, and into this the unhappy Jews were driven forcibly on certain occasions. To this church they were compelled to subscribe—subscribe, mark you, as worshippers of the one invisible God, to the support of a system which is as leprous with idolatry as were the Canaanites whom the Lord abhorred. Paganism is not more degrading than Romanism. Over the door of this church is placed, in their own tongue in the Hebrew, these words:—"All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation;" how, by such an insult as that, could they hope to convert the Jew. The Jew saw everywhere idols which his soul abhorred, and he loathed the name of Christ, because he associated it with idol worship, and I do not wonder that he did. I praise the Jew that he could not give up his own simple theism, and the worship of the true God, for such a base, degrading superstition as that which Rome presented to him. Instead of thinking it a wonder of unbelief that the Jew is not a Christian, I honor him for his faith and his courageous resistance of a fascinating heathenism. If Romanism be Christianity I am not, neither could I be, a Christian. It were a more manly thing to be a simple believer in one God, or even an honest doubter upon all religion, than worship such crowds of gods and goddesses as Popery has set up, and to bow, as she does, before rotten bones and dead men's winding sheets. Let the true Christian church think lovingly of the Jew, and with respectful earnestness tell him the true gospel; let her sweep away superstition, and set before him the one gracious God in the Trinity of his divine Unity; and the day shall yet come when the Jews, who were the first apostles to the Gentiles, the first missionaries to us who were afar off; shall be gathered in again. Until that

shall be, the fullness of the church's glory can never come. Matchless benefits to the world are bound up with the restoration of Israel; their gathering in shall be as life from the dead. Jesus the Saviour is the joy of all nations, but let not the chosen race be denied their peculiar share of whatever promise holy writ has recorded with a special view to them. The woes which their sins brought upon them have fallen thick and heavily; and even so let the richest blessings distil upon them.

Although our translation is not literally correct, it, nevertheless, expresses a great truth, taught plainly in the context; and, therefore, we will advance another step. The coming of Christ is a joy to all people. It is so, for the fourteenth verse says: "On earth peace," which is a wide and even unlimited expression. It adds, "Good will towards"—not Jews, but "men"—all men. The word is the generic name of the entire race, and there is no doubt that the coming of Christ does bring joy to all sorts of people. It brings a measure of joy even to those who are not Christians. Christ does not bless them in the highest and truest sense, but the influence of his teaching imparts benefits of an inferior sort, such as they are capable of receiving; for wherever the gospel is proclaimed, it is no small blessing to all the population. Note this fact: there is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached gospel, where a tyrant long can hold his place. It matters not who he be, whether pope or king; let the pulpit be used properly for the preaching of Christ crucified, let the Bible be opened to be read by all men, and no tyrant can long rule in peace. England owes her freedom to the Bible; and France will never possess liberty, lasting and well-established, till she comes to reverence the gospel, which too long she has rejected. There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power. The religion of Jesus Christ sets a man free from superstition; when he believes in Jesus, what cares he for Papal excommunications, or whether priests give or withhold their absolution? The man no longer cringes and bows down; he is no more willing, like a beast, to be led by the nose; but, learning to think for himself and becoming a man, he disdains the childish fears which once held him in slavery. Hence, where Jesus comes, even if men do not receive him as the Saviour, and so miss the fullest joy, yet they get a measure of benefit; and I pray God that everywhere his gospel may be so

proclaimed, and that so many may be actuated by the spirit of it, that it may be better for all mankind. If men receive Christ, there will be no more oppression: the true Christian does to others as he would that they should do to him, and there is no more contention of classes, nor grinding of the faces of the poor. Slavery must go down where Christianity rules, and mark you, if Romanism be once destroyed, and pure Christianity shall govern all nations, war itself must come to an end; for if there be anything which this book denounces and counts the hugest of all crimes, it is the crime of war. Put up thy sword into thy sheath, for hath not he said, "Thou shalt not kill," and he meant not that it was a sin to kill one but a glory to kill a million, but he meant that bloodshed on the smallest or largest scale was sinful. Let Christ govern, and men shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire. It is joy to all nations that Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness.

But, beloved, the greatest joy is to those who know Christ as a Saviour. Here the song rises to a higher and sublimer note. Unto us indeed a child is born, if we can say that he is our "Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Let me ask each of you a few personal questions. Are your sins forgiven you for his name's sake? Is the head of the serpent bruised in your soul? Does the seed of the woman reign in sanctifying power over your nature? Oh then, you have the joy that is to all the people in the truest form of it; and, dear brother, dear sister, the further you submit yourself to Christ the Lord, the more completely you know him, and are like him, the fuller will your happiness become. Surface joy is to those who live where the Saviour is preached; but the great deeps, the great fathomless deeps of solemn joy which glisten and sparkle with delight, are for such as know the Saviour, obey the anointed one, and have communion with the Lord himself. He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man. I wish that some Christians were more truly Christians: they are Christians and something else; it were much better if they were altogether Christians. Perhaps you know the legend, or perhaps true history of the awakening of St. Augustine. He dreamed that he died, and went to the gates of heaven, and the keeper of the gates said to him, "Who are you?" And he answered, "Christianus sum," I am a Christian. But the porter replied, "No, you are not a Christian, you are a Ciceronian, for your thoughts and studies were

most of all directed to the works of Cicero and the classics, and you neglected the teaching of Jesus. We judge men here by that which most engrossed their thoughts, and you are judged not to be a Christian but a Ciceronian." When Augustine awoke, he put aside the classics which he had studied, and the eloquence at which he had aimed, and he said, "I will be a Christian and a theologian;" and from that time he devoted his thoughts to the word of God, and his pen and his tongue to the instruction of others in the truth. Oh I would not have it said of any of you, "Well, he may be somewhat Christian, but he is far more a keen money-getting tradesman." I would not have it said, "Well, he may be a believer in Christ, but he is a good deal more a politician." Perhaps he is a Christian, but he is most at home when he is talking about science, farming, engineering, horses, mining, navigation, or pleasure-taking. No, no, you will never know the fullness of the joy which Jesus brings to the soul, unless under the power of the Holy Spirit you take the Lord your Master to be your All in all, and make him the fountain of your intensest delight. "He is my Saviour, my Christ, my Lord," be this your loudest boast. Then will you know the joy which the angel's song predicts for men.

III. But I must pass on. The last thing in the text is The SIGN. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, but one was graciously given. Sometimes it is sinful for us to require as an evidence what God's tenderness may nevertheless see fit to give as an aid to faith. Wilful unbelief shall have no sign, but weak faith shall have compassionate aid. The sign that the joy of the world had come was this,—they were to go to the manger to find the Christ in it, and he was to be the sign. Every circumstance is therefore instructive. The babe was found "wrapped in swaddling clothes." Now, observe, as you look at this infant, that there is not the remotest appearance of temporal power here. Mark the two little puny arms of a little babe that must be carried if it go. Alas, the nations of the earth look for joy in military power. By what means can we make a nation of soldiers? The Prussian method is admirable; we must have thousands upon thousands of armed men and big cannon and ironclad vessels to kill and destroy by wholesale. Is it not a nation's pride to be gigantic in arms? What pride flushes the patriot's cheek when he remembers that his nation can murder faster than any other people. Ah, foolish generation,

ye are groping in the flames of hell to find your heaven, raking amid blood and bones for the foul thing which ye call glory. A nation's joy can never lie in the misery of others. Killing is not the path to prosperity; huge armaments are a curse to the nation itself as well as to its neighbors. The joy of a nation is a golden sand over which no stream of blood has ever rippled. It is only found in that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. The weakness of submissive gentleness is true power. Jesus founds his eternal empire not on force but on love. Here, O ye people, see your hope; the mild pacific prince, whose glory is his self-sacrifice, is our true benefactor.

But look again, and you shall observe no pomp to dazzle you. Is the child wrapped in purple and fine linen? Ah, no. Sleeps he in a cradle of gold? The manger alone is his shelter. No crown is upon the babe's head, neither does a coronet surround the mother's brow. A simple maiden of Galilee, and a little child in ordinary swaddling bands, it is all you see.

"Bask not in courtly bower,  
Or sunbright hall of power,  
Pass Babel quick,  
and seek the holy land.  
From robes of Tyrian dye,  
Turn with undazzled eye  
To Bethlehem's glade, and by the manger stand."

Alas, the nations are dazzled with a vain show. The pomp of empires, the pageants of kings are their delight. How can they admire those gaudy courts, in which too often glorious apparel, decorations, and rank stand in the stead of virtue, chastity, and truth. When will the people cease to be children? Must they for ever crave for martial music which stimulates to violence, and delight in a lavish expenditure which burdens them with taxation? These make not a nation great or joyous. Bah! how has the bubble burst across yon narrow sea. A bubble empire has collapsed. Ten thousand bayonets and millions of gold proved but a sandy foundation for a Babel throne. Vain are the men who look for joy in pomp; it lies in truth and righteousness, in peace and salvation, of which yonder newborn prince in the garments of a peasant child is the true symbol.



Neither was there wealth to be seen at Bethlehem. Here in this quiet island, the bulk of men are comfortably seeking to acquire their thousands by commerce and manufactures. We are the sensible people who follow the main chance, and are not to be deluded by ideas of glory; we are making all the money we can, and wondering that other nations waste so much in fight. The main prop and pillar of England's joy is to be found, as some tell us, in the Three per Cents., in the possession of colonies, in the progress of machinery, in steadily increasing our capital. Is not Mammon a smiling deity? But, here, in the cradle of the world's hope at Bethlehem, I see far more of poverty than wealth; I perceive no glitter of gold, or spangle of silver. I perceive only a poor babe, so poor, so very poor, that he is in a manger laid; and his mother is a mechanic's wife, a woman who wears neither silk nor gem. Not in your gold, O Britons, will ever lie your joy, but in the gospel enjoyed by all classes, the gospel freely preached and joyfully received. Jesus, by raising us to spiritual wealth, redeems us from the chains of Mammon, and in that liberty gives us joy.

And here, too, I see no superstition. I know the artist paints angels in the skies, and surrounds the scene with a mysterious light, of which tradition's tongue of falsehood has said that it made midnight as bright as noon. This is fiction merely; there was nothing more there than the stable, the straw the oxen ate, and perhaps the beasts themselves, and the child in the plainest, simplest manner, wrapped as other children are; the cherubs were invisible and of haloes there were none. Around this birth of joy was no sign of superstition: that demon dared not intrude its tricks and posturings into the sublime spectacle: it would have been there as much out of place as a harlequin in the holy of holies. A simple gospel, a plain gospel, as plain as that babe wrapped in the commonest garments, is this day the only hope for men. Be ye wise and believe in Jesus, and abhor all the lies of Rome, and inventions of those who ape her detestable abominations.

Nor does the joy of the world lie in philosophy. You could not have made a schoolmen's puzzle of Bethlehem if you had tried to do so; it was just a child in the manger and a Jewish woman looking on and nursing it, and a carpenter standing by. There was no metaphysical difficulty there, of

which men could say, "A doctor of divinity is needed to explain it, and an assembly of divines must expound it." It is true the wise men came there, but it was only to adore and offer gifts; would that all the wise had been as wise as they. Alas, human subtlety has disputed over the manger, and logic has darkened counsel with its words. But this is one of man's many inventions; God's work was sublimely simple. Here was "The Word made flesh" to dwell among us, a mystery for faith, but not a football for argument. Mysterious, yet the greatest simplicity that was ever spoken to human ears, and seen by mortal eyes. And such is the gospel, in the preaching of which our apostle said, "we use great plainness of speech." Away, away, away with your learned sermons, and your fine talk, and your pretentious philosophies; these never created a jot of happiness in this world. Fine-spun theories are fair to gaze on, and to bewilder fools, but they are of no use to practical men, they comfort not the sons of toil, nor cheer the daughters of sorrow. The man of common sense, who feels the daily rub and tear of this poor world, needs richer consolation than your novel theologies, or neologies, can give him. In a simple Christ, and in a simple faith in that Christ, there is a peace deep and lasting; in a plain, poor man's gospel there is a joy and a bliss unspeakable, of which thousands can speak, and speak with confidence, too, for they declare what they do know, and testify what they have seen.

I say, then, to you who would know the only true peace and lasting joy, come ye to the babe of Bethlehem, in after days the Man of Sorrows, the substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. Come, ye little children, ye boys and girls, come ye; for he also was a boy. "The holy child Jesus" is the children's Saviour, and saith still, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. Come hither, ye maidens, ye who are still in the morning of your beauty, and, like Mary, rejoice in God your Saviour. The virgin bore him on her bosom, so come ye and bear him in your hearts, saying, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And you, ye men in the plenitude of your strength, remember how Joseph cared for him, and watched with reverent solicitude his tender years; be you to his cause as a Father and a helper; sanctify your strength to his service. And ye women advanced in years, ye matrons and widows, come like Anna and bless the Lord that you have seen the salvation of Israel, and ye hoar heads, who like Simeon are ready to depart, come ye and take the Saviour

in your arms, adoring him as your Saviour and your all. Ye shepherds, ye simple hearted, ye who toil for your daily bread, come and adore the Saviour; and stand not back ye wise men, ye who know by experience and who by meditation peer into deep truth, come ye, and like the sages of the East bow low before his presence, and make it your honor to pay honor to Christ the Lord. For my own part, the incarnate God is all my hope and trust. I have seen the world's religion at the fountain head, and my heart has sickened within me; I come back to preach, by God's help, yet more earnestly the gospel, the simple gospel of the Son of Man. Jesus, Master, I take thee to be mine for ever! May all in this house, through the rich grace of God, be led to do the same, and may they all be thine, great Son of God, in the day of thine appearing, for thy love's sake. Amen.

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## **Joy In Life's Hard Times**

*"At evening time it shall be light."*

I shall not notice the particular occasion upon which these words were uttered, or try to discover the time to which they more especially refer; I shall rather take the sentence as a rule of the kingdom, as one of the great laws of God's dispensation of grace, that "at evening time it shall be light." Whenever philosophers wish to establish a general law, they think it necessary to collect a considerable number of individual instances; these being put together, they then infer from them a general rule. Happily, this need not be done with regard to God. We have no need,

when we look abroad in providence, to collect a great number of incidents, and then from them infer the truth; for since God is immutable, one act of His grace is enough to teach us the rule of His conduct. Now, I find, in one place, it is recorded that, on a certain occasion, during a certain adverse condition of a nation, God promised that at evening time it should be light. If I found that in any human writing, I should suppose that the thing might have occurred once, that a blessing was conferred in emergency on a certain occasion, but I could not from it deduce a rule; but when I find this written in the Book of God, that on a certain occasion when it was evening time with His people God was pleased to give them light, I feel myself more than justified in deducing from it the rule, that always to His people at evening time there shall be light.

The Church at large has had many evening times. If I might derive a figure to describe her history from anything in this lower world, I should describe her as being like the sea. At times the abundance of grace has been gloriously manifest. Wave upon wave has triumphantly rolled in upon the land, covering the mire of sin, and claiming the earth for the Lord of Host. So rapid has been its progress that its course could scarce be obstructed by the rocks of sin and vice. Complete conquest seemed to be foretold by the continual spread of the truth. The happy Church thought that the day of her ultimate triumph had certainly arrived, so potent was her Word by her ministers, so glorious was the Lord in the midst of her armies, that nothing could stand against her. She was "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Heresies and schisms were swept away, false gods and idols lost their thrones; Jehovah Omnipotent was in the midst of His church, and He upon the white horse rode forth conquering and to conquer. Before long, however, you find it always has happened that there came an ebb-tide. Again the stream of grace seemed to recede, the poor Church was driven back either by persecution or by internal decay; instead of gaining upon man's corruptions it seemed as if man's corruptions gained on her; and where once there had been righteousness like the waves of the sea, there was the black mud and mire of the filthiness of mankind. Mournful tunes the Church had to sing, when by the rivers of Babylon she sat down and wept, remembering her former glories, and weeping her present

desolation. So has it always been—progressing, retrograding, standing still a while, and then progressing once more, and falling back again. The whole history of the Church has been a history of onward marches, and then of quick retreats—a history which, I believe, is, on the whole, a history of advance and growth, but which, read chapter by chapter, is a mixture of success and repulse, conquest and discouragement. And so I think it will be, even to the last. We shall have our sunrises, our meridian noon, and then the sinking in the west; we shall have our sweet dawns of better days, our Reformations, our Luthers and our Calvins; we shall have our bright full noon-tide, when the gospel is fully preached, and the power of God is known; we shall have our sunset of ecclesiastical weakness and decay. But just as sure as the evening-tide seems to be drawing over the Church, "at evening time it shall be light."

We may expect to see darker evening times than have ever been beheld. Let us not imagine that our civilization shall be more enduring than any other that has gone before it, unless the Lord shall preserve it. It may be that the suggestion will be realized which has often been laughed at as folly, that one day men should sit upon the arches of London Bridge, and marvel at the civilization that has departed, just as men walk over the mounds of Nimrod, and marvel at cities buried there. It is just possible that all the civilization of this country may die out in blackest night; it may be that God will repeat again the great story which has been so often told: "I looked, and lo, in the vision I saw a terrible beast, and it ruled the nations, but lo, it passed away and was not." But if ever such things should be—if the world should ever have to return to barbarism and darkness—if instead of what we sometimes hope for, a constant progress to the brightest day, all our hopes should be blasted, let us rest quite satisfied that "at evening time there shall be light," that the end of the world's history shall be an end of glory. However red with blood, however black with sin the world may yet be, she shall one day be as pure and perfect as when she was created. The day shall come when this poor planet shall find herself unrobed of those swaddling bands of darkness that have kept her lustre from breaking forth. God shall yet cause His name to be known from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof,

"And the shout of jubilee

Loud as mighty thunders roar,  
Or the fulness of the sea,  
When it breaks upon the shore,  
Shall yet be heard the wide world o'er."

"At evening time it shall be light."

We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also the starry orbs.

"The very law that moulds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source,  
That law preserves the earth a sphere,  
And guides the planets in their course."

It is even so with the laws of grace. "At evening time it shall be light" to the Church.... Christian let us descend to lowly things. Thou hast had thy bright days in temporal matters: thou hast sometimes been greatly blessed: thou canst remember the day when the calf was in the stall, when the olive yielded its fruit, and the fig-tree did not deny its harvest; thou canst recollect the years when the barn was almost bursting with the corn, and when the vat overflowed with the oil; thou rememberest when the stream of thy life was deep, and thy ship floated softly on, without one disturbing billow of trouble to molest it. Thou saidst in those days, "I shall see no sorrow; God hath hedged me about; He hath preserved me; He hath kept me; I am the darling of His providence; I know that all things work together for my good, for I can see it is plainly so. "

Well, Christian, thou hast after that had a sunset; the sun which shone so brightly, began to cast his rays in a more oblique manner every moment, until at last the shadows were long, for the sun was setting, and the clouds began to gather; and though the light of God's countenance tinged those clouds with glory, yet it was waxing dark. Then troubles lowered o'er thee; thy family sickened, thy wife was dead, thy crops were meagre, and thy daily income was diminished, thy cupboard was no more full, thou wast wondering for thy daily bread; thou didst not know what should become of thee, mayhap thou wast brought very low; the keel of thy vessel did grate upon the rocks; there was not enough bounty to float thy ship above the rocks of poverty. You used both industry and economy, and you added thereunto perseverance; but all in vain. It was in vain that

you rose up early, and sat up late, and ate the bread of carefulness; nothing could you do to deliver yourself, for all attempts failed. You were ready to die in despair. You thought the night of your life had gathered with eternal blackness. You would not live always, but had rather depart from this vale of tears. Was it not light with thee at evening time? The time of thine extremity was just the moment of God's opportunity. When the tide had run out to its very furthest, then it began to turn; thine ebb had its flow; thy winter had its summer; thy sunset had its sunrise; "at evening time it was light." On a sudden by some strange work of God as thou didst think then, thou was completely delivered. He brought out thy righteousness like the light, and thy glory as the noonday. The Lord appeared for thee in the days of old; He stretched out His hand from above; He drew thee out of deep waters; He set thee upon a rock and established thy goings.

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## **Joy In Salvation**

I will rejoice in thy salvation. - Psalm 9:14

I desire to continue the topic of the morning, only we will look at another side of the same important matter.

We spoke this morning, as you have not forgotten, upon these words, "Your own salvation." I trust most of us—would God I could hope all of us—were earnest about our own personal salvation. To those who are earnest this second text will be the complement of the first. They desire that their own salvation shall be secure; it is their own salvation when they obtain it; but here is the guide as to what is the right salvation—what our own salvation ought to be. It is not our own in another sense; it is God's. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." While it becomes our own by an act of faith, it is not our own so that we can claim any merit or take any part of the glorying to ourselves. The only salvation that is worth being our own is that which is God's. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Having this

morning somewhat at length explained what salvation is, showing that it was not a mere deliverance from wrath to come, but from the present wrath of God, and yet more essentially from sin, from the power of evil within us, there is no need that we should go over that again, I trust; but we shall begin by noticing the speciality which is in the text, dwelling upon the divine salvation. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." So, then, we look at once at: -

## I. A DIVINE SALVATION.

The salvation we have already spoken of is God's, and it is God's salvation in many ways. It was his in the planning. None but himself could have planned it. In his infinite wisdom he devised it. The salvation which is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, in the gospel is every part of it in all its architecture the fruit of divine skill. We may say, "Or with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and who taught him knowledge?" In every part the divine hand may be seen; it is of God's planning and ordaining, or ever the earth was. So is it of God's providing. You have salvation wrapped up in the gift of the person of Jesus Christ. All of it lies in Christ. Because he died, our sin is put away. Because he lives, we shall live also. And Christ is the pure gift of God. All salvation is in him, and, therefore, all salvation is thus procured by God. It is God's salvation. And what is more, God not only plans and procures, but he also applies salvation. I believe in free agency, but I never yet met with a Christian man who was able to say that he came to Christ of his own free will without being drawn by the Spirit of God. Whatever our doctrinal view may be, the experimental fact is the same in every case. All believers will confess that they are God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." There is a want of power. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." There is a want of will, and the Spirit of God, therefore, applies the salvation which God has planned, and which God has provided. And as the first application of this salvation is of God, so is it all the way through. I do not believe, dear brethren, that our religion is like the action of a clock wound up at first by a superior hand, and then left to go alone. No! every day the Holy Ghost must continue to work upon us, and in us, to will and to do according to God's good pleasure. And if you



and I should ever get right up to the gate of pearl, and should hear the songs of the blessed within that gate, we should not be able to take the last step, but should turn back to our sin and folly even, if he that began a good work in us should cease to carry it on. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. He makes the rough draft of it, in conviction, upon our conscience; he goes on to complete the picture; and if there be one touch in the picture that is not of God, it is a blot upon it. If there be anything of the flesh, it will have to be wiped out; it is not consistent with the work of God. Of God is it in all respects. Now we know that this salvation is of God, not only because we are told that he planned it, and provided it, and applies it, but because it has the marks of God upon it. There is a certain line of poetry; I know it is Shakespeare's. Well, you know, I cannot quite tell you why, but yet I am sure no one ever wrote exactly in that way. I am reading the Psalms through, and I read and I say, "That is David's." I observe certain critics who say, "No, this belongs to the time of the captivity." I am certain it does not. And why? Because there is a Davidic ring about it, you know. The son, of Jesse, and he alone, could have said such things. Now in salvation there are the marks of divine authorship. I once saw a painting by Titan at Venice, and he had written, "Fecit, fecit Titian." He claimed it twice over, as if to make sure that someone else should not claim it. And God has put it three times over that there should be no doubt whatever that salvation is of God, and he must have the glory of it. Now observe the marks of God—what I may call the broad arrow of the King—set on salvation. It is full of mercy. Here is salvation for the blackest of sinners—salvation for all manner of sin—forgiveness for all manner of sin—salvation so full of grace that only God could have conceived it. "Who is a pardoning God like thee?" But this salvation is equally congenial with justice, for God never absolutely forgives a sin. There is always punishment for sin in every case. Jesus Christ, the Substitute, comes in and satisfies Justice before the word is spoken to the sinner, "Thy transgression is blotted out." In the salvation which God has provided on the cross by the death of his dear Son there is as much justice as there is mercy; and there is an infinity of both. Now this is God-like. Man, if he brings out one quality, usually clouds another with it; but God exhibits his character in harmonious completeness—as merciful as if he were not just, and as just as if he were not gracious. In the gospel, on this account,

five see also divine wisdom. Whatever some may say about the doctrine of substitution, Christ is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. The way, so simple, yet so sublime, by which God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, exhibits the infinite wisdom of the Most High.

But I won't keep you by mentioning all the divine attributes. It is certain they all shine in the gospel, nor can any tell which of the letters best is writ—the power, the wisdom, or the grace. They are all there, proving the salvation to be of God.

And there is one other matter. True salvation is of God because it draws toward God. If thou hast God's salvation, thou art being drawn towards thy heavenly Father, nearer and nearer every day. The ungodly forget God; the awakened seek God; but the saved rejoice in God. Ask thyself this question, Couldst thou live without God? The ungodly man would be happier without God than he is with. It would be the best piece of news in the newspaper to thousands, if we could publish it to-morrow, that God was dead. To ungodly men it would be like ringing the bells of universal Joy; they would run riot after their own will. And where would the believer be? He would be an orphan. His sun would be blotted out; his hopes would be dead and buried. Judge by this whether thou art saved. If thou art saved, thou art drawn to God, thou seekest to be like God, thou desirest to honour God. If there be none of these things in thee, then I charge thee see to it, for thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. God have mercy upon thee! I need not further say that the salvation is of God, and God must have all the glory of it. All on earth who are saved, and all in heaven who are saved, will ascribe their salvation entirely to the ever blessed God, and join with Jonah, who in the very depths of the sea made this, his confession of faith, "Salvation is of the Lord." But now, secondly, our text (having noticed the divine salvation in it) has:—

## II. AN OUTSPOKEN AVOWAL.

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here is someone springing out from the common crowd and saying, "I have heard of God's salvation; I will rejoice in it! I will rejoice in it! Some despise it. They hear it, and they turn a deaf ear. When they have listened to it longest, they are most weary of it. But I

will rejoice in thy salvation." Here is a distinguished character, who is made so, doubtless, by distinguishing grace. Oh! I hope there are many of us here who could stand up and say—if this were the time and place—"Let others say what they will, and count the cross a thing to mock at, and Jesus Christ to be forgotten, I am his servant; I will rejoice in his salvation." There are some that rest in another salvation. We all did so once. But he who speaks in the text throws aside self-righteousness as filthy rags. He puts it all aside, and says, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." If I were righteous, I would not say so. Had I a perfect holiness, I would not mention it in comparison with the righteousness of Christ; but being an unworthy sinner, without a single merit of my own, I will not be so foolish as to patch up a fictitious righteousness, but I will rejoice in thy salvation. You see them there!—those worshippers of the scarlet woman—they are resting in their priest! He puts on millinery, blue, pink, scarlet, white, and I know not what—all kinds of little toys to please fools with. And there be some that rejoice in that salvation that comes from an "infallible" sinner—that comes from a sham priest of God. But we are looking to Christ, who stands before the eternal throne and pleads the merits of his own blood. We say:—

"Let all the forms that men devise  
Assault our faith with treacherous art,  
We'll Can them vanity and lies  
And bind the gospel to our heart."

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." There may be some tonight to whom I shall speak who are rejoicing in God's salvation through his abundant grace who have very little else to rejoice in. You are very poor. Ah! how welcome you are to this house! How glad I am that you have come. I feel it always a joy that the people have the gospel preached to them. Well, you have no broad acres, you have no gold rings on your fingers; you come in the garb of toil. Never mind, my brother, lay hold on eternal life and say, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Perhaps you are sick to-night—your poor weak body could scarcely drag itself up to the assembly of God's people. Well, well, it is a heavy thing to have to suffer so, but if you cannot rejoice in a hale body, yet rejoice in his salvation. Look to-night to Jesus; put your trust in him alone, and you will have a sufficient well-

spring of joy, if you have nothing else. Possibly some of you who lay hold on Christ and rejoice in him will have hard times of it at home your father will mock at you, your mother will not sympathise with you; your workmates to-morrow, if they hear that you are converted, will laugh, and jest, and jeer at you. What say you? Are you a coward? Will you back out of it because it demands a sacrifice? Oh! if it be so, then you are indeed unworthy of the name, and you count yourself so; but if you are what you should be, you will say, "Let them; laugh at me as they will, and spit upon me as they please, I will rejoice in thy salvation."

"If on my face for thy dear name,  
Shame and reproach may be;  
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
For thou'lt remember me."

It takes some pluck, but we ought to have it in the cause of Christ. Your mean, miserable wretches that will only go out to follow Christ in sunny weather, and get them gone again when a cloud darkens the sky, deserve well the wrath that comes upon them. They are like the Nautilus, very well on the placid sea, but the first billow that arises they furl their sails and drop into the deep, and are seen no more. Oh! beware, beware, beware of a sunny-weather religion; beware of a religion that will not stand the fire; but be you such that, if all the world forsook Christ, you would say, "I will rejoice in his salvation"; and if you were turned out of doors, if you were turned out of the world itself, and thought not fit, to live, you would yet be content to have it so, if you might be numbered with the people of God, and be permitted to rejoice in his salvation. Does this, as I try to speak it, awaken a holy emotion in any soul here? Is there someone who has been a stranger to my Lord who to-night can say, "I desire to rejoice in his salvation"? I cannot forget, when I sat as a young lad under the gallery of a little place of worship, hearing the gospel simply preached—the blessed moment when I was led to resolve to follow Christ. I have never been ashamed of having done so. I have never had to regret it. He is a blessed Master. He has handled me roughly lately, but he is a blessed Master. I would follow at his heels if only like a dog, for it is better to be his dog than to be the devil's darling. He is a blessed Master. Let him say what he will, and do what he will. Oh! is there no young man

here, no youth, no child, no girl; is there no gray-headed one who will say, "I will rejoice in thy salvation" O eternal Spirit, come and touch some heart, and make this, their spiritual birthright, that they may say, "I—I—I will rejoice in thy salvation."

But we must pass on, for time presses. We have, in the third place, to consider in the text:—

### III. A DELIGHTFUL EMOTION.

We have noticed the divine salvation, and the outspoken avowal; now we will notice the delightful emotion. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." It is an unfortunate thing that Christianity gets associated with melancholy. I will not forbid the banns, for they are not very near of kin, but I wish they were further apart every day. It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian; it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy. If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and a flashing eye, it is the man whose sins are forgiven him, and who is saved with God's salvation. In order for any man, however, to rejoice in God's salvation, he must, first of all, know it. There must be an intelligent apprehension of what it is. Next, he must grasp it by an act of faith as his own. Then, having grasped it, he must study it to know the price at which it was bought, and all the qualities—the divine qualities that follow from it. Then he must hold it fast, and seek to get out the sweetness from it. What is there in God's salvation that should make us rejoice? I do not know what to select, for it is all joy and all rejoicing. It is enough to make our heart to ring with joy to think that there should be a salvation at all for such poor souls as we are. We may well hang out all the streamers of our spirits, and strew the streets of our soul with flowers, for King Jesus has come to dwell there. Ring every bell; give him a glorious welcome. Let all the soul be glad when Jesus enters and brings salvation with him, for the salvation of Christ is so suitable that we may well rejoice in it. Dear brother, if you are saved, I know the salvation of Christ suited you. It did me—exactly—it was made on purpose for me. I am as sure of it as if there were no other sinner to be saved. It was the gospel that brought power to the weak, nay, it brought life to the dead; it brought everything to those that had nothing; it is just the sort of gospel for a penniless, bankrupt sinner like myself. We rejoice in the suitability

of the gospel; we rejoice in the freeness of it. We have nothing to pay; we have no price to pay, neither of promise, nor of anything that was our own. Salvation was freely given to us in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice in it, then. Oh! rejoice in the richness of that salvation. When the Lord pardoned our sins, he did not pardon half of them, and leave some of them on the book, but with one stroke of the pen he gave a full receipt for all our debts. When we went down into the fountain filled with blood, and washed, we did not come up half-clean, but there was no spot nor wrinkle upon us—we were white as driven snow. Glory be to God for such a rich salvation as this. And he did not in that day save us with a perhaps and a chance salvation that set us on a rock, and say, "Keep yourself there—you must depend upon yourselves", but this was the covenant he made with us, "A new heart also will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee." It was a complete salvation, which would not permit a failure. The salvation, which is given to the soul that believes is on this wise, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." I believe the perseverance of the saints to be the very gem of the gospel. I could not hold the truth of Scripture if this could be disproved to me, for every page seems to have this upon it, if nothing else, that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." In this my soul rejoices, that I have a salvation to preach to you which, if you receive it, will effectually save you if your hearts are given to Christ, and will keep you, and preserve you, and bring you into the eternal kingdom of his glory. I will rejoice in the certain and abiding character of that salvation. Oh! there is enough in the salvation of Christ to make heaven full of bliss; there is enough to make us full of praise. Let us take up the theme; let us talk by the way to one another about it; let us talk to sinners about it; let us recommend religion by our cheerfulness. Levity be far from us, but happiness let it be the happiest sphere in which we live if we have little else to rejoice in, we have enough here. Whatever may be our condition or prospects, we may still rejoice in God's salvation, and let us not fail to be filled with this most blissful emotion.

And now I must close. The text has in it a word of the future which we must not quite overlook. Here is a joyful gospel, "I will rejoice in thy

salvation." You may read it if you like, "I shall"—"I shall" or "I will"—it would be quite right. The Hebrew has no present. It seems to have given up all tenses—like God himself who was, and is, and is to come. I shall rejoice in thy salvation. Now here is:

#### IV. A BLESSED PROSPECT.

You may live to grow old; well, we shall never grow weary of Christ. If we are his people, we shall never have any cause to part from him; "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I could bring up to this platform an aged brother whom all of you would know, who has infirmities and has age creeping upon him, but there is not a happier soul in this house than he; and when I had made him speak to you, I could bring you many more aged women too, and I would ask them what they think of Christ, and I am sure they would say with greater emphasis than I can, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I almost wish my grandfather were alive and behind me to-night, for on one occasion I preached with him in the pulpit, and when I came to speak of experience he pulled my coat-tail and came to the front, and said, "My grandson can tell you that he believes it, but I can tell you experimentally," and on the old gentleman went with it. Well, many an aged Christian can tell you he has rejoiced in God's salvation. He does rejoice, and, instead of age making the joy of his youth to become dim, it has mellowed and sweetened the fruit, which was sweet even at the first. Oh! that we may, when these hairs grow hoar with years, and the snows of many winters lie white upon our head, may we still rejoice in God's salvation. But then, whether we reach old age or not, there is one thing that is certain—we shall assuredly die, and when we come to die, what shall we do? I know what you are thinking of. You say, "I should groan." Ay, sinner, you are thinking of the friend that is wiping away the clammy sweat from the brow and those closed eyes. Now those may never occur. We often hear them mentioned in reference to dying beds, but they are not so constantly there as to be, necessary. And if they were there' if we did lose sight itself before life fails—what then? Why, the vision of the Christ, who is our salvation, and in whom we rejoice, shall then be more gloriously clear and radiantly beautiful, because the sights and sounds of earth have vanished from us.

Now, instead of looking at these outward parts of dying, think of this, "I

will rejoice in thy salvation." When I parted from our dear brother, Cook, a few days ago, he could not say much. He was very, very weak, but what he did say was just this, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is all." Well, I talked, and read, and prayed, and so on, and when we had done, he simply said, "The blood—the blood, the blood—that is all my hope." Why, he looked as calm in prospect of dying as any of you do in sitting here, and was as delighted with the hope of being where Jesus is as ever bride was at the coming of the marriage day. It was delightful to see the blessed calm and peace that was upon that man of God. And when I come to die, whoever I may be, however little my standing in the Church of God is, if I am in Christ, I will rejoice in his salvation; I will make the dark valley ring with his praises; I will make the river of death itself to roll back as the Red Sea did of old, with my triumphant songs; I will enter heaven with this upon my heart and upon my lip, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and power, and dominion, and glory for ever and ever!' And, brethren, if that is what we may do in dying, this is what we shall do for ever and ever, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Millions of ages, throughout all the cycles of years that interpose ere Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and then onward, even through eternity, this always shall be our own ground of rejoicing, "I will rejoice in thy salvation."

Now I cannot come and stand at the door and speak to everyone as the congregation withdraws, but if it were possible I should like to stand there and shake the hand of everyone that has been in the house to-night, and say, "Well, friend, how fares it with you?" Can you say, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation?' If I cannot do that, I wish it were possible to speak in the silent shades of night to you when you awoke, so that you might hear a voice ringing in your ears, "Do you rejoice in God's salvation?" Perhaps some of you may have come a long distance across the sea. You may be by-and-by on shipboard again. It may be that you will be in peril, or it may be that afterwards you shall be in sickness. Well, may this evening's congregation in this day of July rise up before your minds, and if you forget the preacher (and that will not matter), yet if you hear a voice that says, "Can you rejoice in God's salvation?" I hope that, even if it is twenty years to come, it may then be as the voice of God to your soul, and bring you to the Saviour. But better far would it be if you would come to him



tonight and you may. May the Spirit of God bring you! Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life. The whole of the gospel is wrapped up in Christ's message, which he has sent by his apostles, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To you each this—this—is the word, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God add his own blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# **The Joy Of The Lord, The Strength Of His People**

The joy of the Lord is your strength. - Nehemiah 8:10

And the singers sang aloud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. - Nehemiah 12:42-43

Last Sabbath day in the morning I spoke of the birth of our Saviour as being full of joy to the people of God, and, indeed, to all nations. We then looked at the joy from a distance; we will now in contemplation draw nearer to it, and perhaps as we consider it, and remark the multiplied reasons for its existence, some of those reasons may operate upon our own hearts, and we may go out of this house of prayer ourselves partakers of the exceeding great joy. We shall count it to have been a successful morning if the people of God are made to rejoice in the Lord, and especially if those who have been bowed down and burdened in soul shall receive the oil of joy for mourning. It is no mean thing to comfort the Lord's mourners; it is a work specially dear to the Spirit of God, and, therefore, not to be lightly esteemed. Holy sorrow is precious before God, and is no bar to godly joy. Let it be carefully noted in connection with our first text that abounding mourning is no reason why there should not speedily be seen an equally abundant joy, for the very people who were bidden by Nehemiah and Ezra to rejoice were even then melted with penitential grief, "for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law." The vast congregation before the watergate, under the teaching of Ezra, were awakened and cut to the heart; they felt the edge of the law of God like a sword opening up their hearts, tearing, cutting, and killing, and well might they lament: then was the time to let them feel the gospel's balm and hear the gospel's music, and, therefore, the former sons of thunder changed their note, and became sons of consolation, saying to

them, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. Go your way eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Now that they were penitent, and sincerely turned to their God, they were bidden to rejoice. As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colours with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant colouring of delight. The glad news of the gospel can only be printed on wet paper. Have you ever seen clearer shining than that which follows a shower? Then the sun transforms the rain-drops into gems, the flowers look up with fresher smiles and faces glittering from their refreshing bath, and the birds from among the dripping branches sing with notes more rapturous, because they have paused awhile. So, when the soul has been saturated with the rain of penitence, the clear shining of forgiving love makes the flowers of gladness blossom all around. The steps by which we ascend to the palace of delight are usually moist with tears. Grief for sin is the porch of the House Beautiful, where the guests are full of "The joy of the Lord." I hope, then, that the mourners, to whom this discourse shall come, will discover and enjoy the meaning of that divine benediction in the sermon on the mount, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

From our text we shall draw several themes of thought, and shall remark: first, there is a joy of divine origin,— "The joy of the Lord;" and, secondly, that joy is to all who partake of it a source of strength— "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Then we shall go on to show that such strength always reveals itself practically—our second text will help us there: and we shall close by noticing, in the fourth place, that this joy, and, consequently, this strength, are within our reach today.

I. THERE IS A JOY OF DIVINE ORIGIN—"The joy of the Lord." Springing from the Lord as its source, it will necessarily be of a very elevated character. Since man fell in the garden, he has too often sought for his enjoyments where the serpent finds his. It is written, "upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," this was the serpent's doom; and man, with infatuated ambition, has tried to find

his delight in his sensual appetites, and to content his soul with earth's poor dust. But the joys of time cannot satisfy an undying nature, and when a soul is once quickened by the eternal Spirit, it can no more fill itself with worldly mirth, or even with the common enjoyments of life than can a man snuff up wind and feed thereon. But, beloved, we are not left to search for joy; it is brought to our doors by the love of God our Father; joy refined and satisfying, befitting immortal spirits. God has not left us to wander among those unsatisfactory things which mock the chase which they invite; he has given us appetites which carnal things cannot content, and he has provided suitable satisfaction for those appetites; he has stored up at his right hand pleasures for evermore, which even now he reveals by his Spirit to those chosen ones whom he has taught to long for them.

Let us endeavour to analyze that special and peculiar pleasure which is here called "The joy of the Lord." It springs from God, and has God for its object. The believer who is in a spiritually healthy state rejoices mainly in God himself; he is happy because there is a God, and because God is in his person and character what he is. All the attributes of God become well-springs of joy to the thoughtful, contemplative believer; for such a man says within his soul, "All these attributes of my God are mine: his power, my protection; his wisdom, my guidance; his faithfulness, my foundation; his grace, my salvation." He is a God who cannot lie, faithful and true to his promise; he is all love, and at the same time infinitely just, supremely holy. Why, the contemplation of God to one who knows that this God is his God for ever and ever, is enough to make the eyes overflow with tears, because of the deep, mysterious, unutterable bliss which fills the heart. There was nothing in the character of Jupiter, or any of the pretended gods of the heathen, to make glad a pure and holy spirit, but there is everything in the character of Jehovah both to purify the heart and to make it thrill with delight. How sweet is it to think over all the Lord has done; how he has revealed himself of old, and especially how he has displayed his glory in the covenant of grace, and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. How charming is the thought that he has revealed himself to me personally, and made me to see in him my Father, my friend, my helper, my God. Oh, if there be one word out of heaven that cannot be excelled, even by the brightness of heaven itself, it is this word,

"My God, my Father," and that sweet promise, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." There is no richer consolation to be found: even the Spirit of God can bring nothing home to the heart of the Christian more fraught with delight than that blessed consideration. When the child of God, after admiring the character and wondering at the acts of God, can all the while feel "he is my God; I have taken him to be mine; he has taken me to be his; he has grasped me with the hand of his powerful love; having loved me with an everlasting love, with the bands of lovingkindness has he drawn me to himself; my beloved is mine and I am his;" why, then, his soul would fain dance like David before the ark of the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord with all its might.

A further source of joy is found by the Christian, who is living near to God, in a deep sense of reconciliation to God, of acceptance with God, and yet, beyond that, of adoption and close relationship to God. Does it not make a man glad to know that though once his sins had provoked the Lord they are all blotted out, not one of them remaineth; though once he was estranged from God, and far off from him by wicked works, yet he is made nigh by the blood of Christ. The Lord is no longer an angry judge pursuing us with a drawn sword, but a loving Father into whose bosom we pour our sorrows, and find ease for every pang of heart. Oh, to know, beloved, that God actually loves us! I have often told you I cannot preach upon that theme, for it is a subject to muse upon in silence, a matter to sit by the hour together and meditate upon. The infinite to love an insignificant creature, an ephemera of an hour, a shadow that declineth! Is not this a marvel? For God to pity me I can understand, for God to condescend to have mercy upon me I can comprehend; but for him to love me, for the pure to love a sinner, for the infinitely great to love a worm, is matchless, a miracle of miracles! Such thoughts must comfort the soul. And then, add to this, that the divine love has brought us believers into actual relationship with God, so that we are his sons and daughters, this again is a river of sacred pleasure. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son." No minister of flame, though perfect in obedience, has received the honour of adoption; to us, even to us frail creatures of the dust, is given a boon denied to Gabriel, for through Jesus Christ the firstborn, we are members of the family of God. Oh! The abyss of joy which lies in sonship with God, and joint heirship

with Christ! Words are vain here. Moreover, the joy springing from the spirit of adoption is another portion of the believer's bliss. He cannot be an unhappy man who can cry, "Abba, Father." The spirit of adoption is always attended by love, joy, and peace, which are fruits of the Spirit; for we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of liberty and joy in Christ Jesus. "My God, my Father." Oh how sweet the sound. But all men of God do not enjoy this, say you. Alas! we grant it, but we also add that it is their own fault. It is the right and portion of every believer to live in the assurance that he is reconciled to God, that God loves him, and that he is God's child, and if he doth not so live he has himself only to blame. If there be any starving at God's table, it is because the guest stints himself, for the feast is superabundant. If however, a man comes, and I pray you all may, to live habitually under a sense of pardon through the sprinkling of the precious blood, and in a delightful sense of perfect reconciliation with the great God, he is the possessor of a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But, beloved, this is not all. The joy of the Lord in the spirit springs also from an assurance that all the future, whatever it may be, is guaranteed by divine goodness, that being children of God, the love of God towards us is not of a mutable character, but abides and remains unchangeable. The believer feels an entire satisfaction in leaving himself in the hands of eternal and immutable love. However happy I may be today, if I am in doubt concerning tomorrow, there is a worm at the root of my peace; although the past may now be sweet in retrospect, and the present fair in enjoyment, yet if the future be grim with fear, my joy is but shallow. If my salvation be still a matter of hazard and jeopardy, unmingled joy is not mine, and deep peace is still out of my reach. But when I know that he whom I have rested in hath power and grace enough to complete that which he hath begun in me, and for me; when I see the work of Christ to be no half-way redemption, but a complete and eternal salvation; when I perceive that the promises are established upon an unchangeable basis, and are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, ratified by oath and sealed by blood, then my soul hath perfect contentment. It is true, that looking forward there may be seen long avenues of tribulation, but the glory is at the end of them; battles may be foreseen, and woe unto the man who does not expect them, but the eye of faith perceives the crown of victory.

Deep waters are mapped upon our journey, but faith can see Jehovah fording these rivers with us, and she anticipates the day when we shall ascend the banks of the hither shore and enter into Jehovah's rest. When we have received these priceless truths into our souls we are satisfied with favour and full of the goodness of the Lord. There is a theology which denies to believers this consolation, we will not enter into controversy with it, but sorrowfully hint that a heavy chastisement for the errors of that system of doctrine, lies in the loss of the comfort which the truth would have brought into the soul. For my part, I value the gospel not only for what it has done for me in the past, but for the guarantees which it affords me of eternal salvation. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

Now, beloved, I have not yet taken you into the great deeps of joy, though these streams are certainly by no means shallow. There is an abyss of delight for every Christian when he comes into actual fellowship with God. I spoke of the truth that God loved us, and the fact that we are related to him by ties most near and dear; but, oh, when these doctrines become experiences, then are we indeed anointed with the oil of gladness. When we enter into the love of God, and it enters into us; when we walk with God habitually, then our joy is like Jordan at harvest time, when it overfloweth all its banks. Do you know what it means—to walk with God—Enoch's joy; to sit at Jesus' feet—Mary's joy; to lean your head upon Jesus' bosom—John's familiar joy? Oh yes, communion with the Lord is no mere talk with some of us. We have known it in the chamber of affliction; we have known it in the solitude of many a night of broken rest; we have known it beneath discouragements and under sorrows and defamations, and all sorts of ills; and we reckon that one dram of fellowship with Christ is enough to sweeten an ocean full of tribulation, and that only to know that he is near us, and to see the gleaming of his dear eye, would transform even hell itself into heaven, if it were possible for us to enjoy his presence there. Alas! Ye do not and cannot know this bliss, ye who quaff. Your foaming bowls, listening to the sound of stringed instruments, ye do not know what this bliss means—ye have not dreamed of it, nor could ye compass it though a man should tell it unto you. As the beast in the meadow knows not the far-reaching thoughts of him who reads the stars and threads the spheres, so neither can the carnal man

make so much as a guess of what are the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him, which any day and every day, when our hearts seek it, he revealeth unto us by his Spirit. This is "the joy of the Lord," fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Beloved, if we reach this point, we must labour to maintain our standing, for our Lord saith to us "abide in me." The habit of communion is the life of happiness.

Another form of "the joy of the Lord" will visit us practically every day in the honour of being allowed to serve him. It is a joy worth worlds to be allowed to do good. To teach a little child his letters for Christ, will give a true heart some taste of the joy of the Lord, if it be consciously done for the Lord's sake alone. To bear the portion to those for whom nothing is prepared, to visit the sick, to comfort the mourner, to aid the poor, to instruct the ignorant, any, and all of such Christian works, if done in Jesus' name, will in their measure array us in Jehovah's joy. And happy are we, brethren, if when we cannot work we are enabled to lie still and suffer, for acquiescence is another silver pipe through which "the joy of the Lord" will come to us. It is sweet to smart beneath God's rod, and feel that if God would have us suffer it is happiness to do so, to fall back with the faintness of nature, but at the same time with the strength of grace, and say, "Thy will be done." It is joy, when between the millstones crushed like an olive, to yield nothing but the oil of thankfulness; when bruised beneath the flail of tribulation, still to lose nothing but the chaff, and to yield to God the precious grain of entire submissiveness. Why, this is a little heaven upon earth. To glory in tribulations also, this is a high degree of up-climbing towards the likeness of our Lord. Perhaps, the usual communions which we have with our Beloved, though exceeding precious, will never equal those which we enjoy when we have to break through thorns and briars to be at him; when we follow him into the wilderness then we feel the love of our espousals to be doubly sweet. It is a joyous thing when in the midst of mournful circumstances, we yet feel that we cannot mourn because The Bridegroom is with us. Blessed is that man, who in the most terrible storm is driven—not from his God, but even rides upon the crest of the lofty billows nearer towards heaven. Such happiness is the Christian's lot. I do not say that every Christian possesses it, but I am sure that every Christian ought to do so. There is a highway to heaven, and all in it are safe; but in the middle of that road



there is a special way, an inner path, and all who walk therein are happy as well as safe. Many professors are only just within the hedge, they walk in the ditch by the road side, and because they are safe there, they are content to put up with all the inconveniences of their walk; but he who takes the crown of the causeway, and walks in the very centre of the road that God has cast up, shall find that no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon, for there the Lord himself shall be his companion, and will manifest himself to him. You shallow Christians who do but believe in Christ, and barely that, whose bibles are unread, whose closets are unfrequented, whose communion with God is a thing of spasms, you have not the joy of the Lord, neither are you strong. I beseech you, rest not as you are, but let your conscious feebleness provoke you to seek the means of strength: and that means of strength is to be found in a pleasant medicine, sweet as it is profitable—the delicious and effectual medicine of "the joy of the Lord."

II. But time would fail me to prolong our remarks upon this very fruitful subject, and we shall turn to our second head, which is this: that **THIS JOY IS A SOURCE OF GREAT STRENGTH.**

Very rapidly let us consider this thought. It is so because this joy arises from considerations which always strengthen the soul. Very much of the depth of our piety will depend upon our thoughtfulness. Many persons, after having received a doctrine, put it by on the shelf; they are orthodox, they have received the truth, and they are content to keep that truth on hand as dead stock. Sirs, of what account can this be to you, to store your garners with wheat if you never grind the corn for bread, or sow it in the furrows of your fields? He is the joyful Christian who uses the doctrines of the gospel for spiritual meat, as they were meant to be used. Why, some men might as well have a heterodox creed as an orthodox one for all the difference it makes to them. Having the notion that they know, and imagining that to know sufficeth them, they do not consider, contemplate, or regard the truths which they profess to believe, and, consequently, they derive no benefit from them. Now, to contemplate the great truths of divine election, of eternal love, of covenant engagements, of justification by faith through the blood of Christ, and the indwelling and perpetual abiding of the Holy Ghost in his people, to turn over these

things is to extract joy from them; and this also is strengthening to the mind. To press the heavenly grapes by meditation, and make the red wine flow forth in torrents, is an exercise as strengthening as it is exhilarating. Joy comes from the same truths which support our strength, and comes by the process of meditation.

Again, "the joy of the Lord" within us is always the sign and symbol of strong spiritual life. Holy vivacity betokens spiritual vigour. I said that he who had spiritual joy gained it by communion with God, but communion with God is the surest fosterer of strength. You cannot be with a strong God without getting strength yourself, for God is always a transforming God; regarding and looking upon him our likeness changes till we become in our measure like our God. The warmth of the South of France, of which you often hear so much, does not spring from soft balmy winds, but from the sun; at sunset the temperature falls. You shall be on one side of the street in Italy and think it May, cross the street into the shade and it is cold as January. The sun does it all. A man who walks in the sunlight of God's countenance, for that very reason is warm and strong. The sunlight of joy usually goes with the warmth of spiritual life. As the light of joy varies so does the warmth of holy strength; he who dwells in the light of God is both happy and strong. He who goes into the shade and loses the joy of the Lord becomes weak at the same time. So the joy of the Lord becomes our strength, as being an indicator of its rise or fall. When a soul is really vigorous and active, it is like the torrent which dashes down the mountain side, which scorns in winter to own the bonds of frost: in a few hours the stagnant pools and slowly moving streams are enchained in ice; but the snow king must bring forth all his strength ere he can manacle the rushing torrent. So when a soul dashes on with the sacred force of faith, it is hard to freeze it into misery, its vigour secures its joy.

Furthermore, the man who possesses "the joy of the Lord," finds it his strength in another respect, that it fortifies him against temptation. What is there that he can be tempted with? He has more already than the world can offer him as a reward for treachery. He is already rich; who shall ensnare him with the wages of unrighteousness? He is already satisfied; who is he that can seduce him with pleasing baits? "Shall such a man as I

flee?" The rejoicing Christian is equally proof against persecution. They may well afford to be laughed at who win at such a rate as he does. "You may scoff," saith he, "but I know what true religion is within my soul, and your scoffing will not make me relinquish the pearl of great price." Such a man is, moreover, made strong to bear affliction; for all the sufferings put upon him are but a few drops of bitterness cast into his cup of bliss, to give a deeper tone to the sweetness which absorbs them.

Such a man becomes strong for service, too. What can he not do who is happy in his God? By his God he leaps over a wall, or breaks through a troop. Strong is he, too, for any kind of self-sacrifice. To the God who gives him all, and remains to him as his perpetual portion, such a man gives up all that he hath, and thinks it no surrender. It is but laying up his treasure in his own peculiar treasure house, even in the God of his salvation.

A joyous man, such I have now in my mind's eye, is to all intents and purposes a strong man. He is strong in a calm restful manner. Whatever happens he is not ruffled or disturbed. He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. The ruffled man is ever weak. He is in a hurry, and doth things ill. The man full of joy within is quiet, he bides his time and croucheth in the fulness of his strength. Such a man, though he is humble, is firm and steadfast; he is not carried away with every wind, or bowed by every breeze, he knows what he knows, and holds what he holds, and the golden anchor of his hope entereth within the veil, and holds him fast. His strength is not pretentious but real. The happiness arising from communion with God breeds in him no boastfulness; he does not talk of what he can do, but he does it; he does not say what he could bear, but he bears all that comes. He does not himself always know what he could do; his weakness is the more apparent to himself because of the strength which the Holy Ghost puts upon him; but when the time comes, his weakness only illustrates the divine might, while the man goes calmly on, conquering and to conquer. His inner light makes him independent of the outward sun; his secret granaries make him independent of the outer harvest; his inward fountains place him beyond dread though the brook Cherith may dry Up; he is independent of men and angels, and fearless of devils; all creatures may turn against him if

they please, but since God himself is his exceeding joy, he will not miss their love or mourn their hate. He standeth where others fall, he sings where others weep, he wins where others fly, he glorifies his God where others bring dishonour on themselves and on the sacred name. God grant us the inward joy which arises from real strength and is so linked with it as to be in part its cause.

III. But now I must hasten on to notice in the third place that THIS STRENGTH LEADS TO PRACTICAL RESULTS. I am sure I shall have your earnest attention to this, because in many of you I have seen the results follow of which I now speak. I would not flatter any one, but my heart has been full of thanksgiving to the God of all grace when I have seen many of you rejoicing in the Lord under painful circumstances and producing the fruits of a gracious strength. Turn then to our second text, and there you shall observe some of the fruits of holy joy and pious strength.

First, it leads to great praise. "The singers sang aloud," their minstrelsy was hearty and enthusiastic. Sacred song is not a minor matter. Quaint George Herbert has said -

"Praying's the end of preaching."

Might he not have gone further and have said, praising's the end of praying? After all, preaching and praying are not the chief end of man, but the glorifying of God, of which praising God vocally is one form. Preaching is sowing, prayer is watering, but praise is the harvest. God aims at his own glory so should we; and "whoso offereth praise glorifieth me saith the Lord." Be ye diligent then to sing his praises with understanding. We have put away harps and trumpets and organs, let us mind that we really rise above the need of them. I think we do well to dispense with these helps of the typical dispensation; they are all inferior even in music to the human voice, there is assuredly no melody or harmony like those created by living tongues; but let us mind that we do not put away an atom of the joy. Let us be glad when in the congregation we unite in psalmody. It is a wretched thing to hear the praises of God rendered professionally, as if the mere music were everything. It is horrible to have a dozen people in the table-pew singing for you, as if they

were proxies for the whole assembly. It is shocking to me to be present in places of worship where not a tenth of the people ever venture to sing at all, and these do it through their teeth so very softly, that one had need to have a microscope invented for his ears, to enable him to hear the dying strain. Out upon such mumbling and murdering of the praises of God; if men's hearts were joyous and strong, they would scorn such miserable worship. In this house we all try to sing, but might we not have more praise services? We have had a praise meeting every now and then. Ought we not to hold a praise meeting every week? Should not the prayer meeting be more than ever cheered by praise. The singing of God's people should be, and if they were more full of divine strength would be, more constant and universal. How sinners chant the praise of Baechus in the streets! You can hardly rest in the middle of the night, but what unseemly sounds of revelry startle you. Shall the votaries of wine sing so lustily, and shall we be silent? We are not often guilty of disturbing the world with our music; the days in which Christian zeal interfered with the wicked seem to have gone by; we have settled down into more orderliness, and I am afraid also into more lukewarmness. Oh for the old Methodistic shout. Brethren, wake up your singing again. May the Lord give us again a singing-time, and make us all praise him with heart, and with voice, till even the adversaries shall say, "The Lord hath done great things for them;" and we shall reply, "Ay, ye speak the truth; he hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Perhaps there has not been so large a blessing upon the churches of England, because they have not rendered due thanksgiving. In all the time in which we are in trouble we are anxious and prayerful; when a prince is sick bulletins are issued every hour or so; but ah, when the mercy comes but few bulletins are put out, calling upon us to bless and praise the name of God for his mercies. Let us praise the Lord from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, for great is the Lord, and greatly is he to be praised.

The next result is great sacrifice. "That day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced." What day is that in which the church of God now makes great sacrifices? I have not seen it in the calendar of late; and, alas! If men make any sacrifice they very often do so in a mode which indicates that they would escape the inflection if they could. Few make great sacrifices and rejoice. You can persuade a man to give a considerable

sum; a great many arguments at last overcome him, and he does it because he would have been ashamed not to do it, but in his heart he wishes you had not come that way, and had gone to some other donor. That is the most acceptable gift to God which is given rejoicingly. It is well to feel that whatever good your gift may do to the church, or the poor, or the sick, it is twice as much benefit to you to give it. It is well to give, because you love to give; as the flower which pours forth its perfume because it never dreamed of doing otherwise; or like the bird which quivers with song, because it is a bird and finds a pleasure in its notes; or like the sun which shines, not by constraint, but because, being a sun, it must shine; or like the waves of the sea which flash back the brilliance of the sun, because it is their nature to reflect and not to hoard the light. Oh, to have such grace in our hearts that we shall joyfully make sacrifices unto our God. The Lord grant that we may have much of this; for the bringing of the tithes into the storehouse is the way to the blessing; as saith the Scripture: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in thine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Next to that, there are sure to follow other expressions of joy. They "rejoiced, for God had made them to rejoice with great joy." It was not all singing and giving. When the wheels of the machine are well oiled the whole machine goes easily; and when the man has the oil of joy, then in his business, and in his family, the wheels of his nature glide along sweetly and harmoniously, because he is a glad and a happy man. There are some professors who imagine the sorrow of the Lord to be their strength; they glory in the spirit of bondage and in an unbelieving experience, having great acquaintance with the corruption of their hearts, sometimes of a rather too practical character. They make the deformities of the saints to be their beauty-spots, and their faults to be their evidences. Such men denounce all who rejoice in the Lord, and only tolerate the unbelieving. Their strength lies in being able to take you through all the catacombs of nature's darkness, and to show you the rottenness of their evil hearts. Well, such strength as that let those have who will, but we are persuaded that our text is nearer to wisdom: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." While we know something of our

corruption, and mourn it, know something of the world's troubles, and sometimes lament as we bear them; yet there is a joy in the perfect work of Christ, and a joy in our union to him which uplifts us far above all other considerations. God becomes to us such a strength that we cannot help showing our joy in our ordinary life.

But then the text tells us that holy joy leads to family happiness. "The wives also and the children rejoiced." It is so in this church. I have lately seen several children from households which God has blessed, and I have rejoiced to see that father and mother know the Lord, and that even the last of the family has been brought to Jesus. O happy households where the joy is not confined to one, but where all partake of it. I dislike much that Christianity which makes a man feel, "If I go to heaven it is all I care for." Why, you are like a German stove which I found in the room of an hotel the other day—a kind of stove which required all the wood they could bring up merely to warm itself, and then all the heat went up the chimney. We sat around it to make it warm, but scarce a particle of heat came forth from it to us. Too many need all the religion they can get to cheer their own hearts, and their poor families and neighbours sit shivering in the cold of ungodliness. Be like those well constructed stoves of our own houses, which send out all the heat into the room. Send out the heat of piety into your house, and let all the neighbours participate in the blessing, for so the text finishes, "The joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off." The joy of the Lord should be observed throughout our neighbourhood, and many who might otherwise have been careless of true religion will then enquire, "What makes these people glad, and creates such happy households?" Your joy shall thus be God's missionary.

IV. And now I have to close. THIS JOY, THIS STRENGTH, ARE BOTH WITHIN OUR REACH! "For the Lord had made them glad with great joy." God alone can give us this great joy. Then it is within the reach of any, for God can give it to one as well as to another. If it depended upon our good works or our natural abilities, some of us could never reach it; but if God is the source and giver of it he may give it to me as well as to thee, my brother, and to thee as well as to another. What was the way in which God gave this joy? Well first, he gave it to these people by their being attentive hearers. They were not only hearers, but they heard with

their ears, their ears were into the word; it was read to them and they sucked it in, receiving it into their souls. An attentive hearer is on the way to being a joyous receiver. Having heard it they felt the power of it, and they wept. Did that seem the way to joy? It was. They received the threatenings of the law with all their terrors into their soul, they allowed the hammer of the word to break them in pieces, they submitted themselves to the word of reproof. Oh! That God would incline you all to do the same, for this, again, is the way in which God gives joy. The word is heard, the word is felt. Then after this, when they had felt the power of the word, we see that they worshipped God devoutly. They bowed the head. Their postures indicated what they felt within. Worshippers who with penitent hearts really adore God, will never complain of weary Sabbaths; adoration helps us into joy. He who can bow low enough before the throne shall be lifted as high before that throne as his heart can desire.

We read also that these hearers and worshippers understood clearly what they heard. Never be content with hearing a sermon unless you can understand it, and if there be a truth that is above you, strain after it, strive to know it. Bible-reader, do not be content with going through the words of the chapter: pray the Holy Ghost to tell you the meaning, and use proper means for finding out that meaning; ask those who know, and use your own enlightened judgment to discover the sense. When shall we have done with formalism of worship and come into living adoration? Sometimes, for all the true singing that there is, the song might as well be in Latin or in Greek. Oh! To know what you are singing, to know what you are saying in prayer, to know what you are reading, to get at it, to come right into it, to understand it—this is the way to holy joy.

And one other point. These people when they had understood what they had devoutly heard, were eager to obey. They obeyed not only the common points of the law in which Israel of old had furnished them with examples, but they found out an old institution which had been buried and forgotten. What was that to them; God had commanded it, and they celebrated it, and in so doing this peculiar joy came upon them. Oh, for the time when all believers shall search the word of God, when they shall not be content with saying, "I have joined myself with a certain body of



Christians, and they do so; therefore I do so." May no man say to himself any longer, "Such is the rule of my church;" but may each say, "I am God's servant and not the servant of man, not the servant of thirty-nine articles, of the Prayer-book, or the Catechism; I stand to my own Master, and the only law book I acknowledge is the book of his word, inspired by his Spirit." Oh, blessed day, when every man shall say, "I want to know wherein I am wrong; I desire to know what I am to do; I am anxious to follow the Lord fully." Well, then, if your joy in God leads you to practical obedience, you may rest assured it has made you strong in the very best manner.

Beloved brethren and sisters, we had, before I went away for needed rest, a true spirit of prayer among us. I set out for the continent joyfully, because I left with you the names of some eighty persons proposed for church-membership. My beloved officers, with great diligence, have visited these and others, and next Lord's-day we hope to receive more than a hundred, perhaps a hundred and twenty fresh members into the church. Blessed be God for this. I should not have felt easy in going away if you had been in a barren, cold, dead state; but there was a real fire blazing on God's altar, and souls were being saved. Now, I desire that this gracious zeal should continue, and be renewed. It has not gone out in my absence, I believe, but I desire now a fresh blast from God's Spirit to blow the flame very vehemently. Let us meet for prayer tomorrow, and let the prayer be very earnest, and let those wrestlers who have been moved to agonizing supplication renew the ardour and fervency of their desires, and may we be a strong people, and consequently a joyous people in the strength and joy of the Lord. May sinners in great numbers look unto Jesus and be saved. Amen, and Amen.

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## **The Joyous Return**

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thing iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. - Hosea 14:1-3

We are in the last chapter of the book of the prophet Hosea. Throughout the book there has been thunder: sometimes a low rumbling, as of a distant tempest, sometimes peal on peal, as of a storm immediately overhead. And now the tempest has gathered all its force. Here it culminates. You expect the bolt of heaven to destroy. Lo, instead thereof a silver shower of mercy! The gentle drops come down plenteously, and you hear their fall upon the tender herb like music soft and low. God does not say, "O Israel, depart accursed!" But instead thereof, in dulcet tones he cries, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." In the midst of wrath he remembers mercy.

"When God's right arm is bared for war,  
And thunders clothe his cloudy car."

e'en then he stays his uplifted hand, reins in the steeds of vengeance, and holds communion with grace; "for his mercy endureth for ever," and "judgment is his strange work."

To use another figure: the whole book of Hosea is like a great trial wherein witnesses have appeared against the accused, and the arguments and excuses of the guilty have been answered and baffled. All has been heard for them, and much, very much against them, and the convicted stand at the bar to hear their sentence. Behold the Judge, instead of putting on the black cap to pronounce doom of death, stretches out his hands to the condemned, and in tones of pity cries, "O Israel, return"!

This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected from such a prickly shrub to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit; but so it is: where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea; and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have

been more terrible in judgment. Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!

While I am preaching from such a text, I feel the need of special help from the Holy Spirit. I lift up my heart for it. Will you not, my brethren, pray for me, that my hearers may not only hear my voice, but may perceive the inward voice of God speaking to their hearts! The Lord himself is the speaker of the text: it is Jehovah who says, "O Israel, return." May many of you hear the voice of God, and in that voice perceive an over-powering omnipotence which shall turn your thoughts and souls into the right way, making you willing in the day of his power!

I ask you to consider, first, the call to call to God: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God"; and, secondly, the argument for coming: "For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Thirdly, we shall dwell upon the help in coming which the Lord gives to those who are willing to obey. He says, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." In conclusion, we shall pray to see in many the coming by this help. May my unconverted hearers return unto the Lord, and know the power of his restoring grace!

I. First, notice THE CALL TO COME: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." Oh, that the call may be made effectual this day!

It is a very instructive call; for it tells the sinner exactly what he has to do. Return: that is, reverse your course. The course you have taken is the opposite of that which you ought to have taken; therefore, come back. You have gone from God; come back to God. You have been prayerless; begin to pray! You have been hardened; yield to the Word. You have been full of cavils; believe even as a little child. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and not the fruits of obstinate persistence in evil. To many there could be no better direction in spiritual morals than this word, "Return." Do what you have not done: leave undone what you have been doing. Reverse the original. Take the other track! "Return!" is but a single word, but that word is full of moaning. There is to be a change, a total change, a coming back to God.

The word is also instructive, because it says, Return unto the Lord." Do

not only look to God, but return to him. Arise, and go unto your Father. Do not barely think about it, but do it. Do not return part of the way to this and to that good custom and salutary habit; but come right back to the Lord, and rest not till you feel that you are in his arms. It is of no use for the prodigal to say, "I will arise," unless he adds, "and go to my father." It is of no use his quitting one far-off country for another; but it must be said of him, And he arose and came to his father." The best direction we can give to many a sinner is—Reverse your course of life, and let your reversed course of life lead you to God himself. How surely will he need the abounding grace of God for such a work as this! for Virgil's lines are true—

"The gates of hell are open night and day;  
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way.  
But to return, and seek the upper skies,  
In this the task and mighty labor lies.

The call is very practical. It does not ask for sentiment, but for action: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." Do not, as I have said before, think of it merely, but resolutely and thoughtfully return. Do not speculate about when you will do it: let it be done now. Procrastinate no longer: quit halting and hesitating once for all. Cease to count the loss or the gain of it, and take the decisive step: "O Israel, return."

I cannot help reminding you that this instructive and practical exhortation is also a very pathetic call. The "O" with which it commences is not used as an oratorical embellishment. Loving entreaty breathes in it. He who speaks is in earnest, and pleads with all his heart. It is God himself who says, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." It is not a chill command—cold and sharp, like the sword of the Lord in the day of doom; but albeit it has all the force of a command, it is a warm and tender entreaty from the lips of love: "O Israel, return." In that "O" I seem to hear at once the weeping of the Lord Jesus, the sounding of the bowels of the great Father, and the grieving of the Holy Spirit, "O Israel, return"! is a sorrowful, tender, gentle, wooing voice, which I beseech you to regard. Possibly some of you may have had to plead with one of your own children, who has been very wilful, and has threatened to do that which would have been exceedingly injurious to him. You have said, "Oh, do not

so, my soul! Oh, do not so, my daughter!" and you have thrown your soul into your pleading. Even thus doth God, with sacred pathos, with love welling up from the depth of his heart, plead with every sinner before me, and he words the pleading thus—"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God."

I would remind you, also, that, pathetic as it is, it is a divine call. "O Israel, return!" Who saith it? The prophet? Yea, and more than the prophet: he who pleads is the prophet's God. The first motion towards reconciliation is never from the sinner, but always from God. The sinner does not cry, "O Lord, my God, permit me to return"; but the Lord himself, who watches the wandering one, and sees him falling to his ruin, cries out, in the freeness of his grace, "O Israel, return!" What matters it to the Lord, though a man should even plunge down to hell? The Lord will be glorious, though the rebel perish. The Lord hath no need of men. Yet the Lord thinks much of wandering men, and longs for their return. Out of the freeness and riches of his love he calls them to himself. He swears by his own life that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he turn unto him, and live. Because of his spontaneous love and pity, he crieth, plaintively, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." Hearken, then, my hearers. If it were my call, you might refuse it with small blame: but it is God's call: shall your Maker call in vain? Will you add to all your sin the turning of your back upon the God of love. Shall Jehovah cry in pity to your souls, and cry in vain? God grant it be not so! Here from this text, which, once written, remaineth, there soundeth out of the eternal deep of boundless mercy this cry of grace: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God"!

And so I will say no more about this call except that it is evidently a very gracious one. He puts it so, "Return unto the Lord thy God." If thou, O sinner, wilt return to the Lord, he will be thy God; he will enter into covenant with thee, he will give himself over to thee to be thine. Henceforth thou shalt have a property in Jehovah, and all the wealth of his infinite nature shall be thine. Thou shalt be able to say, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." That man hath made a great speech who hath truly said, "God is mine." There is more in calling God our God than if we could hold the title-deeds of

both the Indies, or claim possession of the stars. God, in the infinity of his grace, declares, "I will be their God."

I cannot preach as I would. Who can compass such a theme as this? Oh, that you were wise, that you knew what was good for you! Then would you answer to this call. O sinner, how I wish that thou wert delivered from thy madness! for then thou wouldest no longer turn thy back upon thine own blessedness, nor wouldest thou longer reject the Lord thy God to thine own confusion. Thy present course will lead thee down to destruction utter and entire; wherefore, pause, I pray thee! Nay, I say more; do not stay where thou art, but return, return at once! Seest thou not what a welcome God will give thee? for he says not, "Return unto thy Judge," but "Return unto thy God." It is not written, "Return like an escaped prisoner to thy jailer, return to the whip and to the stocks"; but, "Return unto the Lord thy God." This God shall be thine exceeding joy. Albeit I cannot put my soul into such words as I could wish, I am sure that men who are wise and prudent will think upon these things, and will be led to seek after the Lord, from whom all blessings flow. I remember how, when I perceived the freeness and preciousness of the gospel, I ran towards it, being drawn that way by a strong desire for that which promised such great things to me. May many a man and woman out of the present company say, "I will answer to the divine entreaty. Jehovah bids me return, and return I will"!

II. Secondly, I beg you to notice THE ARGUMENT FOR COMING. "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." What a wonderful argument is this! You are in an evil plight through sin; therefore return to the Lord your God. But, saith one, I was afraid I might not come because I had fallen." See how your fear is anticipated. The case is reversed, and your having fallen is made by the Lord into an argument why you should return to him. "I am broken-kneed," saith one; "I have fallen so badly that I shall never be worth a penny for any good work." Yet the Lord cries, "Return, for thou hast fallen." I hear one moaning, "I am broken to pieces by sin: I am like an old pot that has fallen on the stones. I am useless henceforth. "For that very reason the Lord of mercy bids you return. "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen." What ingenuity of mercy there is in the heart of God! See, he takes away the

reason for despair, and makes out of it an argument for hope. Because you are thus fallen, you have need to return; and God considers your need, not your merit. Because you are fallen, God's pity invites you to return. Use the word "fallen" literally. If you are a fallen man, return; if you are a fallen woman, return. Why is it that the word "fallen" has a force in reference to woman which it has not in regard to man: surely a fallen man is as sad a sight as a fallen woman. But whether male or female, here is the argument for your returning to God: "Thou hast fallen; therefore return." I pray you, yield to so gracious a plea.

Dear friends, the argument is also this: the cause of your evil plight is sin. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Sin is the root of the mischief. Do not say, "I was fated to be so." "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." It is true that thou hast fallen in Adam; but thou hast also fallen by thine own actual sin, and thou hast enough to do to confess thine own act and deed. Thine own wilful omissions and commissions have ruined thee. Thou art wounded, but thine own hand has given the injurious stab. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity"; blame no one else. That you are an unbeliever is your own fault; you will not come to Christ that you might have life. The way you follow is the way of your own choice, in which you follow the imaginations and devices of your own heart. All the misery of your present estate is due to yourself alone. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself"! Feel that it is so, and confess it before God, taking to yourself shame and confusion of face.

The only remedy for your evil case is to come back to God. If you have fallen by your iniquity, you must be set free from this iniquity; but you cannot free yourself. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" You have lain in the lye of evil till you are dyed ingrain with the scarlet of iniquity, and the color cannot be taken out except by a miracle of grace. God alone can take away the spots from the leopard, and the blackness from the Ethiopian, and the crimson from the deep-dyed wool. The Lord and the Lord only can work these marvels. Hence you are called upon to "return unto the Lord your God," for your only hope of restoration lies in God himself.

Your guilt should not make you hesitate; for the Lord knows all about it, and his invitation shows that he does so. He says, "Return; for thou hast

fallen." O my hearer, hast thou tried to hide that fall? Art thou sitting here and trying to forget thy ruin? The Lord does not forget it, and does not wish you to forget it. He sets it before your mind, and bids you come to him as a fallen person. The Lord Jesus Christ receives sinners as sinners. He does not want them to change their character and then come, but they are to come to him for a change. Come simply as sinners; not as awakened sinners, or sensible sinners, or sinners with some other good qualification. As sinners, come to him who has come to save sinners. The Lord Jesus gave himself for our sins; he never gave himself for our righteousness, and therefore he would have us come to him in all our defilement. Come in your evil habits, your guilt, your condemnation, your spiritual death, and your corruption. Come just as you are. He delighteth in mercy: leave space for mercy to work in. "Return," saith he; "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

If you are in the worst case that ever mortal was in, you have the best possible helper to whom you are to return. If you go to Gilead for balm for your wound, you would turn that way in vain; for to the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" the answer is, of course, there is neither balm nor physician there; or else the hurt of the daughter of my people would long ago have been healed. You have long enough gone to Gilead, now go to God. Human sources of help must fail you; and for that very reason we would persuade you to turn to God. There is no physician in Gilead, therefore, come along with you to him whose touch is better than balm, who is himself himself the health of souls. The very hem of his garment overflows with power, so that a touch is effectual. Jesus has but to cast an eye on the most guilty and forlorn, and they live. Yea, if they do but cast an eye on him, they receive eternal life. A legion of devils will flee at his word. Oh, what a blessing it is that there is such a mighty Saviour! If anybody here perishes it is not because the Saviour is not able to save him. If any man here shall die in his sin, it can only be accounted for by the Saviour's declaration, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." How intensely do I pray that you may return to God, urged by these reasons; namely, that you are helplessly, hopelessly lost, and Christ is a mighty Saviour, on whom your help is laid!



I would that for this reason you would come to him, even this very day! He will receive you even now; for he hath said it: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

III. Now let us see how our gracious God meets us, and provides for us THE HELP IN COMING.

The Lord helps our ignorance and our fear. He gives us direction as to what to bring. Read the second verse. "Ah!" saith the sinner, "I do not know what to take with me in approaching the Most High. I have no bullocks, no lambs, no incense. In my hand there is no price of money or merit." The answer is, "Take with you words." Your heart is right; you are longing for salvation; you need not say, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" "Take with you words"; you have plenty of them. The heart must be there first, and then nothing more is asked than "words." Cheap enough is this offering. Leaves of the wood are not so easy to come at. This is simple enough; he that hath a tongue can bring words. O man and woman, whatever else you cannot bring, you can bring words; for indeed you have multiplied words to sin. The Lord helping you to return, you need not hesitate for want of an offering, since he saith, "Take with you words." This is but another version of our grand hymn—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me Saviour, or I die."

And then, the Lord helps the coming sinner by a direction as to where to turn. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." "I was wanting to see the minister," saith one. Turn to the Lord! "I desire to converse with a man of God." Turn to the Lord! We read in the book of Job, "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?" My answer would be—Sinner, turn thou to the sinner's friend, and leave the saints along. If thou wouldest be saved turn not to Peter, nor James, nor John; but turn to him whom all these call "Master and Lord." "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Have

you been in the habit of turning to a man who is called a priest? I pray you, do so no longer; for there is now but one sin-atonement priest, and he is the Lord Jesus. Have you turned to ceremonies? Do you look for rest in sacraments? You look that way in vain; for they are not the way of salvation. Turn rather to the Lord as he is revealed in the Lord Jesus. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord himself. Against him you have sinned: to him make confession. You need that his anger should be turned away; seek, then, a free forgiveness from himself. It is his love that you want: go to him for it, and he will receive you graciously, and love you freely.

A further help is this. The Lord helps us to return to him by giving a direction how to pray. A minister said to me last Thursday evening what I have often felt to be true: "We had need make coming to Christ very plain, for many people are so ignorant that they almost need to have the words of confession and faith put into their mouths. They need somebody to kneel down side by side with them, and utter the very words that they should speak unto the Lord." There is much more truth in this statement than inexperienced persons may think. So here the Lord does, as it were, put the words into the sinner's mouth. "Take with you words, and say unto him." He says the words, that the sinner may make them his own, and say them after him. In this condescending style he teaches the returning sinner how to pray. What a gracious God he is! Suppose a case. A great king has been grievously offended by a rebellious subject, but in kindness of heart he wills to be reconciled. He invites the rebel to sue for pardon. He replies, "O King, I would fain be forgiven, but how can I properly approach your offended majesty? I am anxious to present such a petition as you can accept, but I know not how to draw it up." Suppose this great king were to say, "I will draw up the petition for you," what confidence the supplicant would feel in presenting the petition! He brings to the king his own words. He prays the prayer he is bidden to pray. By the very fact of drawing up the petition, the monarch pledged himself to grant it. O my hearer, the Lord puts it into your mouth to say this morning, "Take away all iniquity." May you find it in your heart to pray in that fashion! That prayer is best which is offered in God's own way, and is of God's own prompting. May you present such a prayer at once!

Here I find two sentences of petition. The first is—"Take away all iniquity." Follow me, and try to pray this prayer, "O Thou that takest away the sin of the world, take away all my iniquity. It is great, but pardon it, I pray thee; for thou didst bear our sins in thine own body on the tree. By thy precious blood, wash away all my iniquity! Let me know that thou hast carried my transgression away, even as the scapegoat carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness of forgetfulness. Take away all iniquity by an act of pardon, I beseech thee. Take it away, also, in another sense—Lord, take it out of my heart; take it out of my life."

Dear seekers, I pray you, do not look on one sin and say, Lord, spare it!" Do not wish to have one sin left; but cry "Take it away! Take it away! Take away all iniquity. However sweet, or fascinating, or deeply seated, Lord, take away all iniquity. If I have been given to the intoxicating cup, take it away! If I have been the slave of greed, take it away! If I have been subject to passion, or pride, or lustfulness, take it away! Whatever is my besetting sin, 'take away all iniquity!'" Dost thou wish to have one fair sin spared to thee? It will be thy ruin. Hew in pieces that Agag sin that cometh so delicately. Let your cry be, "Take it away!" The taking of it away may cost you a right hand or a right eye; still, shrink; not, but cry, "Take away all iniquity." Have done with it all. It will be of no use to give up one poison; if you take another poison, it will kill you. All sin must go, or else all hope is gone! Return to God; but it must be with a prayer which shows that you and your sins have fallen out, never to be reconciled.

The next petition is, "Receive us graciously." Confess that a kind reception of you by God must be of grace alone. Nothing but grace can open a door for our returning. Sinners cannot be received of the Lord on any other terms but those of mercy. We would not ask to be dealt with according to our merits; but we thank the Lord that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As to our sins, we cannot answer him one of a thousand. The Lord must receive us graciously or reject us righteously. Are we not glad that sinners can be received in the name of grace, and find a welcome in the tender mercy of our God? Offer, then, this petition, "Receive us graciously." I am not content merely to talk to you about these gracious words; I want every soul here to use them in personal prayer. Oh, that the Lord would touch

all lips by his grace, and lead them to say from the heart—"Lord, receive me, I return to thee. Take away all iniquity, and take me to thyself! Receive me as a subject of thy kingdom. Receive me of thy grace into thy home of love. Receive me into the family of thy redeemed on earth, and then receive me into thy mansion in heaven. 'Receive us graciously.

These are two sweet petitions, and they are fitly framed together. May the Holy Spirit constrain every heart to present them! May these be the words which every one of you shall take with him in returning to the Lord!

One sentence of promise follows these two of petition: "So will we render the calves of our lips." What are the "calves of our lips"? They are sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Yonder are the calves of the stall which men bring in sacrifice: they are struck down, and they die at the altar. God does not ask us for bullocks which have horns and hoofs. He takes no pleasure in the blood of calves, or of goats. He desires a broken heart, two faith, and humble love: these live at the altar. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God." Let us bring him our best thoughts, our best expressions, our best testimonies, our heartiest praises: these are not calves of our stalls, but "calves of our lips." Let our gratitude be a living sacrifice, and our conduct a constant testimony to the goodness of God. I think we can say this morning—at least, I can—"Lord, if thou wilt spare me, I will speak for thee." I must do so during the rest of my life, or else I shall have to change my ways and habits. I was thinking, as I came along this morning, that it is somewhere about forty years since I first opened my mouth to preach for Christ, and I can still say what I have of often said—

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been thy theme,  
And shall be till I die."

Is there not some young man here who will begin at once to take up this service for the next forty years? I wonder what young man it is that I may lay hands upon for Jesus? And some Christian woman—no, she is not a Christian yet; but I call her such, for she is going to be, I am only

anticipating a little—will she not now become a Christian, and straightaway render unto the Lord Jesus the calves of her lips, by bearing her testimony in her family and among her acquaintances? Who will consecrate himself this day unto the Lord. While you cry to God for mercy as to the past, resolve that if you are saved you will confess his name, and so offer him the calves of your lips. The Lord claims your hearts first, and your lips next. You must confess Christ before men. Salvation is promised to a confessed faith; always remember that, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him shall be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Faith should be confessed in God's own way, by baptism, and to that faith the promise is specially given. Though I doubt not that some may be saved who is himself do not make an open avowal of their faith, yet the promise runs as I have quoted it, and I would not have you wilfully forget the command implied in it. "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven"; so saith the Lord Jesus. It is no more than his due, that we should take up our cross and follow him. It is but a small thing, that if we trust in his name, we should bear his name. So you see the Lord puts into our mouths this morning this resolve, that we will praise him. "So will we render the calves of our lips."

Now come three sentences of renunciation: Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." First, the natural, legal trust, so much esteemed among men, must go. Israel used always to fall back upon Assyria. If Egypt threatened the people, or if any other nation oppressed them, they sent a present to the King of Assyria to come and deliver them. But now they cry, "Asshur shall not save us." The popular trust of the world is in self-righteousness in its various forms. You were going to be saved by your own repentance, reformation, and future well-doing; but of this you must say, "Asshur shall not save us." Are you trusting in sacraments? Give up so vain a confidence. They are not meant to save, but to instruct those who are saved already. Are you trusting in your hereditary godliness, your birthright religion? Away with so poor a foundation! Are you trusting in your prayers, your givings to the poor, your attendance on sermons, your honesty, your good nature? Set these on one side, and cry, "Asshur shall not save us." All confidences must go save Jesus Christ,

whom God has laid in Zion for a foundation stone. On him must we build, and on none other; for "Asshur shall not save us."

But, next, they gave up all carnal confidence of their own: "neither will we ride upon horses." The kings of Israel were forbidden to multiply horses, because they were not used in commerce, but only for military purposes, and Jehovah would not have his people rely upon these creatures. Egypt might glory in horse and chariot, but Israel must not do so. Hence we find pious Hezekiah keeping this law so strictly that Rabshakeh reviled him by offering to send two thousand horses if he could set riders upon them. When we come to God we must quit all trust in ourselves of every sort: in our tears, our prayers, our moral life, our excellent instincts, or anything else we must place no trust. "Some trust in horses, and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." It may be, you have fine horses of morality and religiousness, you have many virtues upon which you think you might fairly depend: give up these trusts. Have you been lately trotting out your horses before your own family, and saying to your wife, "I am not like many men. I never drink too much, neither do I treat my household unkindly"? Put away these horses. You cannot come to God riding in pride. Say, "We will not ride upon horses." Put away every confidence in yourself, in whatever fashion it appears.

One more stroke of renunciation remains. Down must go the gods of our former estate. He that would come to the true God must have done with the false gods. If we have been living for any objects save the glory of God, we must away with those objects. If we have been paying religious reverence to anything save God himself, we must away with it. "Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." It seems strange that men should ever have said such a thing; but since they have said it, they must say it no more. God help every one here now to make a complete renunciation of everything which usurps the place of God! Whether it be an object of trust, reverence, desire, fear, or love, we must cast it down, and worship God alone. He saith to us, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." In the work of salvation the work of our hands is out of court, and God alone must be glorified.

The words close with one sentence of faith. My time fails me, and I

cannot dwell upon it at length. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Dear orphan boys below me, here is a word for you. Remember it, and love God because it is true: "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." God is the Father of the fatherless. Now, if God receives the fatherless, who have none to take care of them, and he becomes their God, we may be encouraged to come to him, even in the most forlorn condition. Does God keep open house for those who have no home? Then I will go to him. Does God take up those whom father and mother have forsaken? Then will I put my trust in him. I saw on a board this morning words announcing that an asylum was to be built on a plot of ground, for a class of persons who are described in three terrible words—HELPLESS, HOMELESS, HOPELESS. These are the kind of people that God receives: to them he gives his mercy. Are you helpless? He will help you. Are you homeless? He will house you. Are you hopeless? He is the hope of those who have no other confidence. Come, then, to him at once!

IV. This last word should induce sinners to return to God, and then we shall see before our eyes THE COMING BY THIS HELP. You that are great, and good, and full, and inwardly strong, you will not return to God. You that are nothing, and less than nothing, you that are fallen in your own sight, you that cannot help yourselves, you are likely to come: I pray that you may come at once. I have set before you an open door that no man can shut: will you not enter? Come to my Lord this day. Come now and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." May God help us to be doing this, rather than talking and hearing about it!

Let us come to God, for he will help us to come. You see he helps us by giving us words; but as he never helps men to be hypocrites, he will also help us to feel the words. He who gives us words to speak, will give us grace to speak them sincerely. Are not these words the true desires of your hearts? On your knees, when you get home, pour them out before God. In your pews while you are here, present these petitions in silence. Say, "Take away all iniquity, receive me graciously: so will I render the calves of my lips." The Lord's help will suffice, not only to teach us the manner of praying, but to give us the desire, the faith, the love, the resolve which make up this prayer.

Let your coming to the Lord now be decisive and actual. You have meant

it for years, and yet nothing has been done. Some of you have been hearing me preach now for a quarter of a century. Think of that! I met, the other day, with one who heard me at New Park Street, and at last he has come out to confess his Lord after more than thirty years. Slow work this! Better late than never. Come, my friends, are you going to stick in the mud for ever? Will you lie outside the wicket-gate throughout another year? God grant you may cry now, "Take away all iniquity: receive us graciously"!

Oh, that this might be the universal Cry of all my audience at this hour! The text is not written as for one, but for many. "Take with you words." The first verse is in the singular, and speaks of "thou"; but the second is in the plural, and speaks of "us." It is not, "Take away all iniquity; receive me graciously"; but, "receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us." Come along with you, then, the whole company of you who desire salvation. I call upon you who are sitting in this first gallery all around me! I call upon the dense mass in the area below! I call upon you who sit in the upper gallery! Oh, that we might all join in one common return unto the Lord! Let us call this day "The day of the joyous return." "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Who says "No"? What? Will you choose your own destruction, and persevere in the way of sin? I hope you will all say, "Ay," and that the Holy Spirit will lead you to carry out the resolve.

The special call is to the fallen: "Return; for thou hast fallen." Come, ye fallen ones, come and welcome. It is to the wandering for to such is the command appropriate which saith, "Return."

"Return, O wanderer, to thy home  
Thy Father calls for thee;  
No longer now an exile roam  
In guilt and misery;  
Return! Return.

The call is to the forlorn and destitute: "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." You that are fallen, far off, fatherless, and forlorn, come at once to God in Jesus Christ. Come now! Come! Come! Come! See how the Lord



meets you! Read the fourth verse; I could almost kiss the lines as I gaze on them: "I will heal their backsliding": come, sick one, here is healing for you. "I will love them freely": come, unlovely one, here is love for you. "Mine anger is turned away from him": though you have felt his wrath burning in your souls, it is gone for ever. "I will be as the dew unto Israel": before this service is quite over, some drops of dew shall have fallen upon your parched spirits, and shall sparkle in your bosoms like diamonds glittering in the sun.

These later verses speak as if the gracious work were done: they describe a scene most bright, full of color, and rich with perfume, as a fact accomplished. The chapter begins with an exhortation, but it runs into description, as if the people really had come, and God had met them, and had blessed them exceedingly. Lord, make it so at this very moment! May it not be merely that I have preached, and that these people have listened most encouragingly, but may men be really saved through grace! The Lord's people have been praying all the while, "God bless thy servant"; and now I shall look for fruit from this first of March. The Lord grant that this March may come in like a lamb to many of you! May the lion go out of you! May a heavenly wind spring up and blow across this city, and bring soulhealing with it! In this hope, I bid you again "Come to Jesus." Jesus says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The Lord gather you all into the arms of his grace, for his Son's sake! Amen.

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## **The Judgement Seat Of God**

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. - Romans 14:10-12

No doubt there is an error in our version, for where in the tenth verse we read, "The judgment seat of Christ," it should be "The judgment seat of God." I suppose the word "Christ" slipped into certain manuscripts because Paul had been speaking of Christ, and it was thought to be natural that he should continue to use the same name. Paul did not say "Christ," but "God," but by that word he meant the same person. Paul knew that Christ is God, and when he was speaking of Christ it was no deviation from the subject for him to speak concerning him under the title of "God." It was necessary here for him to use the word "God," because he was about to quote from the Old Testament Scripture a passage which speaks concerning the sovereignty of God, which is to be acknowledged and confessed by all mankind. The passage runs, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." I beg you to notice how strongly this passage goes to prove the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; because the whole run of the passage is concerning Christ. "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." And then the apostle immediately, without any break in the sense whatever, speaks of God, because he was speaking of the same person, and he quotes a passage which relates to God himself, and uses it as relating to Christ. It does, indeed, relate to our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is "very God of very God," and God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. In another place Paul most distinctly declares that it is Christ who is to judge the world. Look into the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the ninth verse, "We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Therefore, though the reading should be God,

the sense is "Christ."

It would have been a most important point with Paul to draw a distinction between Christ and God if there had been any doubt as to his divinity. It would have been a most necessary thing to prevent us from idolizing a mere man. But here, so far from taking any pains to make such distinction between Christ Jesus and God, as would have been needful if he were not God, he interchanges the two words. He speaks of them in the same breath, for they are one. "The Lord shall judge his people," and it is "the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1) "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Revelation 1:7). This judgment by Christ is by our apostle proved from an Old Testament prophecy which certainly refers to Jehovah himself. Read Isaiah 45:23, and learn from it that our Lord Jesus is Jehovah, and let us joyfully adore him as our Savior and God, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

The doctrine of eternal judgment, upon which I shall speak this morning, is introduced to us for a certain reason. Paul saw among Christians a much too common habit of judging one another. I suppose if Paul were to come among us now he would not see any remarkable difference upon that point. Just then the bulk of the converts were Jews, and as such, they brought into the Christian Church their former religious habits; those men who had devoutly kept the ceremonial law felt as if they would violate their consciences if they did not continue to keep its more prominent precepts; and though they gave up certain of its observances which were evidently abolished by the gospel, they kept up others, such as special days for religious fasts and feasts. Many true but weak believers were very scrupulous about what they should eat, thinking to keep up the legal distinction between meats clean and unclean. At the same time the church had in her midst men who said, and said correctly, "The coming of Christ has done away with the old dispensation; these holy days are all types and shadows whose substance is in Christ. Has not the Lord shown to Peter, who is the minister of the circumcision, that henceforth nothing is common or unclean?" The men of strong faith blamed their weaker brethren for being superstitious, and by their superstition bringing a yoke

of bondage upon themselves. "No," replied the weaker sort, "we were not superstitious; we are conscientious, while you go much too far in your liberty, and cause us to stumble." Thus while the strong looked down upon the weak, almost doubting whether they could have come into the liberty of Christ at all, the weak condemned the strong, almost charging them with turning their liberty into licence. They were both wrong, for they were judging one another. Paul, who was himself most strongly opposed to the Judaizing party, and in every respect came out clear and straight upon the bold lines of Christian liberty, was, nevertheless, so actuated by the spirit of his Master that he was ready to be all things to all men, and seeing grave peril of dissension where all should be love, he rushed into the breach, and he said, "Do not judge one another: what have ye to do with judging? There is a judgment yet to come." He mentioned the future judgment on purpose that by its powerful influence upon their minds they might be taken away from the frivolous amusement, for it does not come to much more -- the frivolous amusement, the mischievous meddlesomeness of judging one another, when already the judge is at the door.

Let us linger a minute over this practical point, and see how Paul rebukes the spirit of judging one another. First, he says in effect that it is unnatural. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? He whom thou judgest or despisest is thy brother. Thou hast called the weak one superstitious, but he is thy brother: thou hast called the strong man licentious because he enjoys his liberty; but he is thy brother." If we must needs judge, certainly it should not be those who are linked to us by the ties of spiritual relationship. Are not all believers one family in Christ? Wherever the root of the matter is to be found there exists an overwhelming argument for undying unity. Why, then, wilt thou take thy brother by the throat and drag him before thy judgment seat, and make him answer to thee, brother to brother, and then condemn him? Shall a brother condemn a brother? When the outside world censures Christians we understand it, for they hated our Master, and they will hate us; but inside the charmed circle of Christian communion there should be esteem for one another, a defending of each other: we should be anxious rather to apologise for infirmity than to discover imperfection. Far be it from us to find flaws where they do not

exist. Would to God it were so, that perfect love cast out all suspicion of one another, and that we had confidence in each other, because Christ our Lord will hold up our brethren, even as he has upheld ourselves.

This judging among Christians, then, is, first of all, unnatural; and, next, it is an anticipation of the judgment day. There is to come a day when men shall be judged -- judged after a better fashion than you and I can judge. How dare we, then, travesty God's great assize by ourselves mounting the throne and pretending to rehearse the solemn transactions of that tremendous hour? Judgment will come soon enough: may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day. My brother, why needest thou hurry it on by thyself ascending the throne? Cannot God do his own work? "Vengeance is mine: I will repay," saith the Lord. We need not spend our time in perpetually trying to discern between the tares and the wheat. The tares to which the Savior referred in that parable were so like the wheat that men could not tell which was which, and his command was, "Let both grow together until the harvest." At harvest time he will give the reapers directions for separating between the real wheat and that which was a mockery of it. As for us, the saints shall judge the world, but for the present the order is "judge nothing before the time." We can separate between the outwardly vile and the outwardly pure, by marks which God has given us, such as these, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and "If any man love not the Lord Jesus let him be anathema." As guardians of the church's honor we are bound to use these rules; but between brother and brother, differing on minor points, between Christian and Christian, each one obeying his conscience, we are not to exercise mutual condemnation. Come hither, brethren! Here is work enough for you all in dragging the great net to shore. What are you at there? Sitting down and trying to put the goad into vessels, and cast the bad away? That work may be left till later on; but now let us drag the net to shore. Haul away, brethren, with all your might! By-and-by shall come the time for reckoning up the results of our fishery, and separating between the seeming and the true.

Moreover, we not only anticipate the judgment, but we impudently intrude ourselves into the office and prerogative of Christ when we condemn the saints. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ:" that, is the true throne of judgment. How many times I have had to appear before the judgment seat of my fellow-men! Sometimes one's motives are impugned; another time one's actions, or mode of speech, or way of managing church affairs. Well, it is a small matter for us to appear before men's judgment seat: we may very well refuse to put in an appearance at all, for man is not our master, and we are not bound to answer to his summons. Why is it that so many brethren seem to think that they are masters, and have a right to judge the Lord's servants? I know some Christians who not only form judgments, and very severe judgments, upon all that are round about them as to the facts that come under their notice; but they, also, without any facts whatever, conceive notions concerning persons whom they have never seen, and are full of obstinate prejudices against them. Many twist words into meanings which they were never intended to mean by the person who used them; and others, even without so much as the excuse of misunderstanding words, sit down and imagine evil against their brethren. They dream that they are slighted, and then hard judgments follow. Once imagine that you are badly treated, and then you will think that everything is done out of spite to you, and the next thing is to think spitefully of others. There are persons about who are liberally gifted in the line of gossip who by their talk would make you think that you were living in Sodom and Gomorrah, if not in Tophet. You are made to fear that everyone you have trusted is a vile deceiver, that every man who is zealous is mercenary, that every minister is preaching in public what he secretly disbelieves, that every generous subscriber only gives out of pride; that, in fact, you are living in a place where the race of Judas Iscariot is to be seen, reproduced ten thousand times over. One goes to bed and cannot sleep after talking to these tale-bearers. The consolation is that there is no truth in their wonderful discoveries. These slanderous statements are a base burlesque of judgment, and nothing more. Why are they thought so much of? After you and I have done our best to hold our mimic court and have summoned this man and that man before us, what is it at its best but child's play, and at its worst a violent usurpation of the rights of Christ Jesus, who alone reigns as lawgiver in the midst of his church to-day, and who will sit as judge on the clouds of heaven by-and-by to judge the world in righteousness?

The apostle argues strongly against this evil spirit of censoriousness in the Christian Church; and to give a knock-down blow to it he says, "It is all needless; you need not judge one another, for both your brother and yourself will stand before the judgment seat of God. There is no need of your condemnation, for if any man be worthless the Judge will condemn him: you may not interfere with the business of the great Supreme; he will manage the affairs of men far better than you can." Yet more, your judgment is unprofitable: you would spend your time much more profitably if you would recollect that you also who can be so exact and severe in pointing out this fault here, and the other fault there, will be yourselves examined by an unerring eye. Your own account books have to be sent in, and to be examined item by item; therefore look well to your own matters. If you were watching your own heart, out of which are the issues of life; if you were watching your own tongue and bridling it, and so mastering your whole body; if you were watching your own opportunities for usefulness; if you were observing your Master's eye as a handmaiden looks to her mistress, you would be doing something that would pay you far better than censuring others, something much more to the glory of God, much more to the gain of the church, much more to the comfort of your own soul. So the apostle winds up by saying, according to the most forcible rendering of the original, "We must each one of us give an account of himself to God."

Brothers, sisters, I bring these truths before you because they are meant for brothers in Christ, and not so much for the outside world. It is to those who have faith, and are in the family of love, that the word of warning is given that we do not judge, and to us the argument is addressed that we shall each one give an account for himself to God. I do not know that you specially need a warning against unkind judgments, but I know that you may need it, even as other churches have done. I am very thankful that we have not been much disturbed with this great evil; but, still, it does come up among all Christian people more or less. I read the other day in an interesting pamphlet upon the Apocalypse, a note which furnishes me with an illustration: the writer endeavors to explain why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the Book of Revelation as having its chosen twelve thousand. All the other tribes are there, but Dan is missed, and Manasseh is put in his place. The author says it is because

Dan signifies "judgment," or "one that judges." He says: "These judges of evil thoughts have been sad troublers in Israel in all ages; not fearing to judge their brother and set at nought their brother, they have judged everything and everybody but themselves. All who have not pronounced their Shibboleth, nor seen eye to eye with them, have been adjudged as heretics, not to be tolerated, but tabooed to the extent of their ability. In vain for them has it been written, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Like their great ancestor of this tribe, they deal in foxes and firebrands, and too often set on fire their neighbors' standing corn, an act we have never been able to commend even in Samson. This predilection for foxes and firebrands has unhappily developed in the seed of Dan to this day. And so in the place of Dan, The Judge, we get Manasses, One who forgets, one who, though cast off by his brethren, forgets and forgives their injuries, and we account it a good exchange; and in the New Jerusalem home, where failure will be no more, Dan, 'a serpent in the way,' or 'a lion's whelp,' would be as much out of work as out of place." If any of the Danites hear or read this let them pray for grace to change their habits and natures.

I. Now I come to the doctrine itself, the solemn doctrine of judgment to come. May God make it impressive to our hearts. Our thoughts are now directed to the future judgment, and we notice concerning it, first, that **THE JUDGMENT WILL BE UNIVERSAL**: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." There will come a judgment, then, for all classes of persons; for the strong brother who with his knowledge of Christian liberty went as far as he should, perhaps further than he ought to have gone. He judged himself to be right in the matter, but he must stand before the judgment seat of Christ about it. There will also be a judgment for the weak brother. He who was so scrupulous and precise ought not to be censuring the other man who felt free in his conscience, for he will himself stand before the judgment seat of God. No elevation in piety will exclude us from that last solemn test, and no weakness will serve as an excuse. The man of one and the man of ten talents must alike be reckoned with. Weak Christians are exempted



from many trials by the gentleness of God, but not from the ultimate trial, for we shall each one of us give an account of himself unto God: the strong and the weak. The men who bore office in the church will have to answer for it, even as saith the apostle Paul, in Hebrews 13:17, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account." And again "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful: he that judgeth me is the Lord." I could on bended knees ask your pity for myself, having to minister to so large a congregation, and with so much larger a congregation outside to whom I weekly minister through the press. Ah me, who is sufficient for these things? Who shall be found faithful in such a position? I think all ministers might with tears in their eyes cry to you, "Brethren, pray for us." It will be the height of my ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. If, like George Fox, I can say in dying, "I am clear, I am clear," that were almost all the heaven could wish for. Oh to discharge one's ministry aright, and to be able to render an account like that of Paul, who said, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." This is my soul's longing.

Yes, but not only will ministers, and deacons, and elders, and persons who had high standing in the church have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but so will the most obscure of the members of the church, and those secret ones who never dared to take up membership at all. You will not be able to hide away for ever. The man with the one talent must be summoned before his Lord as certainly as the man with ten, and of each one a reckoning shall be taken. In our Lord's parables it is ever the King's own servants that are called before him. "The lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Our Master will say to each one of his servants, "Give an account of thy stewardship." "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked," "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God." I have not time or space to enter into the differences of that judgment as it regards the righteous and the wicked, but I confine myself to the one fact that all mankind will be judged, according to the word of the Lord in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse: "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are

contentions, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God."

What a motley throng will gather at that assize, of all nations and peoples and tongues! Persons of all ages, too. You boys and girls, and you who have lived through a long life. Kings and princes will be there to give in their weighty account, and senators and judges to answer to, their Judge; and then the multitude of the poor and needy, and those that live neglecting God, and forgetful of their souls, -- they must all be there. It is a universal judgment. John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Both sheep and goats shall gather before the great dividing shepherd: the wise and foolish virgins shall both hear the midnight cry; the house on the rock and the house on the sand shall alike be tested by the last tremendous storm; tares and wheat alike shall ripen; bad fish and good shall be sorted out from the net, while the multitudes outside, the nations that knew not God, shall all without exception hear with trembling the summons to the dread tribunal.

Saints and sinners too, only on what a different footing, are all to be judged out of the books, and out of the Book of Life. Thus saith the word of the Lord, -- "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." To the, saints the judgment of the things done shall be according to righteousness, for these things shall be taken in evidence that they were indeed reconciled to God. The Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." And then shall come the evidence: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink," and so on. These fruits shall be the evidence that they were in Christ, the evidence of their being justified by faith; while on the other hand the sour and bitter fruit of the ungodly shall be an evidence that they were not planted of the Lord: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye did not minister unto me." We need, have no fear of the judgment

to come when we know that we are in Christ, for who fears to enter a just court when he knows that by the highest authority he has already been cleared? How complete the Christian's safety! For there will be no accuser. So bright will be the righteousness of a saint through faith that no accuser will appear. Hark, the herald gives forth the challenge! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" All through the court it rings; and God is there -- the faithful and all-seeing God. Does he lay anything to their charge? Far from it. "It is God that justifieth." Outside the court the voice demands, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" -- They hear it in heaven, and angels who have watched the race of every believer, and seen how he has been running towards the goal, are silent as to any accusation. The challenge is heard in hell, where devils hate the godly, but they dare not forge a lie against them. Happy he who can also say, "There is laid up for me a crown of, righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." Mark, he will give it as Judge, and on that day; how say some among you that there is no judgment for the saints? Who, then, need fear to enter the court when every accusation is silenced and a reward is expected?

But still you say that the believer has sinned. Yes, but that sin has been forgiven, and he has a righteousness with which to answer the law. I will show you ere I have done how the Christian has been judged, condemned, and tried, and in reference to him the essence of the judgment is past already, so that there can be no condemnation. Hence that second challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" The Judge is the only one who can condemn, and we are sure that he will not, for "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that has risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." Tremble not, therefore, at the doctrine that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but pray that, as John puts it, "we may have boldness in the day of judgment," because as Jude saith, the Lord Jesus "is able to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy."

Not a single person shall escape the judgment. There shall be no omission from the calendar; every being of the race of Adam shall answer for himself, "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man" must see

the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. We shall have to put in an appearance as men do in court when they are subpoenaed to attend. The word of Jesus is, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Ah, how unwillingly will rebels come before that throne! Pharaoh! you must see a greater than Moses. Herod! you must see the young child upon his throne. Judas! you hanged yourself to escape the judgment of your conscience, but by no means can you escape the judgment of your God. Though four thousand years have elapsed since men died, and their bodies may have melted quite away, yet when the trumpet ringeth out clear and shrill their bodies shall live again, and they must all come forth, each one to answer for himself at that grand assize before the Judge of all the earth, who must do right with each of them. Let us, then, bow before the solemn truth that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

The second truth, which we must make as prominent as ever we can, is that **IT WILL BE A PERSONAL JUDGMENT** for each one. This is the pith of what the apostle is saying: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The judgment will not proceed in a rough, indiscriminate manner, as upon a race or tribe, but each man will have to stand apart, and the account reckoned will not be of a family or a band, but of each individually for himself. Note this carefully, O men: We shall have to give an account each man for his own actions, for his own thought, for his own words, for his own intention; nay, not only of that, but of himself. We shall each man have to give account of the state of his own heart, of the condition of his mind before God, whether he repented, whether he believed, whether he loved God, whether he was zealous, whether he was truthful, whether he was faithful. If it only dealt with actions, words, and thoughts, the account would be solemn enough, but we must each one give an account of himself, of what he was as well as what he did, of what was in his heart as well as of that which came out of it in his deeds. Oh, what a trial will this be!

We shall then have to give an account of our judgments of others. We shall not have to answer for what they did, but for our daring to judge and condemn them. Did you ever think of this, you that judge others, that you

are laying down the standard by which you will have to be judged yourselves? I generally find that those who are most severe towards others need and often expect great leniency towards themselves, but it will not be so at the last, for thus it is written, "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." How easy it will be to judge the faultfinding at the judgment day. The Judge will only have to say, "They have already condemned themselves: they have condemned their own faults as they saw them in others; they have used the sharpest judgments against less faults than their own; out of their own mouth let them take the sentence and depart." You will have to render no account for other people, but you will have to render an account of yourself and how you judged other people. The last account will be wholly personal, therefore see ye to it.

That account will, according, to my text, have connected with it full submission. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me." You may to-day say, "I do not care about God": you will have to care about him. As truly as God lives you will have to bow. You may say, "What matters it to me what Scripture says?" It will matter to you, as certainly as God lives, which is putting it on the most solemn certainty that can be. God has taken an oath about it, and declares that you shall own his away. You had better bend at once, for you must either break or bow. God means to have his sovereignty acknowledged by all mankind. Hath he not made us? Do we not owe everything to him? He will not have his crown rights denied for ever. He is Lord of all, and he swears by himself that every knee shall bow and own it. You will have to come to it, my friend. Next, you will have to confess; so the text saith. By this I understand that you will have to acknowledge that God is your Lord and Master, and had a right to your services; that you ought to have kept his law; that in sinning you have done unrighteously and acted as you ought not to have acted. That confession you will not be able to withhold. Oh how the wicked will bite their tongues when they have to acknowledge their folly and wrong-doing; but it will have to come out of every man's mouth. When God pronounces sentence, and the ungodly are sent down to hell, they will give their own assent to his righteousness in condemning and punishing them. The verdict of the castaways in hell is that they deserve it; and this is, indeed, the hell of hell, that they cannot deny the justice of those pains which come upon them as the result of their disobedience.

God will see to it that we shall justify him either in life or in death, by confessing that he is righteous.

I appeal to you, my dear hearers, whether you are ready with your account which you will have to render to God: have you kept one at all? Sometimes when men appear before a court they plead that they have no books, and it is always a bad sign. You know what the judge thinks of him. Can you dare to examine yourself, and answer questions? Can you give an account of your stewardship? Have you kept it correctly, or have you credited yourself with large things where you ought to have debited yourself? Your fraud will be discovered, for the great Accountant will read it through, and will detect an error in a single moment. Is your account kept correctly, and are you ready to render it in at this moment? Christian brother, you and I might hold back a little before we could say "Ay" to that, and yet I trust we could say it, for we know ourselves to be accepted with God. As for those who have scarcely thought of their God, their Maker, what will they do? what can they do, when each one of them must give an account before God, and they have no account except that which will condemn them for having wasted their Master's goods, for having defrauded the eternal God of that which was justly his due, and having spent upon their lusts that which ought to have been dedicated to their God? This judgment, then, will be personal. You cannot put your godly mother into the scale with yourself; you cannot associate your dear old father with yourself in judgment. O children, you cannot be judged by your ancestry, but by your acts; for it is written: "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Oh, see ye to it: God help you to do so.

III. Thirdly, THIS JUDGMENT WILL BE DIVINE. "We shall stand before the judgment seat of God." The judgment will be universal, personal, divine; and because it is the judgment seat of God, it will be a judgment according to truth. God will make no mistakes: he will not impute any wrong to us undeservedly, and he will not give us credit for right because we bore the appearance of it. He will search to the very core and essence of the matter. Are you ready to be tried as by fire? Trial by fire is but a scant figure of trial by the searching eye of the Most High God. He will test us by the supreme standard of perfect justice. We judge by, one

another, and if we areas liberal, or as prayerful, or as gracious as others we consider that it is all right. But the balances of the sanctuary are far more exact. It will not be you in one scale and I in another; and if I am as gracious as you, we shall both be accepted. Ah, no; there is another standard than that, the standard of truth and grace in the heart, and real love to God, and conformity to the image of Christ. Judge ye whether ye can stand that test. That judgment will be most searching. "The Lord pondereth the hearts." He will not judge after the sight of the eyes, but search out our secrets. Then shall the foundations be tested, then shall all that the man rested on and stayed himself upon be tried, whether it be the Rock of Ages or whether it be the mere sand of presumption. There will be no such trial day before or after as that day of the assize of God. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." That judgment will be impartial. You and I are always partial in weighing ourselves. We generally give the most lenient verdict except when we happen to be despondent in spirit, and then we are morbidly sensitive. But God will judge us without partiality. Rich friend, that diamond ring will answer no purpose in that day: my ladies, those fine garments will make no impression in that court. My learned friend, that handle to your name will be of no avail; and you, fine sir, with your knighthood, earldom, or dukedom, will be none the better off; for coronets, and even imperial crowns all go for nothing before the throne of God, who is no respecter of persons.

This judgment will be final. The sentence of the Supreme Court will settle all. Doth he say, "Depart ye cursed"? They can do no other. Doth he say, "Come ye blessed"? Oh, how blessed to enter into the eternal home. May none of you ever hear him say, "Depart"; for he will never reverse the sentence: you will have to depart, and keep on departing, going further, farther, and further away from him who is hope and life and joy. There is no hope held out that he shall ever say, "Come back again, ye cursed"; but no, "Depart into everlasting fire in hell." God save us from such an ultimatum as that.

At the last judgment certain sins will prove to be of heavy weight. I will do no more than mention a few of them. There is one that is never treated

leniently by any judge; it is contempt of court. God will speedily condemn those who have despised his authority. Are there any such here who have despised the Lord their God, and set at nought his counsel? They seldom or never think of God or his law, or even regard his day; but they say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice?" Beware, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for the Lord our God is jealous of his great name, and he hears the voices of them that scoff at him.

Rejection of mercy is also a high crime and misdemeanor. The Judge who shall sit upon the throne has already presented mercy to all of you, and the unconverted among you have refused it. Surely they deserve the deepest hell who slight eternal love. If the Judge can say, "The prisoner at the bar has had the glad tidings of forgiveness presented to him, but has refused to listen to the gracious message, or having listened, and being almost persuaded, he nevertheless put it off to a more convenient time, and here he stands a trampler on the blood of Christ." This will be the fiercest heat of the eternal burnings. Ye refused mercy; ye put from you eternal life, and counted yourselves unworthy of salvation. This sin will be a millstone about the soul for ever.

Then there is the crime of wilful, deliberate sinning, with intent so to do. Have any of you been guilty of this fact, and have you not fled to Christ? Did you choose sin, knowing it to be sin? Are you still choosing sin, and living in it against the voice of conscience? Ah, believe me, sin repeated, sin continued in will bring swift and sure destruction. These sins go beforehand to judgment, and there lodge solemn complaints against the guilty. I cannot close amid these clouds. Break forth, O sun! Turn to the passage from which Paul quoted; for there you shall hear a sweet gospel word which may fitly end my discourse. Paul's mind was at Isaiah 45:23. He did not quote the words literally, but he gave the sense. Here is the passage: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Now, what words do you think come before these? You shall look for yourselves. I will wait while you open your Bibles. Do you see the blessed lines? God declares that every man shall bow before him, and confess his authority; but what word of exhortation stands before that oath of his? I wish I could make it flash out at this



moment in letters of light right round the building, -- "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." That mercy-message stands side by side with the judgment prophecy. Come, then, dear hearts, you that are guilty, come and bow before your God ere he ascends the throne of judgment. Come and do willingly what you will have to do by- and-by unwillingly. Come now, and confess that he is judge and ought to be honored; confess that he is king and ought to be obeyed; confess that you are his subject and are bound to serve him; confess that you have done wrong, grievous wrong, in having broken his law; come and make out your own indictment; come and be your own accuser; come and condemn yourself; come and bow your head when God's law condemns you; come and own that you deserve divine wrath, and submit yourself to the Lord's justice.

Then give another look to your God and Savior and say, "My Lord, I know thou art my Judge; but thou art also my Redeemer: I accept the place of condemnation, but I see that thou didst stand there in my behalf, the just for the unjust, my substitute, bearing my sin and punishment. Blessed Lord, I accept thee as my substitute; I yield myself up to thee; I stand now tried, condemned, punished, dead, raised again in thee, and therefore pardoned, acquitted, justified, beloved, accepted for Jesus' sake." Oh, is not this a blessed ending to a solemn sermon?

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
While through thy blood absolved I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

God bless you. Amen.

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## **The Judgment Upon Zacharias**

Thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. - Luke 1:20

Unbelief is everywhere a great sin, and a grievous mistake. Unbelief has proved the ruin of those countless multitudes who, having heard the gospel, rejected it, died in their sins, have been consigned to the place of torment, and await the fiercer judgment of the last day. I might ask the question concerning this innumerable host, "Who slew all these?" The answer would be, "Unbelief." And when unbelief comes into the Christian's heart, as it does at times—for the truest believer has his times of doubt; even Abraham, the father of the faithful, sometimes had his misgivings—that unbelief does not assail his thoughts without withering his joys, and impairing his energies. There is nothing in the world that costs a saint so dear as doubt. If he disbelieve his God, he most assuredly robs himself of comfort, deprives himself of strength, and does himself a real injury. The case of Zacharias may be a lesson to the Lord's people. It is to them I am going to speak: Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. In reviewing these, we mark:—

## I. THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF ZACHARIAS.

Here we cannot fail to discover some profitable lesson. He was undoubtedly a believer. He is said, in the sixth verse, to have been righteous before God. No man ever obtained such a reputation except by faith. "The just shall live by faith." No other righteousness than that which is faith is of any esteem in God's account. Such was the righteousness of Abraham, and such was the righteousness of all the saints before the advent of our Redeemer. Such, too, has been the standard ever since. Zacharias evidently was a real believer. Yet for all that, when the angel appeared to him, and God gave him the promise of a son, he was amazed, bewildered, incredulous, and could not credit, but only question the announcement. "How shall I know that these things shall be?"

Nor was he merely a genuine believer; he was well instructed and greatly

enlightened, for he was a priest, and, as a priest considered, he was righteous before God, and blameless, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That he was well instructed in the Word of God is undeniable. He could not otherwise have discharged his duty, for the priest's lips must keep knowledge, and he must teach men. Being proficient in the one, and competent for the other, ignorance offered him no excuse. Moreover, as a man of years, he was probably to be classed among the experienced saints of his time. He had borne the burden and heat of the day, and received proof upon proof of the abundant mercy of God. Now mark this. For any of us to doubt, who have been justified by faith is a shameful delinquency. For those to doubt who have, in addition to their first convictions, a thousand confirmations of the truth they have embraced, who are acquainted with the covenant and its rich inventory of promises, who are deeply taught in the things of God—for such to doubt involves a higher degree of guilt. I do not think that had Zacharias been a mere babe in grace, or an inexperienced stripling, his unbelief would have met with so stern a rebuke. It was because he was a venerable priest, one thoroughly schooled in sacred truth, a man who for many years instructed the people of Israel in the oracles of God, that it became a crying evil for him to say, "Whereby shall I know this?" when the angel told him of his prayer being heard, and of the manner of answer the Lord would vouchsafe him.

The high office that Zacharias held as a priest caused him to be looked up to. Hence his conduct was more narrowly watched, and his example had a wider influence. On a similar account we have need, all of us in our several spheres, to consider the effect of our actions upon others. The higher a man's position, the greater his responsibility; and in the event of any delinquency, the graver his offense. For you to disbelieve, my dear brother, who are at the head of a household, is worse than a personal infirmity; it is a violation of duty to your family. And you, dear friend, who preach the gospel, for you to disbelieve, who are looked upon by many as an advanced Christian, as a mature saint whose example may be safely followed by those who listen to your counsels—this is a great and a crying evil, whereby you dishonour the Lord. I pray God that your conscience may be tenderly sensitive, and that you may be aroused to a sense of the dishonour you bring to him by your faithlessness.

How peculiarly favoured Zacharias was! An angel of the Lord appeared unto him. Not to any of the other priests, when they were offering incense, did such a heavenly visitor come. And what welcome tidings he brought! It was a wonderful message that he was to be the father of a child great in the sight of the Lord, one who should minister in the spirit and power of Elias, and become the forerunner of the Messiah. This surely was a signal instance of Divine favour. And mark this, beloved, our God is very jealous of those whom he highly favours. You cannot have privileged communications from the Lord, or be admitted into close communion with him, without finding that he is a jealous God. The nearer we draw to him, the more hallowed our sense of his presence will be. But to doubt his Word, or question the fulfillment of his promise when he speaks kindly to us, must incur his censure. I speak after the manner of men; we do not expect from a stranger the esteem which we ought to merit from our servants. But our friends, who know us better than servants, ought to trust us more implicitly. And yet beyond common friendship in the near relation and tender attachment of a wife to her husband, the most unqualified confidence should be reposed. Even so, my brethren, if you and I have ever been permitted to lean our heads on Jesus' bosom; if we have sat down at his banquets, and his banner over us has been love; if we have been separated from the world by peculiar fellowship with Christ, and have had choice promises given us, we cannot, like Zacharias, ask, "Whereby shall I know" without grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and bringing upon ourselves some sad chastisement as the result.

What soothing comfort had just been administered to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord! Was not the manner of the salutation fitted to allay terror, and inspire him with trust? The troubled thoughts that perplexed him, and the fear that fell upon him when the angel appeared standing at the right hand of the altar, met with no rebuke. If it was natural that so unwonted a vision should startle him, there was a gentle sympathising tenderness in the angel's address that might well have stilled the throbbings of his heart. "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." And so is it with us when the consolations of God have been neither few nor small, and when his good will towards us has been pointedly expressed, does it not make doubt and questioning more inexcusable? Do

we not thereby aggravate the sin? Some of us have lived in the very bosom of comfort. Precious promises have been brought home to our souls; we have eaten of the marrow and the fatness; we have drunk the wines on the lees well refined. We are no strangers to the blessing of his eternal and unchanging love, or to the light of his countenance, which they prove who find grace in his eyes. Oh! if we begin to doubt after these discriminating love tokens, what apology can we offer? How can we hope to escape from the chastening rod?

Moreover, the misgivings that Zacharias betrayed relate to the very subject on which his supplications were offered. It was in response to his own petition that the angel said to him, "Thy prayer is heard." I marvel at his faith that he should persevere in prayer for a boon which seemed, at his own and his wife's age, to have been out of the course of nature, and beyond the domain of hope, but I marvel a great deal more that, when the answer came to that very prayer, Zacharias could not believe it. So full often is it with us; nothing would surprise some of us more than to receive an answer to some of our prayers. Though we believe in the efficacy of prayer, at times we believe so feebly that when the answer comes, as come it does, we are astounded and filled with amazement. We can scarcely think of it as a purpose of God, it seems rather to us like a happy coincidence. Surely this adds greatly to the sin of unbelief. If we have been asking for mercy without expecting it, and pleading promises while harbouring mistrust, every prayer we have offered has been only a repetition of our secret unbelief; and it is God's faithfulness that brings our inconsistency to light.

One other reflection is suggested by the narrative. Zacharias appears to have staggered at a promise which others, whom we might well imagine to have been weaker in faith than himself, implicitly believed. The veteran falters where a babe in grace might have taken courage. And is it not always a scandal if any of us who have been conspicuously favoured of God are ready to halt, while our feebler brethren and sisters are animated and encouraged? No dubious thought seems to have crossed the mind of Elizabeth, no incredulous expression fell from her lips. She said, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me."

This case was the very opposite of that of Abraham and Sarah. There

Abraham believed, but Sarah doubted; here the wife believes in the face of her husband's scruples. In like manner, Mary, that humble village maiden, accepts with simple faith the high and holy salutation with which she was greeted. She just basks a natural question, and that being answered, she replies, "Be it unto me, according to thy Word." Her surprise was soon exchanged for joy, and by-and-by she begins to sing with a loud voice, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Not a little remarkable is this opening chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Woman, who had been in the background through long preceding generations, seems suddenly to take a foremost place. Zacharias and Joseph stand in doubt, while Elizabeth and Mary exultingly believe. And who knows but I may be addressing some poor woman here who, in the depth of affliction, bodily suffering, and poverty, nevertheless rejoices in God with all her heart? But without a doubt, I am now speaking to many a man who is vexed with trifling cares, murmurs bitterly because of petty annoyances, and distrusts his God when clouds come over the sky so that he sees not his way. Shame on our unbelief. Think shame of yourselves because of it, I pray you. Never does it disgrace us more than when the weaklings of the Lord's family put us to the blush by the simplicity and sincerity of their faith. The character and position of Zacharias may furnish a striking moral, but I do urgently entreat each Christian to point the keen edge of criticism at himself, and consider how much he is personally to blame for his own unbelief. Let us now proceed to investigate:—

## II. THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS.

Whence this perilous wavering at that privileged hour His fault was that he looked at the difficulty. "I am an old man," said he, "and my wife is well stricken in years." And while he looked at the difficulty he would fain suggest a remedy; he wanted a sign. "Whereby shall I know this?" It was not enough for him that God had said so; he wanted some collateral evidence to guarantee the truth of the word of the Lord. This is a very common fault among really good people. They look for a sign. I have often trembled in my own soul when I have felt an inclination thus to tempt the Lord by looking for some minute circumstance to verify a magnificent promise. When I have thought, "Hereby shall I know

whether he does hear prayer or not," a cold shiver has passed over me, the shudder has gone through my soul that ever I should think of challenging the truth of God's word, when the fact is so certain. To us who have full often cried unto the Lord in our distresses and been delivered out of our troubles, to raise such a question is indeed ungrateful. For a child of God who habitually prays to his Father in heaven to look upon his faithfulness as a matter of uncertainty is to degrade himself, and to dishonour his Lord. Yet there is no denying the tendency and disposition among us to want a sign. As we read a prophecy of the future, we crave a token in the present. If the Lord were pleased to give us a sign, or if he told us to ask for a sign, we should be quite right in attaching a high importance thereto, but for us to doubt a plain promise, and, therefore, ask a sign, is to sin against the Lord. Sometimes we have wanted signs in spiritual things. Meet and proper is it for us to rejoice in the true delights of fellowship with Christ, but it ill becomes us to make our feelings a kind of test of our acceptance, or to say, "I will not believe God if he does not indulge me with certain manifestations of grace; unless he gives me the sweetmeats I crave, I will be sulky and sullen, and refuse to eat the children's bread." Why, such conduct is wilful and wicked; it is weak, and utterly inexcusable. Yet how many of us have been guilty of this folly? Now, as Zacharias stood upon the threshold of the gospel dispensation, and he was the first among those who heard the glad tidings to express unbelief, it was necessary that he should be made an example of.

God would show at the very outset, even before John the Baptist was born, that unbelief could not be tolerated nor should it go unchastened. Therefore, his servant, Zacharias, must, as soon as he had asked for a sign, have such a sign as would make him suffer for months to come, constrain him to be sorry that he had ever dared to proffer the request. Oh! beloved, is our faith still so weak, and our experience still so contracted, that we cannot yet trust our God? Twenty years have we known him. Has he been a wilderness to us? Have his mercy and truth ever failed us in time of need? Shall all his tender dealings with us count for nothing? Do ye think so lightly of the gift of his Son, the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the dally providence which has guarded you, and of the hourly benediction which has been vouchsafed to you, that ye would fain put aside these unfailing benefits from your grateful remembrance, while

you indulge in some paltry whim, and tempt the Lord your God by your mistrust? That be far from any of us! We would rather take up the position of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who, when arraigned before Nebuchadnezzar, and adjudged to be thrown into the furnace of fire, said, "Our God is able to deliver us; but," they added, "if not (though he should do nothing of the kind), nevertheless be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." That is the spirit in which we ought to walk before God—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." What if he does not spare my mother's precious life? What if he does not preserve my child from the ravages of the fatal epidemic? What if he take away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke? What if my business should cease to thrive? What if my health fail and my strength decay? What if I be dishonoured by the scandal of my neighbours? Shall I, therefore, cast off my allegiance to God, or betray my trust in him? Am I to engage in rebellion like this? Not flood nor flame could quench or extinguish his love to me. Shall anxiety or tribulation, disappointment or disaster sever my heart from devotion to him? Nay, God give me grace to see my cattle destroyed, and my goods swept away, and my children cut off in their prime, and to hear cruel taunts from the wife of my bosom; to be covered with sore boils, and to sit on a dunghill and scrape myself with a potsherd and find my best friends miserable comforters, and yet, in the midst of accumulated distresses, to be able to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; he has not failed to deliver me hitherto, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, though the flocks and herds be cut off, yet will I trust in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation." If true to our high profession, the Christian's faith should not borrow its hue from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. To hanker after signs that a promise shall be fulfilled is obviously to show distrust of the promiser. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." So shall you be restrained from asking for a petty sign to justify you in relying on his princely bounty. The Lord keep you from this great transgression! We pass on to observe:—

### III. THE PENALTY ZACHARIAS INCURRED.



His morbid propensity was followed by a mortifying punishment. He had doubted, and he became dumb, and as the narrative clearly shows us, he was deaf likewise. Such was his chastisement, and it was sent not in anger, but in God's own covenant love. What a salutary medicine! Although bitter to the taste, how effective it was! Read his song, and you will see the evidence. He had been for months silent, quiet, shut out from all sound, and unable to make any. But well he had occupied his months of seclusion. He had searched the prophets—do you see that? He had been musing much upon the coming one—do you see that? Deep humility had taken the place of arrogant presumption. He was bowed down before the majesty of God, yet at the same time full of peace and blissful hope. Thus he looked into the glorious future. Oh! dear brethren, if you are prone to doubt, this sickness of the mind will require a strong corrective. Very likely God will give you some sharp medicine, but it shall work for your good. As his child, he will not chasten you so as to injure you, but he will chasten you so as to benefit you. I do not think children generally court the rod, however beneficial it may be, and yet I am quite sure there is no wise child of God who would not shrink from the graver ills which render such discipline essential to his soul's health.

See how judgment was tempered with mercy. The punishment sent to Zacharias was not so severe as it might have been. Instead of being struck deaf and dumb, he might have been struck dead. As I read this passage, I wondered that God had not struck me deaf and dumb when I have spoken unbelieving words—when I have been depressed in spirit, and spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Oh! had the Lord been wroth with me, and said, "If that is your witness about me, you shall never speak again." That would have been most just, and I might have been a mournful instance of his indignation against his unbelieving servants; he has not dealt so with me; glory be to his name!

And this chastisement did not invalidate the promise. The Lord did not say, "Well, Zacharias, as you don't believe it, your wife, Elizabeth, shall not have a son. There shall be a John born, but he shall not come to your house." Oh! no; that is a grand passage—"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." The promise still stands. God does not take advantage of our unbelief to cry off and say, "I will give thee no

blessings because thou doubttest me"—no, but having said it, he does it and his Word does not return unto him void. Even the trembling, doubting children, though they get the rod, get the blessing too; and the promise is fulfilled, though the father is dumb when the blessing comes. Very painful, indeed, was his chastisement. One would not like to be deaf and dumb for a day; but to be deaf and dumb for the space of nine months must have been a very painful trial to this man. Moreover, he could not bless the people; he could not speak a word; he could not instruct the people; he was useless for that part of the priest's work; and when the song went up within the hallowed walls of the temple, he could not hear it. He might know by signs that they were singing a hallelujah, yet his ears could not catch its grateful strains. That poor tongue of his was silent. He could not add a note to the volume of praise that went up to the God he loved. It must have been mournful to him to have no prayer in the family which he could hear, and in which he could join, and to be as good as dead for all practical purposes. Now I am afraid thence are many believers who have had to suffer something like this, for many days, on account of their unbelief. I think I can point out some who are unable to hear the gospel as once they did many years ago, a friend said that he could not hear me preach. I said to him, "Buy a horn." "No," he said, "it is not your voice; I can hear that, but I don't enjoy it." My reply was, "Perhaps that is my fault, but I am far from sure that it is not your own." I fear, in such cases, it is quite as often the hearer's fault as the preacher's fault. At any rate, when others profit, and our judgment approves, though our hearts find no refreshment, there is reason to suspect that in the dullness of our senses we are compelled to bear chastisement for our unbelief. You go where others go, and find no solace. You hear what edifies and comforts them, but there is no cheer for you. You are deaf; your ears are closed to what the Lord says. Very often it has happened, I fear, to some here, that, for want of faith, they have lost their speech. Time was when they could tell of the Lord's goodness, but they seem silent now. They could sing once, but their harps are hung on the willows now. As they get with their companions, they seem as if they have lost all their pleasant conversation. If they try the old accustomed strings of the time-worn harp, the ancient skill is gone. They cannot praise God as once they did; and all because on one occasion, when the promise was clear before their eyes, they would challenge and mistrust it. They could not

rely upon their God. Little do we know how many Fatherly chastisements come upon us as the result of our unbelief.

The lessons I gather, and with which I conclude, are these—First, if any of you, beloved, are weak in faith, do not be satisfied about it. Cry to God. Our God deserves better homage of us than a weak, attenuated faith can render him. He deserves to be trusted with such confidence as a child gives his parent. Ask him to increase your faith. And you who have faith, oh! keep it jealously, exercise it habitually; pray to the Lord to preserve it. Never begin to walk according to the sight of the eyes. Confer not with flesh and blood. Don't come down from that blessed height of simple confidence in God, but ask that you may abide there, and no longer doubt. The Church wants believers to believe for her, and to pray for her. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Art thou strong in faith, be thou stronger still; art thou weak in faith, be thou strong.

But let the unbeliever, the utter unbeliever, tremble. If a good man, a saved man, a noble and a blameless man was nevertheless for months struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. To you, unbeliever, no angel Gabriel will appear, but the destroying angel awaits you. What shall be your fearful chastisement? You will be silent; it will be eternal. Oh! you shall stand silent at the judgment-seat of Christ, unable to offer any excuse for your rebellion and unbelief. Unbelief will destroy the best of us: faith will save the worst of us. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath eternal life—he that believeth not (whatever else his apparent excellences will assuredly perish. Faith, faith! this is the priceless saving thing to every one of us. The gift be yours to believe. The grace be yours to inherit the righteousness of faith. The joy be yours to believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts. The triumph be yours to believe now to the saving of your souls. Amen.

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## **Justice Satisfied**

Just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. - Romans 3:26

Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. - 1 John 1:9

WHEN THE SOUL is seriously impressed with the conviction of its guilt, when terror and alarm get hold upon it concerning the inevitable consequences of its sin, the soul is afraid of God. It dreads at that time every attribute of divinity. But most of all the sinner is afraid of God's justice. "Ah," saith he to himself, "God is a just God; and if so, how can he pardon my sins? for my iniquities cry aloud for punishment, and my transgressions demand that his right hand should smite me low. How can I be saved? Were God unjust, he might forgive: but, alas! he is not so, he is severely just. 'He layeth justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.' He is the judge of all the earth, and he must do right. How then can I escape from his righteous wrath which must be stirred up against me?" Let us be assured that the sinner is quite right in the conviction that there is here a great difficulty. The justice of God is in itself a great barrier to the salvation of sinners. There is no possibility for that barrier to be surmounted, nor even for it to be removed except by one means, which shall this day be proclaimed unto you through the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is true that God is just. Let old Sodom tell you how God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon man's iniquity. Let a drowning world tell you how God lifted the sluices of the fountains of the great deep, and bade the bubbling waters spring up and swallow up man alive. Let the earth tell you; for she opened her mouth when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against God. Let the buried cities of Nineveh, and the tattered relics of Tyre and Sidon, tell you that God is just, and will by no means spare the guilty. And direst of all, let hell's bottomless lake declare what is the awful vengeance of God against the sins of man. Let the sighs, and groans, and moans, and shrieks of spirits

condemned of God, rise in your ears, and bear witness that he is a God who will not spare the guilty, who will not wink at iniquity, transgression, and sin, but who will have vengeance upon every rebel, and will give justice its full satisfaction for every offence.

The sinner is right in his conviction that God is just, and he is moreover right in the inference which follows from it, that because God is just his sin must be punished. Ah, sinner, if God punish not thy sin, he has ceased to be what he has always been—the severely just, the inflexibly righteous. Never has there been a sin pardoned, absolutely and without atonement, since the world began. There has never been an offense yet remitted by the great Judge of heaven, until the law has received the fullest vindication. You are right, O convicted sinner, that such shall be the case even to the end. Every transgression shall have its just recompense of reward. For every offence there shall be its stroke, and for every iniquity there shall be its doom. "Ah," now says the sinner, "then I am shut out of heaven. If God be just and he must punish sin, then what can I do? Justice, like some dark angel, strides across the road of mercy, and with his sword drawn, athirst for blood and winged to slay, he strides across my path, and threatens to drive me backwards over the precipice of death into the ever-burning lake." Sinner, thou art right; it is even so. Except through the gospel which I am about to preach to thee, justice is thine antagonist, thy lawful, irresistible, and insatiable enemy. It cannot suffer thee to enter heaven, for thou hast sinned; and punished that sin must be, avenged that transgression must be, as long as God is God—the holy and the just.

Is it possible, then, that the sinner cannot be saved? This is the great riddle of the law, and the grand discovery of the gospel. Wonder ye heavens! be astonished O earth! that very justice which stood in the sinner's way and prevented his being pardoned, has been by the gospel of Christ appeased; by the rich atonement offered upon Calvary, justice is satisfied, has sheathed its sword, and has now not a word to say against the pardon of the penitent. Nay, more, that justice once so angry, whose brow was lightning, and whose voice was thunder, has now become the sinner's advocate, and itself with its mighty voice pleads with God, that whosoever confesses his sin should be pardoned and be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

The business of this morning shall be to show, in the first place,

according to the first text, how justice is no longer the sinner's enemy —"God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth;" and then, in the second place, that justice has become the sinner's advocate, and that "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But here let me utter a caution; I shall speak this morning, only to those who feel their guilt, and who are ready to confess their sin. For to those who still love sin, and will not acknowledge their guilt, there is no promise of mercy or pardon. For them there remains nothing but the fearful looking for of judgment. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." The soul that neglects this great salvation cannot escape; there is no door of escape provided for it. Unless the Lord has now brought us to feel our need of mercy, has compelled us to confess that unless he gives us mercy we must righteously perish, and unless, moreover, he has made us willing now to be saved on any terms, so that we may be saved at all, this gospel which I am about to preach is not ours. But if we be convinced of sin and are now trembling before the thunders of God's wrath, every word that I am now about to speak will be full of encouragement and consolation to you.

I. First, then, HOW HAS JUSTICE BEEN PUT ASIDE? or rather, HOW HAS IT BEEN SO SATISFIED THAT IT NO LONGER STANDS IN THE WAY OF GOD'S JUSTIFYING THE SINNER?

The one answer to that is, Justice has been satisfied through the substitution of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. When man sinned the law demanded that man must be punished. The first offense of man was committed by Adam, who was the representative of the entire race. When God would punish sin, in his own infinite mind he thought of the blessed expedient, not of punishing his people, but of punishing their representative, the covenant head, the second Adam. It was by one man, the first man, that sin entered into the world, and death by sin. It was by another man, the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, it was by him that this sin was borne; by him its punishment was endured; by him the whole wrath of heaven was suffered. And through that second representative of manhood, Jesus, the second Adam, God is now able and willing to forgive the vilest of the vile, and justify even the ungodly, and he is able to do so without the slightest violation of his justice. For, mark, when Jesus Christ the Son of God suffered on the tree, he did not suffer

for himself. He had no sin, either natural or actual. He had done nothing whatever that could bring him under the ban of heaven, or subject his holy soul and his perfect body to grief and pain. When he suffered it was as a substitute. He died—"the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Had his sorrows been personally deserved they would have had no efficacy in them. But inasmuch as for sins not his own he died to atone; inasmuch as he was punished, not for any guilt that he had done or could do, but for the guilt incurred by others, there was a merit and an efficacy in all that he suffered, by which the law was satisfied, and God is able to forgive.

Let us show very briefly how fully the law is satisfied.

1. Note first the dignity of the victim who offered himself up to divine justice. Man had sinned; the law required the punishment of manhood. But Jesus, the eternal Son of God, "very God of very God," who had been hymned through eternal ages by joyous angels, who had been the favourite of his Father's court, exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named, he himself condescended to become man; was born of the Virgin Mary; was cradled in a manger; lived a life of suffering, and at last died a death of agony. If you will but think of the wondrous person whom Jesus was—as very God of very God, king of angels, creator, preserver, Lord of all—I think you will see that in his sufferings, the law received a greater vindication than it could have done even in the sufferings of all the men that have ever lived or ever could live. If God had consumed the whole human race, if all the worlds that float in ether had been sacrificed as one mighty holocaust to the vengeance of the law, it would not have been so well vindicated as when Jesus died. For the deaths of all men and all angels would have been but the deaths and sufferings of creatures; but when Jesus died, the Creator himself underwent the pang, it was the divine preserver of the world hanging on the cross. There is such dignity in the Godhead, that all it does is marvellous and infinite in its merit; and when he stooped to suffer, when he bowed his awful head, cast aside his diadem of stars to have his brow girt about with thorns; when his hands that once swayed the sceptre of all worlds were nailed to the tree; when his feet that erst had pressed the clouds, when these were fastened to the wood, then did the law receive an honour such as it never could have received if a whole universe in one devouring conflagration had blazed and burned for ever.

2. In the next place, just pause and think of the relationship which Jesus Christ had towards the great judge of all the earth, and then you will see again that the law must have been fully satisfied thereby. We hear of Brutus that he was the most inflexible of law-givers; that when he sat upon the bench he knew no distinction of persons. Imagine dragged before Brutus many of the noblest Roman senators, convicted of crime: he condemns them, and without mercy they are rent away by the lictors to their doom. You would admire certainly all this justice of Brutus. But suppose Brutus' own son brought before him—and such was the case—imagine the father sitting on the judgment-bench and declaring that he knew no distinction whatever, even of his own children. Conceive that son tried and condemned out of his father's own mouth. See him tied up before his father's own eyes, while, as the inflexible judge, that father bids the lictor lay on the rod, and afterwards cries, "Take him away and use the axe!" See you not here how he loves his country better than his son, and he loves justice better than either. "Now," says the world, "Brutus is just indeed." Now, if God had condemned each of us one by one, or the whole race in a mass, there would certainly have been a vindication of his justice. But lo! his own son takes upon him the sins of the world, and he comes before his Father's presence. He is not guilty in himself, but the sins of man are laid upon his shoulders. The Father condemns his Son; he gives him up to the Roman rod; he gives him up to Jewish mockery, to military scorn, and to priestly arrogance. He delivers up his Son to the executioner, and bids him nail him to the tree; and as if that were not enough, since the creature had not power of itself to give forth all the vengeance of God upon its own substitute, God himself smites his Son. Are you staggered at such an expression? It is scriptural. Read in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and there you have the proof thereof:—"It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief." When the whip had gone round to every hand, when the betrayer had smitten him, when Pilate and Herod, and Jew and Gentile, had each laid on the stroke, it was seen that human arm was not powerful enough to execute the full vengeance: then did the Father take his sword, and cry, "Awake! O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow," and he smote him sternly, as if he had been his enemy, as if he were a common culprit, as if he were the worst of criminals—he smote him again and again, till that awful shriek was forced from the lips of the dying substitute, "Eloi,



Eloi, lama sabachthani,"—my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Surely, when God smites his Son, and such a Son, when God smites his only begotten and well-beloved, then Justice has more than its due, more than itself could ask, Christ himself did freely give!

3. Furthermore, if you will please for a moment to consider how terrible were the agonies of Christ, which, mark you, he endured in the room, the place, the stead of all poor penitent sinners, of all those who confess their sins and believe in him; I say, when you mark these agonies, you will readily see why Justice does not stand in the sinner's way. Doth Justice come to thee this morning, and say, "Sinner, thou hast sinned, I will punish thee?" Answer thus—"Justice, thou hast punished all my sins. All I ought to have suffered has been suffered by my substitute, Jesus. It is true that in myself I owe thee a debt greater than I can pay, but it is true that in Christ I owe thee nothing; for all I did owe is paid, every farthing of it; the utmost drachm has been counted down; not a doit remains that is due from me to thee, O thou avenging justice of God." But if Justice still accuse, and conscience clamour, go thou and take Justice with thee to Gethsemane, and stand there with it:—see that man so oppressed with grief, that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was a press—a vice which forced his blood from every vein, and wrapped him in a sheet of his own blood. Dost see that man there! canst hear his groans, his cries, his earnest intercessions, his strong crying and tears! canst mark that clotted sweat as it crimson the frozen soil, strong enough to unloose the curse! dost see him in the desperate agony of his spirit, crushed, broken, bruised beneath the feet of the Justice in the olive press of God! Justice, is not that enough? will not that content thee? In a whole hell there is not so much dignity of vengeance as there is in the garden of Gethsemane. Art thou not yet satisfied? Come, Justice, to the hall of Pilate. Seest thou that man arraigned, accused, charged with sedition and with blasphemy! See him taken to the guard-room, spat upon, buffeted with hands, crowned with thorns, robed in mockery, and insulted with a reed for a sceptre. I say, Justice, seest thou that man, and dost thou know that he is "God over all blessed for ever?" and yet he endureth all this to satisfy thy demands! Art thou not content with that? Dost thou still frown? Let me show thee this man on the pavement. He is stripped. Stand, Justice, and listen to those stripes, those bloody scourges, and as they fall upon his devoted back and plough deep furrows there, dost thou

see thong-full after thong-full of his quivering flesh torn from his poor bare back! Art not content yet, Justice? Then what will satisfy thee? "Nothing," says Justice, "but his death." Come thou with me, then thou canst see that feeble man hurried through the streets! Seest thou him driven to the top of Calvary, hurled on his back, nailed to the transverse wood? Oh, Justice, canst thou see his dislocated bones, now that his cross is lifted up? Stand with me, O Justice, see him as he weeps, and sighs, and cries; see his soul-agonies! Canst thou read that tale of terror which is veiled in that flesh and blood? Come, listen Justice, whilst thou hearest him cry, "I thirst," and whilst thou seest the burning fever devouring him, till he is dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst! And lastly, O Justice, dost thou see him bow his head, and die? "Yes," saith Justice, "and I am satisfied; I have nothing that I can ask more; I am fully content; my uttermost demands are more than satisfied."

And am I not content, too? Guilty though I am and vile, can I not plead that this bloody sacrifice is enough to satisfy God's demands against me?

Oh, yes, I trust I can,

"My faith doth lay its hand,

On that dear head of thine,

While like a penitent I stand,

And here confess my sin."

Jesus, I believe that they sufferings were for me; and I believe that they are more than enough to satisfy for all my sins. By faith I cast myself at the foot of thy cross and cling to it. This is my only hope, my shelter, and my shield. It cannot be, that God can smite me now. Justice itself prevents, for when Justice once is satisfied it were injustice if it should ask for more. Now, is it not clear enough to the eye of every one, whose soul has been aroused, that Justice stands no longer in the way of the sinner's pardon? God can be just, and yet the justifier. He has punished Christ, why should he punish twice for one offence? Christ has died for all his people's sins, and if thou art in the covenant, thou art one of Christ's people. Damned thou canst not be. Suffer for thy sins thou canst not. Until God can be unjust, and demand two payments for one debt, he cannot destroy the soul for whom Jesus died. "Away goes universal redemption," says one. Yes, away it goes, indeed. I am sure there is nothing about that in the Word of God. A redemption that does not

redeem is not worth my preaching, or your hearing, Christ redeemed every soul that is saved; no more, and no less. Every spirit that shall be seen in heaven Christ bought. If he had redeemed those in hell, they never could have come there. He has bought his people with his blood, and they alone shall he bring with him. "But who are they?" says one. Thou art one, if thou believest. Thou art one if thou repentest of thy sin. If thou wilt now take Christ to be thy all in all, then thou art one of his; for the covenant must prove a lie, and God must be unjust, and justice must become unrighteousness, and love must become cruelty, and the cross must become a fiction, ere thou canst be condemned if thou trustest in Jesus.

This is the way in which Justice ceases to be the enemy of souls.

II. The second text says that not only can God be just, but it says something more: it says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, if I understand this text, it means this: that IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE ON GOD'S PART TO FORGIVE THE SINNER WHO MAKES A CONFESSION OF HIS SIN TO GOD. Mark! not that the sinner deserves forgiveness: that can never be. Sin can never merit anything but punishment, and repentance is no atonement for sin. Not that God is bound from any necessity of his nature to forgive every one that repents, because repentance has not in itself sufficient efficacy and power to merit forgiveness at the hand of God. Yet, nevertheless, it is a truth that, because God is just, he must forgive every sinner who confesses his sin. And if he did not—and mark, it is a bold thing to say, but it is warranted by the text—if a sinner should be led truly and solemnly to make confession of his sins and cast himself on Christ, if God did not forgive him, then he were not the God that he is represented to be in the Word of God: he were a God unjust, and that may God forbid, such a thing must not, cannot be. But how, then, is it that Justice itself actually demands that every soul that repents should be pardoned? It is so. The same Justice that just now stood with a fiery sword in his hand, like the cherubim of old keeping the way of the tree of life, now goes hand in hand with the sinner. "Sinner," he says, "I will go with thee. When thou goest to plead for pardon I will go and plead for thee. Once I spoke against thee: but now I am so satisfied with what Christ has done, that I will go with thee and plead for thee. I will change my language I will not say a word to

oppose thy pardon, but I will go with thee and demand it. It is but an act of justice that God should now forgive." And the sinner goes up with Justice, and what has Justice got to say? Why, it says this: "God must forgive the repenting sinner, if he be just, according to his promise." A God who could break his promise were unjust. We do not believe in men who tell us lies. I have known some of so gentle a disposition, that they could never say "No;" if they were asked to do a thing they have said, "Yes." But they have never earned a character for it, when they have said "Yes," and afterwards did not fulfil. It is not so with God. He is no tender-hearted being who promises more than he can perform, and no forgetful one who promises what afterwards shall slip from his memory. Every word which God utters shall be fulfilled, whether it be decree, threatening, or promise. Sinner! go to God with a promise in your hand.—"Lord thou hast said, 'He that confesseth his sin, and forsaketh it, shall find mercy.' I confess my sin, and I forsake it: Lord, give me mercy!" Don't doubt but that God will give it you. You have his own pledge in your hand; you have his own bond in your keeping. Take that pledge and that bond before his throne of mercy, and that bond never shall be cancelled till it has been honoured. You shall see that promise fulfilled to the uttermost letter, though your sin be never so black. Suppose the promise you take should be this. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "But," says the Law, "thou art one of the greatest sinners that ever lived." "Ay, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and I claim the fulfillment of it." "No, but thou hast been a blasphemer." "I know it, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and blasphemer though I am, I claim the promise." "But thou hast been a thief, thou hast deceived thy neighbour, and thou hast robbed men." "I have, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise case out;' I come, and I claim the promise. It does not say anything at all about character in the promise: it says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and if I be black as the devil, nevertheless God is true, and I claim the promise. I confess all that can be said against me. Will God be untrue, and send a seeking soul away with a promise unfulfilled? Never!" "But," says one, "you have lived many years in this way; your conscience has often checked you, and you have resisted conscience often: it is too late now." "But I have the promise, 'Him that cometh,'—there is no time stipulated in it—'Him that cometh;' I come, and O God, thou canst not break the

promise!" Challenge God by faith, and you will see that he will be as good as his word to you. Though you are worse than words can tell, God, I repeat it, as long as he is just, must honour his own promise. Go and confess your sin, trust in Christ, and you shall find pardon.

But, again, not only did God make the promise, but according to the text man has been induced to act upon it; and, therefore, this becomes a double bond upon the justice of God. Suppose you made a promise to any man, that if such a thing was done, you would do something else, and suppose that man were to do something quite contrary to his own nature, quite abhorrent to himself; but he did it nevertheless, because he expected to get great blessings thereby, do you mean to say you would tempt a man to do that, and put him to vast expense, and care and trouble, and then turn round and say? "There I shall have nothing to do with that promise: I only promised to make you do so-and-so, now, I will not fulfil my engagement." Why the man would turn about and call you base to make a promise to lead him to do something and then not fulfil your promise. Now, God has said, "If we confess our sins and trust in Christ, we shall have mercy." You have done it; you have made the most abject and sincere confession, and you do declare that you have no trust but the blood and righteousness of Christ. Now, on the faith of the promise you have been led into this state. Do you imagine when God has brought you through much pain and agony of mind to repent of sin, to give up self-righteousness, and rely on Christ, he will afterwards turn round and tell you he did not mean what he said? It cannot be—it cannot be. Suppose, now you were about to engage a man to be your servant, and you say to him, renounce such a situation, give that up; come and take a house in the neighbourhood where I live, and I will take you to be my servant." Suppose he does it, and you then say, "I am glad for your own sake that you have left your master, still I will not take you." What would he say to you? He would say, "I gave up my situation on the faith of your promise, and now, you break it." Ah! but it never can be said of Almighty God, that, if a sinner acted on the faith of his promise, then that promise was not kept. God ceases to be God when he ceases to have mercy upon the soul who seeks pardon through the blood of Christ. No, he is a just God, "Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

One more aspect of this case. God's justice demands that the sinner

should be forgiven if he seeks mercy, for this reason: Christ died on purpose to secure pardon for every seeking soul. Now, I hold it to be an axiom, a self-evident truth, that whatever Christ died for he will have. I cannot believe that when he paid to his Father the price of blood, and groans and tears, he bought something which the Father will not give him. Now, Christ died to purchase the pardon of sin for all those who believe on him, and do you suppose that the Father will rob him of that which he has bought so dearly? No, God were untrue to his own Son, he would break his oath to his well-beloved and only begotten Son, if he were not to give pardon, peace, and purity to every soul that comes to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, I would that I could preach it as with a tongue of thunder everywhere, God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. God is just to forgive us our sins, if we confess them; just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

III. Now, to close. I must just enter into some little EXPLANATION OF THE TWO GREAT DUTIES THAT ARE TAUGHT IN THE TWO TEXTS. The first duty is faith—"believeth in Christ;" the second text is confession—"if we confess our sins."

I will begin with confession first. Expect not that God will forgive you until you confess; not in the general confession of a prayer book, but in the particular confession of your own inmost heart. You are not to confess to a priest or a man, unless you have offended against him. In that respect, if you have been an offender against any man, be at peace with him and ask his pardon for aught you have done against him. It is a proof of a noble mind when you can ask pardon of another for having done amiss. Whenever grace comes into the heart it will lead you to make amends for any injury which you have done either by word or deed to any of your fellow-men; and you cannot expect that you shall be forgiven of God until you have forgiven men, and have been ready to make peace with those who are now your enemies. That is a beautiful trait in the character of a true Christian. I have heard of Mr. John Wesley, that he was attended in most of his journeyings by one who loved him very much, and was willing, I believe, to have died for him. Still he was a man of a very stubborn and obstinate disposition, and Mr. Wesley was not perhaps the very kindest man at all times. Upon one occasion he said to this man, "Joseph, take these letters to the post." "I will take them after preaching, sir." "Take them now, Joseph," said Mr. Wesley. "I wish to hear you

preach, sir; and there will be sufficient time for the post after service." "I insist upon your going now, Joseph." "I will not go at present" "You won't!" "No, sir." "Then you and I must part," said Mr. Wesley. "Very good, sir." The good men slept over it. Both were early risers. At four o'clock the next morning, the refractory helper was accosted with, "Joseph, have you considered what I said—that we must part?" "Yes, sir." "And must we part?" "please yourself, sir." "Will you ask my pardon, Joseph?" "No, sir." "You won't?" "No, sir." "Then I will ask yours, Joseph!" Poor Joseph was instantly melted, and they were at once reconciled. When once the grace of God has entered the heart, a man ought to be ready to seek forgiveness for an injury done to another. There is nothing wrong in a man confessing an offense against a fellow-man, and asking pardon for the wrong he has done him. If you have done aught, then, against any man, leave thy gift before the altar, and go and make peace with him, and then come and make peace with God. You are to make confession of your sin to God. Let that be humble and sincere. You cannot mention every offense, but do not hide one. If you hide one it will be a millstone round your neck to sink you into the lowest hell. Confess that you are vile in your nature, evil in your practice, that in you there is no good thing. Lie as low as ever you can at the footstool of divine grace, and confess that you are a wretch undone unless God have mercy upon you.

Then, the next duty is faith. Whilst thou art lying there in the dust turn thine eye to Christ and say. "Black as I am, and hell-deserving as I confess myself to be, I believe that Jesus Christ died for the penitent; and inasmuch as he died, he died that the penitent might not die. I believe thy merits to be great; I believe thy blood to be efficacious; and more than that, I risk my eternal salvation—and yet it is no risk—I venture my eternal salvation upon the merit of thy blood. Jesus, I cannot save myself. Cast the skirts of thy blood-red atonement over me. Come, take me in thine arms; come, wrap me in thy crimson vest, and tell me I am thine. I will trust in nothing else but thee. Nothing I can do or ever did shall be my dependence. I rely simply and entirely upon thy mighty cross, upon which thou didst die for sinners."

My dear hearers, as to any probability of your being lost after such a confession and such a faith, I assure you there is neither possibility nor probability thereof. You are saved; you are saved in time, you are saved in

eternity. Your sins are forgiven; your iniquities are all put away. In this life you shall be fed, and blessed and kept. Remaining sin within you shall be overcome and conquered; and you shall see his face at the last in glory everlasting, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. "Whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation." "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

And now in conclusion, I have tried to tell out simply and plainly the story of how God's justice is satisfied, and has become the sinners friend, and I look for fruit, for where the gospel is simply preached it is never preached in vain. Only let us go home and pray now, that we may know the Saviour. Let us pray that others may know him too. If you are convinced of sin, my dear friends, do not lose a moment. Go to your chamber as soon as you get home, shut to your door, go alone to Jesus, and there repeat your confession, and once more affirm your faith in Christ; and you shall have that peace with God which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. Your troubled conscience shalt find rest: your feet shall be on a rock; and a new song shall be in your mouth, even praise for evermore.

"From whence this fear and unbelief?—

Hast thou, O Father, put to grief

Thy spotless Son for me?

And will the righteous Judge of men

Condemn me for that debt of sin,

Which, Lord, was charged on thee?

Complete atonement thou hast made,

And to the utmost farthing paid

Whate'er thy people owed;

How then can wrath on me take place

If shelter'd in thy righteousness,

And sprinkled with thy blood?

If thou hast my discharge procured,

And freely, in my room, endured

The whole of wrath divine;

Payment God cannot twice demand,—

First, at my bleeding Surety's hand,



And then again at mine.  
Turn, then, my soul unto thy rest!  
The merits of thy great High Priest  
Speak peace and liberty:  
Trust in his efficacious blood;  
Nor fear thy banishment from God,  
Since Jesus died for thee."

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## **Justification By Faith**

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. - Romans 5:1

We desire this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed, and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and who are now at the present moment walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace.

Wishing to speak of the text, then, in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me, not only with your ears, and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eye of your self-examination, asking yourselves, as we proceed step by step, "Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this matter? Have I been led into that truth?" And our hope will be that some person to whom these things have hitherto been merely external, and therefore valueless, may be led by God to get hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul,

and heart, and conscience, so that they may enjoy them, and find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God, happily enjoying peace with the Most High.

Our first few thoughts shall be some plain, earnest talk concerning:—

## I. A FEW PRELIMINARY DISCOVERIES WHICH A MAN MAKES BEFORE HE GETS PEACE WITH GOD.

These, I do not think, are by any means foreign to the text, or merely imported to it, but belong rightfully to it. You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been speaking about sin. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligible definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law, and that the law, by and of itself, could never restore them to the favour of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith.

Well, then, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is, that it is important to be justified in the sight of God. Many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening, and find a man at the counter, and you say to him, "Well, do you never go to a place of worship?" "No," he would say, "but I am quite as good as those who do." "How so?" "Well, I am a great deal better than some of them." "How is that?" "Well, I never failed in business; I never duped people in a limited liability company; I never told lies; I am no thief; I am not a drunkard; I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June; and that is more than you can say of some of your religious people." Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character. There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. He sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet if that man were really to think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of a creature must be, not to his fellow-creatures, but to his Creator, and that, however just a man may be to another man, yet if he be altogether unjust to God, he cannot

escape without the severest penalty. But oh! the most of men think that so long as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow-men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will, and God's law trodden under their feet. Now, I think that everyone here who will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think, that he will see that, even though a man may go before the bar of his country, and say before any judge or jury, "I have in nothing injured my fellow-man; I am just before men," yet it does not make the man's character perfect. Unless he is also able to say, "And I am also just before the presence of the God who made me, and whose servant I am," he has only kept one half, and that the less important, of God's law for him.

It cannot help being, it must be, important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day when he shall say, "Return ye children of men." We must then render up our souls to him who created us. Well, you can surely go as far as that with me—that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your Maker? I am thankful that you can go so far.

The next thing is this. A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that his past life has been marred badly, by serious offences against the law of God. Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark: we cannot see in it. We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that may be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is, and especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law, and, in the light of the divine Spirit, reads that perfect law, and compares with it his own imperfect heart and life. He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing and, sometimes, despair. Take but one command. Perhaps there are some here who will say, "I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command saith, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and I have never broken it; I am clean there." Ay, but now hear Christ explain the command, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, then, who

amongst us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that be the meaning of the command, who can say, "I am innocent?" If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture, has to deal, not with our outward actions alone, but with our words, and with our thoughts, and with our imaginations—if it is so exceeding broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man, then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne? No, dear brethren, this must be understood by you, and by me, before we can be justified, that we are full of sin. What if I say that we are as full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We are all sin. The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ's all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up. Unless you know yourselves to be lost, you will never care for that Saviour who came "to seek and to save the lost." That is a second discovery, then; that it is important to be just before God, but that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law, and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position.

Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we ever can be just before God, on the footing of our own doing. We must give it up now, as an utterly lost case. The past is past: that can never be by us blotted out, and the present, inasmuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past; and the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better, and so salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility. The law said, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen, and when I put to him the question—he believed himself to be perfectly righteous, and I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it; but when I said to him, "Now, there is your own law for it, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them': have you continued in all things?" he said, "I have not." "Then," I

said, "the curse is upon you: how do you hope to escape from it?" and I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had no answer; and it is a question which, when properly understood, no man can answer, except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, "He was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing." Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection. It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase, and had said, "If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward." But we have cracked it, chipped it; ah! my brethren, the most of us have broken it and smashed it to pieces. But we will suppose that we have only cracked it a little. Yes, but even then we have lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole, and the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given. Never you say that you will not break it farther. Nay, but you have broken it. You have thrown yourselves now out of the list. It sometimes seems hard when you tell people that if they have violated the law in one point, they have broken the whole of it; but it is not so hard as it looks to be, for if I tell a man who is going down a coal-mine on a long chain that, if he shall break one link of the chain, it does not matter, though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound; if there is only one link that is broken, down will descend the basket, and the poor miner be dashed to pieces. Nobody thinks that hard. Everybody recognizes that as being a matter of mechanical law, that the strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part. And so the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point in which it fails. Alas! our obedience has failed, and, through it, no one of us can ever be just before God.

Now, I want to stop a minute, and put the question round the galleries, and below stairs. Have you all got as far as that? It is important to be just before God: we see that we are not so: do we see that we cannot be so? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the Eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, or you will keep on knocking at the door until you are quite sure that God has nailed it up for ever, and you will go scrambling over that Alp, and tumbling down this precipice, until you are convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it,

and then you will give up your desperate endeavour and come to God in God's way, which is quite another way from your own. I trust that we are all convinced of this.

Let us notice one more preliminary discovery. A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that, inasmuch as he is not just before God, and cannot be, he is at the present moment under condemnation. God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man be not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him. If you are not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment. You are not executed, it is true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you, and the sign that it is so is your unbelief, for "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all on a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country; but when I say that you have been condemned by the Court of Heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water or oil over a marble slab. And yet, my hearers, if thou didst but know the meaning of what I am saying—and I pray God the Holy Ghost to make thee know it—it would make thy very bones to quiver! God has condemned thee. Thou art out of Christ. Thou hast broken his law. God has lifted his hand to smite thee, and, though his mercy tarries for awhile, yet days and hours will soon be gone, and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution, and where will thy soul be then? Now, you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified, for until we are condemned by ourselves we are not acquitted by God. Again, I pause and say, Dost thou feel this, my dear hearer? If thou dost, instead of despairing, be hopeful. If thou hast the sentence of death within thee, be thankful for it, for now shall life be given thee from the hand of God's grace.

Having occupied, perhaps, too much time over that, we now come more immediately into the text to:—

## II. SHOW THE GOSPEL LEARNING WHICH IS TAUGHT TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely, these:

that, inasmuch as through man's sin, the way of obedience is for ever closed, so that we—none of us—can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offences, to bestow upon them his love, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. He has been pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to devise a way by which without injury to his justice, he can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into his heart, and make them his children, and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept God's law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from himself.

I trust we have learned that; that there is a plan of salvation by grace, and by grace alone; and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works.

It is a blessed thing never to muddle in your head the doctrine of working, and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits, but if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together. It must be all works or else all grace. Now, God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It comes to us upon the footing of grace, pure grace alone. And this is God's plan, namely, that, inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience. Jesus, the Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law, and in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and our Saviour's life and death make up a complete keeping and honouring of that law which we have broken and dishonoured, and God's plan is this: "I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for his sake; and now, looking at you through him, I can bless you though you deserve it not; I can pass by your undeserving; I can blot out your sins like a cloud, and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what he has done; you have no merits, but he has boundless merits; you are full of sin and must be punished,

but he has been punished instead of you, and now I can deal with you." This is the language of God, put into human words, "I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of my dear Son." This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you: all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Everyone of his merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if he were you—he in your stead, you in his stead. Substitution! that is the word! Christ the Substitute for sinners: Christ standing for men, and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, he "being made sin for us who knew no sin." Man standing in Christ's place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favour, instead of Christ.

And this, I say, is through trusting, or believing. God's way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon him. "Therefore, being justified"—how? Not by works; that is not the link, but—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ offers to God the substitution: through faith we accept it: and from that moment God accepts us.

Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the Assembly's Catechism when you were but children: you have learned it in the various classes since then, but do you know it in your own soul, and do you know that God's way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon his dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it, and that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you!

But, going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon:—

### III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE OF THE TEXT.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you, too, through the preliminary discoveries, and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of another, and now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word.



"Being justified." The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. You know what Adam was in naked innocence in Paradise. Such is every believer. Ay, and more than that. Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin, and we also have access with boldness unto God our Father because, through Jesus' blood, we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brethren and sisters—scores and hundreds of them—all of whom are tonight just before God—perfectly so; completely so; so just that they never can be otherwise than just; so just that even in heaven they will be no more acceptable to God than they are here tonight. That is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for-nothing sinner. The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus, but as soon as he trusted Christ, the merits of Christ became his merits, and he stands before God as though he were perfect, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," through the righteousness of Christ.

Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it. "Being justified by faith." The way of reaching this state of justification is not by tears, nor prayers, nor humblings, nor working, nor Bible-reading, nor church-going, nor chapel-going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by faith, which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God, a dependence upon the promise of God, because it is God's promise, and is worthy of dependence. It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said. This is faith, and every man who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight.

I know what the devil will say to you. He will say to you, "You are a sinner!" Tell him you know you are, but that for all that you are justified. He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ's righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps and your backslidings, of your offences and your wanderings. Tell him, and tell your own conscience, that you know all that, but that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that, although your sin be great, Christ is quite able to put it all away. Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as

sinners. You get a mingle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you, and you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means. You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves; you must know that you are sinners, and that in your hearts you are as big and as black sinners as the very worst and vilest, and you must come to Jesus, and leave your fancied righteousnesses, and your pretended goodnesses behind you, and you must take him for everything, and trust in him. Oh! to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness—to have the two together—repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice! Oh! if you could understand that saying of the spouse, "I am black, but comely"—for that is where we must come—black in myself, as black as hell, and yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus.

My dear brethren and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart?:—

"In thy surety thou art free,  
His dear hands were pierced for thee;  
With thy Saviour's vesture on,  
Holy as the holy one."

For so it is: you stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted: and notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear, and as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in his own obedience.

Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to enquire this evening. Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step farther, namely, to observe—and this is coming back, whilst it is also going forward—that "we are justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is the foundation: there is the mainspring. There is the tree that bears the fruit. We are justified by faith, but not by faith of itself. Faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight, because it is hard for us to keep it in mind. But

remember that faith is not the work of the Spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree. That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me. My dear brethren, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, "Well, now, it is all right with me, for I see this, and I feel that." Very good these evidences are in their places, but evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect; when you have to say, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" you will find that, instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross. There was a time when I, too, could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the Spirit of God's work in my soul I do thank God for it, and bless him for it now but I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the huckster walked:—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Brethren, it is down on the ground that we must live. We must build upon the rock itself. On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber, so as to get a little higher. Well, now, some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky, but when you get right down on the mountain itself, that never shakes, and you are perfectly secure there. So sometimes we get building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works—all very well in their way, but then they shake in the storm. Depend upon it, that the soul that clings to the rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it, and having nothing then to depend upon, more than the poor dying robber had when, without a single good work, he had to hang on the dying Christ alone—oh! believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in, Jesus, for a poor sinner when he is torn from his cups and his sins, and none but Jesus for the aged saint when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony:—

"Nothing in my hands I bring:  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our

Lord Jesus Christ."

And now, to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy—"we have peace with God." I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think. I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men travelling through fine scenery, and shutting their eyes for fear they should see. I always open mine as wide as ever I can, because I think I can see God in all the works of his hands, and what God has taken the trouble to make I think I ought to take the trouble to look at. Surely there must be something to see in a man's works if he be a wise man; and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God, who is all-wise. Now, it is a delightful thing to say, when you look upon a landscape, lit up with sunlight and shaded with cloud, "Well, my Father made all this; I never saw him, but I do delight in the work of his hands; he made all this, and I am perfectly at peace with him." Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall. There is thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a lightning's flash. Now, those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with him may stand there and say, "Well, it is my Father who is doing all this; that is his voice; the voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty." I love to hear my Father's voice. I never am so happy as in a tremendous storm, and when the lightning flash comes, I think—Well, it is only the flashing of my Father's eye: now, God is abroad: he seemed as if he had left the world before, but now he comes riding on the wings of the wind; let me go and meet him. I am not afraid! Suppose you are out at sea in a storm. You are justified by faith, and you say, "Well, let the waves roar; let them clap their hands: my Father holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, why should I be afraid?" Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when "earth is all in arms abroad." It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain. Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow-man. Everything is going to the bad. But the Christian says, "God is at the helm; the whole business of business is managed by the great King: let the sons of earth do as they

will, but:—

"He everywhere hath sway,  
And all things serve his might."

It is something to feel that my Father cannot do me a bad turn. Even if he should use his rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank him for it, for I am at perfect peace with him.

And then to come to die, and to feel, "I am going to God, and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife espoused goes to her husband, like a child home from school to the parents' arms. Oh! it is something to die with a sense of peace with God! Surely every thoughtful man will feel that. Now, if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your Father's will with perfect equanimity, let it be what it may. Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your souls.

Oh! I wish it were so with all present! It may be so if God the Spirit bring you to rest in Jesus. Nay, it shall be so, my dear friend; it shall be so with you tonight; though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting. Oh! believe him! Trust him, and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God which, as the world did not give you, so the world shall never take away, but you shall have it for ever and ever. God grant it to each one of us! Amen.

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## **Justification By Faith - Illustrated By Abram's Righteousness**

And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. -  
Genesis 15:6

You will remember that last Lord's-day morning we spoke upon the calling of Abram, and the faith by which he was enabled to enter upon that separated life at the bidding of the Most High. We shall today pass from the consideration of his calling to that of his justification, that being most remarkably next in order in his history, as it is in point of theology in the New Testament; for, "whom he called, them he also justified."

Referring to the chapter before us for a preface to our subject, note that after Abram's calling his faith proved to be of the most practical kind. Being called to separate himself from his kindred and from his country, he did not therefore become a recluse, a man of ascetic habits, or a sentimentalist, unfit for the battles of ordinary life—no; but in the noblest style of true manliness he showed himself able to endure the household trouble and the public trial which awaited him. Lot's herdsmen quarrelled with the servants of Abram, and Abram with great disinterestedness gave his younger and far inferior relative the choice of pasturage, and gave up the well-watered plain of Sodom, which was the best of the land. A little while after, the grand old man who trusted in his God showed that he could play the soldier, and fight right gloriously against terrible odds. He gathered together his own household servants, and accepted the help of his neighbours, and pursued the conquering hosts of the allied kings, and smote them with as heavy a hand as if from his youth up he had been a military man. Brethren, this every-day life faith is the faith of God's elect. There are persons who imagine saving faith to be a barren conviction of the truth of certain abstract propositions, leading only to a quiet contemplation upon certain delightful topics, or a separating ourselves from all sympathy with our

fellow creatures; but it is not so. Faith, restricted merely to religious exercise, is not Christian faith, it must show itself in everything. A merely religious faith may be the choice of men whose heads are softer than their hearts, fitter for cloisters than markets; but the manly faith which God would have us cultivate, is a grand practical principle adapted for every day in the week, helping us to rule our household in the fear of God, and to enter upon life's rough conflicts in the warehouse, the farm, or the exchange. I mention this at the commencement of this discourse, because as this is the faith which came of Abram's calling, so also does it shine in his justification, and is, indeed, that which God counted unto him for righteousness.

Yet the first verse shows us that even such a believer as Abram needed comfort. The Lord said to him, "Fear not." Why did Abram fear? Partly because of the reaction which is always caused by excitement when it is over. He had fought boldly and conquered gloriously, and now he fears. Cowards tremble before the fight, and brave men after the victory. Elias slew the priests of Baal without fear, but after all was over, his spirit sank and he fled from the face of Jezebel. Abram's fear also originated in an overwhelming awe in the presence of God. The word of Jehovah came to him with power, and he felt that same prostration of spirit which made the beloved John fall at the feet of his Lord in the Isle of Patmos, and made Daniel feel, on banks of Hiddekel that there was no strength in him. "Fear not," said the Lord to the patriarch. His spirit was too deeply bowed. God would uplift his beloved servant into the power of exercising sacred familiarity. Ah, brethren, this is a blessed fear—let us cultivate it; for until it shall be cast out by perfect love, which is better still, we may be content to let this good thing rule our hearts. Should not a man, conscious of great infirmities, sink low in his own esteem in proportion as he is honoured with communion with the glorious Lord?

When he was comforted, Abram received an open declaration of his justification. I take it, beloved friends, that our text does not intend to teach us that Abram was not justified before this time. Faith always justifies whenever it exists, and as soon as it is exercised; its result follows immediately, and is not an aftergrowth needing months of delay. The moment a man truly trusts his God he is justified. Yet many are justified

who do not know their happy condition; to whom as yet the blessing of justification has not been opened up in its excellency and abundance of privilege. There may be some of you here today who have been called by grace from darkness into marvellous light; you have been led to look to Jesus, and you believe you have received pardon of your sin, and yet, for want of knowledge, you know little of the sweet meaning of such words as these, "Accepted in the Beloved," "Perfect in Christ Jesus," "Complete in him." You are doubtless justified, though you scarcely understand what justification means; and you are accepted, though you have not realized your acceptance; and you are complete in Jesus Christ, though you have today a far deeper sense of your personal incompleteness than of the all-sufficiency of Jesus. A man may be entitled to property though he cannot read the title-deeds, or has not as yet heard of their existence; the law recognizes right and fact, not our apprehension thereof. But there will come a time, beloved, when you who are called will clearly realize your justification, and will rejoice in it; it shall be intelligently understood by you, and shall become a matter of transporting delight, lifting you to a higher platform of experience, and enabling you to walk with a firmer step, sing with a merrier voice, and triumph with an enlarged heart.

I intend now, as God may help me, first to note the means of Abram's justification; then, secondly, the object of the faith which justified him; and then, thirdly, the attendants of his justification.

#### I. First, brethren, HOW WAS ABRAM JUSTIFIED?

We see in the text the great truth, which Paul so clearly brings out in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that Abram was not justified by his works. Many had been the good works of Abram. It was a good work to leave his country and his father's house at God's bidding; it was a good work to separate from Lot in so noble a spirit; it was a good work to follow after the robber-kings with undaunted courage; it was a grand work to refuse to take the spoils of Sodom, but to lift up his hand to God that he would not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet; it was a holy work to give to Melchisedec tithes of all that he possessed, and to worship the Most High God; yet none of these are mentioned in the text, nor is there a hint given of any other sacred duties as the ground or cause, or part cause of his justification before God. No, it is said, "He believed in



the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Surely, brethren, if Abram, after years of holy living, is not justified by his works, but is accepted before God on account of his faith, much more must this be the case with the ungodly sinner who, having lived in unrighteousness, yet believeth on Jesus and is saved. If there be salvation for the dying thief, and others like him, it cannot be of debt, but of grace, seeing they have no good works. If Abram, when full of good works, is not justified by them, but by his faith, how much more we, being full of imperfections, must come unto the throne of the heavenly grace and ask that we may be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and saved by the free mercy of God!

Further, this justification came to Abram not by obedience to the ceremonial law any more than by conformity to the moral law. As the apostle has so plainly pointed out to us, Abram was justified before he was circumcised. The initiatory step into the outward and visible covenant, so far as it was ceremonial, had not yet been taken, and yet the man was perfectly justified. All that follows after cannot contribute to a thing which is already perfect. Abram, being already justified, cannot owe that justification to his subsequent circumcision—this is clear enough; and so, beloved, at this moment, if you and I are to be justified, these two things are certain: it cannot be by the works of the moral law; it cannot be by obedience to any ceremonial law, be it what it may—whether the sacred ritual given to Aaron, or the superstitious ritual which claims to have been ordained by gradual tradition in the Christian church. If we be indeed the children of faithful Abraham, and are to be justified in Abraham's way, it cannot be by submission to rites or ceremonies of any kind. Harken to this carefully, ye who would be justified before God: baptism is in itself an excellent ordinance, but it cannot justify nor help to justify us; confirmation is a mere figment of men, and could not, even if commanded by God, assist in justification; and the Lord's-supper, albeit that it is a divine institution, cannot in any respect whatsoever minister to your acceptance or to your righteousness before God. Abram had no ceremonial in which to rest; he was righteous through his faith, and righteous only through his faith; and so must you and I be if we are ever to stand as righteous before God at all. Faith in Abram's case was the alone and unsupported cause of his being accounted righteous, for note,

although in other cases Abram's faith produced works, and although in every case where faith is genuine it produces good works, yet the particular instance of faith recorded in this chapter was unattended by any works. For God brought him forth under the star-lit heavens, and bade him look up. "So shall thy seed be," said the sacred voice. Abram did what? Believed the promise—that was all. It was before he had offered sacrifice, before he had said a holy word or performed a single action of any kind that the word immediately and instanter went forth, "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Always distinguish between the truth, that living faith always produces works; and the lie, that faith and works co-operate to justify the soul. We are made righteous only by an act of faith in the work of Jesus Christ. That faith, if true, always produces holiness of life, but our being righteous before God is not because of our holiness in life in any degree or respect, but simply because of our faith in the divine promise. Thus saith the inspired apostle: "His faith was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

I would have you note that the faith which justified Abram was still an imperfect faith, although it perfectly justified him. It was imperfect beforehand, for he had prevaricated as to his wife, and bidden Sarai, "Say thou art my sister." It was imperfect after it had justified him, for in the next chapter we find him taking Hagar, his wife's handmaid, in order to effect the divine purpose, and so showing a want of confidence in the working of the Lord. It is a blessing for you and for me that we do not need perfect faith to save us. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." If thou hast but the faith of a little child, it shall save thee. Though thy faith be not always at the same pitch as the patriarch's when he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet if it be simple and true, if it confide alone in the promise of God—it is an unhappy thing that it is no stronger, and thou oughtest daily to pray, "Lord, increase my faith"—but still it shall justify thee through Christ Jesus. A trembling hand may grasp the cup which bears a healing draught to the lip—the

weakness of the hand shall not lessen the power of the medicine.

So far, then, all is clear, Abram was not justified by works, nor by ceremonies, nor partly by works, and partly by faith, nor by the perfection of his faith—he is counted righteous simply because of his faith in the divine promise.

I must confess that, looking more closely into it, this text is too deep for me, and therefore I decline, at this present moment, to enter into the controversy which rages around it; but one thing is clear to me, that if faith be, as we are told, counted to us for righteousness, it is not because faith in itself has merit which may make it a fitting substitute for a perfect obedience to the law of God, nor can it be viewed as a substitute for such obedience. For, brethren, all good acts are a duty: to trust God is our duty, and he that hath believed to his utmost hath done no more than it was his duty to have done. He who should believe without imperfection, if this were possible, would even then have only given to God a part of the obedience due; and if he should have failed, in love, or reverence, or aught beside, his faith, as a virtue and a work, could not stand him in any stead. In fact, according to the great principle of the New Testament, even faith, as a work, does not justify the soul. We are not saved by works at all or in any sense, but alone by grace, and the way in which faith saves us is not by itself as a work, but in some other way directly opposite thereto.

Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ. If any man should say, "My faith is my righteousness," then it is evident that he is confiding in his faith; but this is just the thing of all others which it would be unsafe to do, for we must look altogether away from ourselves to Christ alone, or we have no true faith at all. Faith must look to the atonement and work of Jesus, or else she is not the faith of Scripture. Therefore to say that faith in and of itself becomes our righteousness, is, it seems to me, to tear out the very bowels of the gospel, and to deny the faith which has been once delivered to the saints. Paul declares, contrary to certain sectaries who rail against imputed righteousness—that we are justified and made righteous by the righteousness of Christ; on this he is plain and positive. He tells us (Romans 5:19) that, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The

Old Testament verse before us as a text this morning, gives us but as it were the outward aspect of justification; it is brought to us by faith, and the fact that a man has faith entitles him to be set down as a righteous man; in this sense God accounts faith to a man as righteousness, but the underlying and secret truth which the Old Testament does not so clearly give us is found in the New Testament declaration, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and justified because of the obedience of Christ. Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the obedience of Christ. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." To the same effect is that verse in the second epistle general of Peter (first chapter, first verse), which runs in our version as follows: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, everybody who is at all familiar with the original knows that the correct translation is "through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The righteousness which belongs to the Christian is the righteousness of our God and Saviour, who is "made of God unto us righteousness." Hence the beauty of the old prophetic title of the Messiah, "The Lord our Righteousness." I do not wish to enter into controversy as to imputed righteousness this morning, we may discuss that doctrine another time; but we feel confident that this text cannot mean that faith in itself, as a grace or a virtue, becomes the righteousness of any man. The fact is, that faith is counted to us for righteousness because she has Christ in her hand; she comes to God resting upon what Christ has done, depending alone upon the propitiation which God has set forth; and God, therefore, writes down every believing man as being a righteous man, not because of what he is in himself, but for what he is in Christ. He may have a thousand sins, yet shall he be righteous if he have faith. He may painfully transgress like Samson, he may be as much in the dark as Jephtha, he may fall as David, he may slip like Noah; but, for all that, if he have a true and living faith, he is written down among the justified, and God accepteth him. While there be some who gloat over the faults of believers, God spieth out the pure gem of faith gleaming on their breast; he takes them for what they want to be, for what they are in heart, for what they would be if they could; and covering their sins with the atoning blood,

and adorning their persons with the righteousness of the Beloved, he accepts them, seeing he beholds in them the faith which is the mark of the righteous man wherever it may be.

II. Let us pass on to consider THE PROMISE UPON WHICH HIS FAITH RELIED when Abram was justified.

Abram's faith, like ours, rested upon a promise received direct from God. "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Had this promise been spoken by any other, it would have been a subject of ridicule to the patriarch; but, taking it as from the lip of God, he accepts it, and relies upon it. Now, brethren, if you and I have true faith we accept the promise, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" as being altogether divine. If such a declaration were made to us by the priests of Rome, or by any human being on his own authority, we could not think it true; but, inasmuch as it comes to us written in the sacred word as having been spoken by Jesus Christ himself, we lean upon it as not the word of man, but the word of God. Beloved, it may be a very simple remark to make, but after all it is needful, that we must be careful that our faith in the truth is fixed upon the fact that God has declared it to be true, and not upon the oratory or persuasion of any of our most honoured ministers or most respected acquaintances. If your faith standeth in the wisdom of man, it is probably a faith in man; it is only that faith which believes the promise because God spake it which is real faith in God. Note that and try your faith thereby.

In the next place, Abram's faith was faith in a promise concerning the seed. It was told him before that he should have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He recognized in this the selfsame promise which was made to Eve at the gates of Paradise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." "Abraham saw my day," says our Lord, "he saw it and was glad." In this promise Abram saw the one seed, as saith the apostle in Galatians 3:16, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." He saw Christ by the eye of faith, and then he saw the

multitude that should believe in him, the seed of the father of the faithful. The faith which justifies the soul concerns itself about Christ and not concerning mere abstract truths. If your faith simply believeth this dogma and that, it saveth you not; but when your faith believes that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses; when your faith turns to God in human flesh and rests in him with its entire confidence, then it justifies you, for it is the faith of Abram. Dear hearer, have you such a faith as this? Is it faith in the promise of God? Is it faith that deals with Christ and looks alone to him?

Abram had faith in a promise which it seemed impossible could ever be fulfilled. A child was to be born of his own loins, but he was nearly a hundred years old, and Sarai also was said to be barren years before. His own body was now dead as it were, and Sarai, so far as childbearing was concerned, was equally so. The birth of a son could not happen unless the laws of nature were reversed; but he considered not these things, he put them all aside; he saw death written on the creature, but he accepted the power of life in the Creator, and he believed without hesitation. Now, beloved, the faith that justifies us must be of the same kind. It seems impossible that I should ever be saved; I cannot save myself; I see absolute death written upon the best hopes that spring of my holiest resolutions; "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing;" I can do nothing; I am slain under the law; I am corrupt through my natural depravity; but yet for all this I believe that through the life of Jesus I shall live, and inherit the promised blessing. It is small faith to believe that God will save you when graces flourish in your heart, and evidences of salvation abound, but it is a grand faith to trust in Jesus in the teeth of all your sins, and notwithstanding the accusations of conscience. To believe in him that justifieth not merely the godly but the ungodly (Romans 4:5). To believe not in the Saviour of saints, but in the Saviour of sinners; and to believe that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; this is precious, and is counted unto us for righteousness.

This justifying faith was faith which dealt with a wonderful promise, vane and sublime. I imagine the patriarch standing beneath the starry sky, looking up to those innumerable orbs. He cannot count them. To his

outward eye, long accustomed in the land of the Chaldees to midnight observation, the stars appeared more numerous than they would to an ordinary observer. He looked and looked again with elevated gaze, and the voice said, "So shall thy seed be." Now he did not say, "Lord, if I may be the father of a clan, the progenitor of a tribe, I shall be well content; but it is not credible that countless hosts can ever come of my barren body." No, he believed the promise; he believed it just as it stood. I do not hear him saying, "It is too good to be true." No; God hath said it—and nothing is too good for God to do. The greater the grace of the promise, the more likely it is to have come from him, for good and perfect gifts come from the Father of Lights. Beloved, does your faith take the promise as it stands in its vastness, in its height, and depth, and length, and breadth? Canst thou believe that thou, a sinner, art nevertheless a child, a son, an heir, an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Canst thou believe that heaven is thine, with all its ecstasies of joy, eternity with its infinity of bliss, God with all his attributes of glory? Oh! This is the faith that justifies, far-reaching, wide-grasping faith, that diminishes not the word of promise, but accepts it as it stands. May we have more and more of this large-handed faith!

Once more, Abram showed faith in the promise as made to himself. Out of his own bowels a seed should come, and it was in him and in his seed that the whole world should be blessed. I can believe all the promises in regard to other people. I find faith in regard to my dear friend to be a very easy matter, but oh! When it comes to close grips, and to laying hold for yourself, here is the difficulty. I could see my friend in ten troubles, and believe that the Lord would not forsake him. I could read a saintly biography, and finding that the Lord never failed his servant when he went through fire and through water, I do not wonder at it; but when it comes to one's own self, the wonder begins. Our heart cries, "Whence is this to me? What am I, and what my father's house, that such mercy should be mine? I washed in blood and made whiter than snow today! Is it so? Can it be? I made righteous, through my faith in Jesus Christ, perfectly righteous! O can it be? What! For me the everlasting love of God, streaming from its perennial fountain? For me the protection of a special providence in this life, and the provision of a prepared heaven in the life to come? For me a harp, a crown, a palm branch, a throne! For me

the bliss of for ever beholding the face of Jesus, and being made like to him, and reigning with him! It seems impossible. And yet this is the faith that we must have, the faith which lays on Christ Jesus for itself, saying with the apostle, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." This is the faith which justifies; let us seek more and more of it, and God shall have glory through it.

### III. In the third place, let us notice THE ATTENDANTS OF ABRAM'S JUSTIFICATION.

With your Bibles open, kindly observe that after it is written his faith was counted to him for righteousness, it is recorded that the Lord said to him, "I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." When the soul is graciously enabled to perceive its complete justification by faith, then it more distinctly discerns its calling. Now, the believer perceives his privileged separation and discerns why he was convinced of sin, why he was led away from self-righteousness and the pleasures of this world, to live the life of faith; now he sees his high calling and the prize of it, and from the one blessing of justification he argues the blessedness of all the inheritance to which he is called. The more clear a man is about his justification the more will he prize his calling, and the more earnestly will he seek to make it sure by perfecting his separation from the world and his conformity to his Lord. Am I a justified man? Then will I not go back to that bondage in which I once was held. Am I now accepted of God through faith? Then will I live no longer by sight, as I once did as a carnal man, when I understood not the power of trusting in the unseen God. One Christian grace helps another, and one act of divine grace casts a refulgence upon another. Calling gleams with double glory side by side with the twin star of justification.

Justifying faith receives more vividly the promises. "I have brought thee," said the Lord, "into this land to inherit it." He was reminded again of the promise God made him years before. Beloved, no man reads the promises of God with such delight and with such a clear understanding as the man who is justified by faith in Christ Jesus. "For now," saith he, "this promise is mine, and made to me. I have the pledge of its fulfillment in the fact that I walk in the favour of God. I am no longer obnoxious to his wrath; none can lay anything to my charge, for I am absolved through Jesus



Christ; and, therefore, if when I was a sinner he justified me, much more, being justified, will he keep his promise to me. If when I was a rebel condemned, he nevertheless in his eternal mercy called me and brought me into this state of acceptance, much more will he preserve me from all my enemies, and give me the heritage which he has promised by his covenant of grace. A clear view of justification helps you much in grasping the promise, therefore seek it earnestly for your soul's comfort.

Abram, after being justified by faith, was led more distinctly to behold the power of sacrifice. By God's command he killed three bullocks, three goats, three sheep, with turtle doves and pigeons, being all the creatures ordained for sacrifice. The patriarch's hands are stained with blood; he handles the butcher's knife, he divides the beasts, he kills the birds he places them in an order revealed to him by God's Spirit at the time; there they are. Abram learns that there is no meeting with God except through sacrifice. God has shut every door except that over which the blood is sprinkled. All acceptable approaches to God must be through an atoning sacrifice, and Abram sees this. While the promise is still in his ears, while the ink is yet wet in the pen of the Holy Spirit, writing him down as justified, he must see a sacrifice, and see it, too, in emblems which comprehend all the revelation of sacrifice made to Aaron. So, brethren, it is a blessed thing when your faith justifies you, if it helps you to obtain more complete and vivid views of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The purest and most bracing air for faith to breathe is on Calvary. I do not wonder that your faith grows weak when you fail to consider well the tremendous sacrifice which Jesus made for his people. Turn to the annals of the Redeemer's sufferings given us in the Evangelists; bow yourself in prayer before the Lamb of God, blush to think you should have forgotten his death, which is the centre of all history; contemplate the wondrous transaction of substitution once again, and you will find your faith revived. It is not the study of theology, it is not reading books upon points of controversy, it is not searching into mysterious prophecy which will bless your soul, it is looking to Jesus crucified. That is the essential nutriment of the life of faith, and mind that you keep to it. As a man already justified, Abram looked at the sacrifice, all day long and till the sun went down, chasing away the birds of prey as you must drive off all disturbing thoughts. So must you also study the Lord Jesus, and view him

in all his characters and offices, be not satisfied except you grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Perhaps even more important was the next lesson which Abram had to learn. He was led to behold the covenant. I suppose that these pieces of the bullock, the lamb, the ram, and the goat, were so placed that Abram stood in the midst with a part on this side and a part on that. So he stood as a worshipper all through the day, and towards nightfall, when a horror of great darkness came over him, he fell into a deep sleep. Who would not feel a horror passing over him as he sees the great sacrifice for sin, and sees himself involved therein? There in the midst of the sacrifice he saw, moving with solemn motion, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, answering to the pillar of cloud and fire, which manifested the presence in later days to Israel in the wilderness. In these emblems the Lord passed between the pieces of the sacrifice to meet his servant, and enter into covenant with him. This has always been the most solemn of all modes of covenanting; and has even been adopted in heathen nations on occasions of unusual solemnity. The sacrifice is divided and the covenanting parties meet between the divided pieces. The profane interpretation was, that they imprecated upon each other the curse that if they broke the covenant they might be cut in pieces as these beasts had been; but this is not the interpretation which our hearts delight in. It is this. It is only in the midst of the sacrifice that God can enter into a covenant relationship with sinful man. God cometh in his glory like a flame of fire, but subdued and tempered to us as with a cloud of smoke in the person of Jesus Christ; and he comes through the bloody sacrifice which has been offered once for all through Jesus Christ on the tree. Man meets with God in the midst of the sacrifice of Christ. Now, beloved, you who are justified, try this morning to reach this privilege which particularly belongs to you at this juncture of your spiritual history. Know and understand that God is in covenant bonds with you. He has made a covenant of grace with you which never can be broken: the sure mercies of David are your portion. After this sort does that covenant run, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. They shall be my people, and I will be their God." That covenant is made with you over the slaughtered body of the Son of God. God and you cross hands over him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the

ground. The Lord accepts us, and we enter with him into sacred league and amity, over the victim whose wounds and death ratify the compact. Can God forget a covenant with such sanctions? Can such a federal bond so solemnly sealed be ever broken? Impossible. Man is sometimes faithful to his oath, but God is always so; and when that oath is confirmed for the strengthening of our faith by the blood of the Only-begotten, to doubt is treason and blasphemy. God help us, being justified, to have faith in the covenant which is sealed and ratified with blood.

Immediately after, God made to Abram (and here the analogy still holds) a discovery, that all the blessing that was promised, though it was surely his, would not come without an interval of trouble. "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." When a man is first of all brought to Christ he often is so ignorant as to think, "Now my troubles are all over; I have come to Christ and I am saved: from this day forward I shall have nothing to do but to sing the praises of God." Alas! A conflict remains. We must know of a surety that the battle now begins. How often does it happen that the Lord, in order to educate his child for future trouble, makes the occasion when his justification is most clear to him the season of informing him that he may expect to meet with trouble! I was struck with that fact when I was reading for my own comfort the other night the fifth chapter of Romans; it runs thus— "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." See how softly it flows, a justification sheds the oil of joy upon the believer's head. But what is the next verse— "and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience," and so on. Justification ensures tribulation. Oh! Yes, the covenant is yours; you shall possess the goodly land and Lebanon, but, like all the seed of Abraham, you must go down into Egypt and groan, being burdened. All the saints must smart before they sing; they must carry the cross before they wear the crown. You are a justified man, but you are not freed from trouble. Your sins were laid on Christ, but you still have Christ's cross to carry. The Lord has exempted you from the curse, but he has not exempted you from the chastisement. Learn that you enter on the children's discipline on the very day in which you enter upon their

accepted condition.

To close the whole, the Lord gave to Abram an assurance of ultimate success. He would bring his seed into the promised land, and the people who had oppressed them he would judge. So let it come as a sweet revelation to every believing man this morning, that at the end he shall triumph, and those evils which now oppress him shall be cast beneath his feet. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We may be slaves in Egypt for awhile, but we shall come up out of it with great abundance of true riches, better than silver or gold. We shall be prospered by our tribulations, and enriched by our trials. Therefore, let us be of good cheer. If sin be pardoned, we may well bear affliction. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now my sins are gone; strike as hard as thou wilt if transgression be covered." These light afflictions which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Let us make it the first point of our care to be justified with Abraham's seed, and then whether we sojourn in Egypt or enjoy the peace of Canaan, it little matters: we are all safe if we are only justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Dear friends, this last word, and I send you home. Have you believed in God? Have you trusted Christ? O that you would do so today! To believe that God speaks truth ought not to be hard; and if we were not very wicked this would never need to be urged upon us, we should do it naturally. To believe that Christ is able to save us seems to me to be easy enough, and it would be if our hearts were not so hard. Believe thy God, man, and think it no little thing to do so. May the Holy Ghost lead thee to a true trust. This is the work of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Believe that the Son of God can save, and confide thyself alone in him, and he will save thee. He asks nothing but faith, and even this he gives thee; and if thou hast it, all thy doubts and sins, thy trials and troubles put together, shall not shut thee out of heaven. God shall fulfil his promise, and surely bring thee in to possess the land which floweth with milk and honey.

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## Justification By Grace

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. - Romans 3:24

The hill of comfort is the hill of calvary; the house of consolation is builded with the wood of the cross; the temple of heavenly cordials is founded upon the riven rock, riven by the spear which pierced its side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like the scene on Calvary.

"Is it not strange, the darkest hour  
That ever dawn'd on sinful earth  
Should touch the heart with softer power  
For comfort, than an angel's mirth?  
That to the cross the mourner's eye should turn,  
Sooner than where the stars of Bethlehem burn?"

Nowhere does the soul ever find such consolation as on that very spot where misery reigned, where woe triumphed, where agony reached its climax. There grace hath dug a fountain, which ever gusheth with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes and the agonies of mankind. Ye have had your seasons of woe, my brethren and my sisters in Christ Jesus; and ye will confess it was not at Olivet that ye ever found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor; but Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of your life; the scourge of Gabbatha hath often scourged away your cares, and the groans of Calvary have put all other groans to flight.

We have, this morning, then, a subject which I trust may be the means of comforting God's saints, seeing it takes its rise at the cross, and thence runs on in a rich stream of perennial blessing to all believers. You note, we have in our text, first of all, the redemption of Christ Jesus; secondly,

the justification of sinners flowing from it; and then thirdly, the manner of the giving of this justification, "freely by his grace."

I. First, then, we have THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN OR BY CHRIST JESUS.

The figure of redemption is very simple, and has been very frequently used in Scripture. When a prisoner has been taken captive, and has been made a slave by some barbarous power, it has been usual, before he could be set free, that a ransom price should be paid down. Now, we being, by the fall of Adam, prone to guiltiness, and, indeed, virtually guilty, we were by the irreproachable judgment of God given up to the vengeance of the law; we were given into the hands of justice; justice claimed us to be his bond slaves for ever, unless we could pay a ransom, whereby our souls could be redeemed. We were, indeed, poor as owlets, we had not wherewith to bless ourselves. We were, as our hymn hath worded it, "bankrupt debtors;" an execution was put into our house; all we had was sold; we were left naked, and poor, and miserable, and we could by no means find a ransom; it was just then that Christ stepped in, stood sponsor for us, and, in the room and stead of all believers, did pay the ransom price, that we might in that hour be delivered from the curse of the law and the vengeance of God, and go our way, clean, free, justified by his blood.

Let me just endeavour to show you some qualities of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You will remember the multitude he has redeemed; not me alone, nor you alone, but "a multitude that no man can number," which shall as far exceed the stars of heaven for number, as they exceed all mortal reckoning. Christ hath bought for himself, some out of every kingdom, and nation, and tongue, under heaven; he hath redeemed from among men some of every rank, from the highest to the lowest; some of every colour—black and white; some of every standing in society, the best and the worst. For some of all sorts hath Jesus Christ given himself a ransom that they might be redeemed unto himself.

Now, concerning this ransom, we have to observe, that it was all paid, and all paid at once. When Christ redeemed his people, he did it thoroughly; he did not leave a single debt unpaid, nor yet one farthing for

them to settle afterwards. God demanded of Christ the payment for the sins of all his people; Christ stood forward, and to the utmost farthing paid whate'er his people owed. The sacrifice of Calvary was not a part payment; it was not a partial exoneration, it was a complete and perfect payment, and it obtained a complete and perfect remittal of all the debts of all believers that have lived, do live, or shall live, to the very end of time. On that day when Christ hung on the cross, he did not leave a single farthing for us to pay as a satisfaction to God; he did not leave, from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, that he had not satisfied. The whole of the demands of the law were paid down there and then by Jehovah Jesus, the great high priest of all his people. And blessed be his name, he paid it all at once too. So priceless was the ransom, so princely and munificent was the price demanded for our souls, one might have thought it would have been marvellous if Christ had paid it by instalments; some of it now, and some of it then. King's ransoms have sometimes been paid part at once, and part in dues afterwards, to run through years. But not so our Saviour: once for all he gave himself a sacrifice; at once he counted down the price, and said, "It is finished," leaving nothing for him to do, nor for us to accomplish. He did not drivel out a part-payment, and then declare that he would come again to die, or that he would again suffer, or that he would again obey; but down upon the nail, to the utmost farthing, the ransom of all people was paid, and a full receipt given to them, and Christ nailed that receipt to his cross, and said, "It is done, it is done; I have taken away the handwriting of ordinances, I have nailed it to the cross; who is he that shall condemn my people, or lay anything to their charge? for I have blotted out like a cloud their transgressions, and like a thick cloud their sins!"

And when Christ paid all this ransom, will you just notice, that he did it all himself! He was very particular about that. Simon, the Cyrenian, might bear the cross; but Simon, the Cyrenian, might not be nailed to it. That sacred circle of Calvary was kept for Christ alone. Two thieves were with him there; not righteous men, lest any should have said that the death of those two righteous men helped the Saviour. Two thieves hung there with him, that men might see that there was majesty in his misery, and that he could pardon men and show his sovereignty, even when he was dying. There were no righteous men to suffer; no disciples shared his

death; Peter was not dragged there to be beheaded, John was not nailed to a cross side by side with him; he was left there alone. He says, "I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me." The whole of the tremendous debt was put upon his shoulders; the whole weight of the sins of all his people was placed upon him. Once he seemed to stagger under it: "Father, if it be possible." But again he stood upright: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." The whole of the punishment of his people was distilled into one cup; no mortal lip might give it so much as a solitary sip. When he put it to his own lips, it was so bitter, he well nigh spurned it—"Let this cup pass from me." But his love for his people was so strong, that he took the cup in both his hands, and

"At one tremendous draught of love  
He drank damnation dry,"

for all his people. He drank it all, he endured all, he suffered all; so that now for ever there are no flames of hell for them, no racks of torment; they have no eternal woes; Christ hath suffered all they ought to have suffered, and they must, they shall go free. The work was completely done by himself, without a helper.

And note, again, it was accepted. In truth, it was a goodly ransom. What could equal it? A soul "exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" a body torn with torture; a death of the most inhuman kind; and an agony of such a character, that tongue cannot speak of it, nor can even man's mind imagine its horror. It was a goodly price. But say, was it accepted? There have been prices paid sometimes, or rather offered, which never were accepted by the party to whom they were offered, and therefore the slave did not go free. But this was accepted. The evidence I will shew you. When Christ declared that he would pay the debt for all his people, God sent the officer to arrest him for it; he arrested him in the garden of Gethsemane, and seizing upon him, he dragged him to the bar of Pilate, to the bar of Herod, and to the judgment seat of Caiaphas; the payment was all made, and Christ was put into the grave. He was there, locked up in durance vile, until the acceptance should have been ratified in heaven. He slept there a portion of three days in his tomb. It was declared that the ratification was to be this: the surety was to go his way as soon as ever his suretyship engagements had been fulfilled. Now let your minds picture



the buried Jesus. He is in the sepulchre. 'Tis true he has paid all the debt, but the receipt is not yet given; he slumbers in that narrow tomb. Fastened in with a seal upon a giant stone, he sleeps still in his grave; not yet has the acceptance been given from God; the angels have not yet come from heaven to say, "The deed is done, God has accepted thy sacrifice." Now is the crisis of this world; it hangs trembling in the balance. Will God accept the ransom, or will he not? We shall see. An angel comes from heaven with exceeding brightness; he rolls away the stone; and forth comes the captive, with no manacles upon his hands, with the grave clothes left behind him; free, never more to suffer, never more to die. Now,

"If Jesus had not paid the debt,  
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

If God had not accepted his sacrifice, he would have been in his tomb at this moment; he never would have risen from his grave. But his resurrection was a pledge of God's accepting him. He said, "I have had a claim upon thee to this hour; that claim is paid now; go thy way." And death gave up his royal captive, the stone was rolled into the garden, and the conqueror came forth, leading captivity captive.

And, moreover, God gave a second proof of acceptance; for he took his only begotten Son to heaven, and set him at his right hand, far above all principalities and powers; and therein he meant to say to him, "Sit upon the throne, for thou hast done the mighty deed; all thy works and all thy miseries are accepted as the ransom of men." O my beloved, think what a grand sight it must have been when Christ ascended into glory; what a noble certificate it must have been of his Father's acceptance of him! Do you not think you see the scene on earth? It is very simple. A few disciples are standing upon a hill, and Christ mounts into the air in slow and solemn movement, as if an angel sped his way by gentle degrees, like mist or exhalation from the lake into the skies. Can you imagine what is going on up yonder? Can you for a moment conceive how, when the mighty conqueror entered the gates of heaven, the angels met him,

"They brought his chariot from on high,  
To bear him to his throne;

Clapp'd their triumphant wings, and cried,  
'The glorious work is done''

Can you think how loud were the plaudits when he entered the gates of heaven? Can you conceive how they pressed on one another, to behold how he came conquering and red from the fight? Do you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints redeemed, come to behold the Saviour and the Lord? They had desired to see him, and now their eyes behold him in flesh and blood, the conqueror over death and hell! Do you think you see him, with hell at his chariot- wheels, with death dragged as a captive through the royal streets of heaven? Oh, what a spectacle was there that day! No Roman warrior ever had such a triumph; none ever saw such a majestic sight. The pomp of a whole universe, the royalty of entire creation, cherubim and seraphim and all powers create, did swell the show; and God himself, the Everlasting One, crowned all, when he pressed his Son to his bosom, and said, "Well done, well done; thou hast finished the work which I gave thee to do. Rest here for ever, mine accepted one." Ah, but he never would have had that triumph, if he had not paid all the debt. Unless his Father had accepted the ransom-price, the ransomer had never been so honoured; but because it was accepted, therefore did he so triumph. So far, then, concerning the ransom.

II. And now, by the help of God's Spirit, let me address myself to THE EFFECT OF THE RANSOM; being justified—"justified freely by his grace through the redemption."

Now, what is the meaning of justification? Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple, even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men, except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic term; it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified; that is, he must be found not guilty; and if he is found not guilty, then he is justified—that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may pardon him, but she cannot justify him. The deed is not a justifiable one, if he were guilty concerning it; and he cannot be justified on account of it. He may be pardoned; but not royalty itself can

ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation which is laid against him, except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is, that we are proved guilty, and yet we are justified: the verdict has been brought in against us, guilty; and yet, notwithstanding, we are justified. Can any earthly tribunal do that? No; it remained for the ransom of Christ to effect that which is an impossibility to any tribunal upon earth. We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There the verdict of guilty is brought in, and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by his grace.

Now, allow me to explain the way whereby God justifies a sinner. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried, and condemned to death. He is a guilty man; he cannot be justified, because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced, who could take all that man's guilt upon himself, who could change places with that man, and by some mysterious process, which of course is impossible with men, become that man; or take that man's character upon himself; he, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place, and making the rebel a righteous man. We cannot do that in our courts. If I were to go before a judge, and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment, instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his guilt. I might take his punishment, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, that Jesus Christ by his redemption did. Here I stand, the sinner. I mention myself as the representative of you all. I am condemned to die. God says, "I will condemn that man; I must, I will—I will punish him." Christ comes in, puts me aside, and stands himself in my stead. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, "Guilty;" takes my guilt to be his own guilt. When the punishment is to be executed, forth comes Christ. "Punish me," he says; "I have put my righteousness on that man, and I have taken that man's sins on me. Father, punish me, and consider that man to have been me. Let him reign in heaven; let me suffer misery. Let me endure his curse, and let him receive my blessing." This marvellous doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners, is a doctrine of revelation,

for it never could have been conceived by nature. Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty. No; the penalty has been all paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die; God says he must. Christ says, "I will be substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take my place; I will take his." God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change. But the God of heaven had a right to do as he pleased. In his infinite mercy he consented to the arrangement. " Son of my love," said he, "you must stand in the sinner's place; you must suffer what he ought to have suffered; you must be accounted guilty, just as he was accounted guilty; and then I will look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were Christ; I will accept him as if he were my only- begotten Son, full of grace and truth. I will give him a crown in heaven, and I will take him to my heart for ever and ever." This is the way we are saved, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

And now, let me further go on to explain some of the characteristics of this justification. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for all his sins. Here stands a man all guilty. The moment he believes in Christ, his pardon at once he receives, and his sins are no longer his; they are cast into the depths of the sea. They were laid upon the shoulders of Christ, and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. "What!" say you, "do you mean that literally?" Yes, I do, That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being; the moment he believes on Christ his guilt is all taken away. But I am going a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God's esteem; but what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious; for, in the moment when Christ takes his sins he takes Christ's righteousness; so that, when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, he looks upon him with as much love and affection as he ever looked upon his Son. He himself has said it —"As the Father loved me, so have I loved you." He loves us as much as his Father loved him. Can you believe such a doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit; the doctrine

whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the prophets—the parable of Joshua the high-priest. Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments; those filthy garments representing his sins. Take away the filthy garments; that is pardon. Put a mitre on his head; clothe him in royal raiment; make him rich and fair; that is justification. But where do these garments come from? and where do those rags go to? Why, the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ, and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore. The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did. Jonathan put his robes on David, David gave Jonathan his garments; so Christ takes our sins, we take Christ's righteousness; and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places that sinners go free and are justified by his grace.

"But," says one, "no one is justified like that, till he dies." Believe me, he is.

"The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives;  
Salvation in full, through his blood."

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God's sight now as he will be when he stands before the throne. Not the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below, who is once justified by grace. It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation; we are fully, freely, and wholly accepted, through Christ our Lord. Just one more word here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ's place, and Christ takes the sinner's place, there is no fear of a second change. If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid, and it will never be asked for again; if you are pardoned, you are pardoned once for ever. God does not give man a free pardon under his own sign-manual, and then afterwards retract it and punish man: that be far from God so to do. He says, "I have punished Christ; you may go free." And after that, we may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," that "being justified by faith we have

peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And now I hear one cry, "That is an extraordinary doctrine." Well, so some may think; but let me say to you, it is a doctrine professed by all protestant churches, though they may not preach it. It is the doctrine of the Church of England, it is the doctrine of Luther, it is the doctrine of the Presbyterian church; it is professedly the doctrine of all Christian churches; and if it seems strange in your ears, it is because your ears are estranged, and not because the doctrine is a strange one. It is the doctrine of holy writ, that none can condemn whom God justifies, and that none can accuse those for whom Christ hath died; for they are totally free from sin. So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel. In the moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ, they cease to be theirs, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted.

III. And now I close up with the third point, upon which I shall be brief, and I hope very earnest: **THE MANNER OF GIVING THIS JUSTIFICATION.** John Bunyan would have it, that there are some whose mouths are set a watering for this great gift of justification. Are there not some here who are saying, "Oh! if I could be justified! But, Sir, can I be justified? I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been everything that is vile. Can I be justified? Will Christ take my black sins, and am I to take his white robes? Yes, poor soul, if thou desirest it; if God has made thee willing, if thou dost confess thy sins, Christ is willing to take thy rags, and give thee his righteousness, to be thine for ever. "Well, but how is it to be obtained?" says one "must I be a holy man for many years, and then get it?" Listen! "Freely by his grace;" "freely," because there is no price to be paid for it; "By his grace," because it is not of our deservings. "But, O Sir, I have been praying, and I do not think God will forgive me, unless I do something to deserve it." I tell you, Sir, if you bring in any of your deservings, you shall never have it. God gives away his justification freely; if you bring anything to pay for it, he will throw it in your face, and will not give his justification to you. He gives it away freely. Old Rowland Hill once went preaching at a fair; he noticed the chapmen selling their wares by auction; so Rowland said, "I am going to hold an auction too, to sell wine and milk, without money and without price. My friends over there," said he "find a great difficulty to get you up

to their price; my difficulty is to bring you down to mine." So it is with men. If I could preach justification to be bought by you at a sovereign a piece, who would go out of the place without being justified? If I could preach justification to you by walking a hundred miles, would we not be pilgrims tomorrow morning, every one of us? If I were to preach justification which would consist in whippings and torture, there are very few here who would not whip themselves, and that severely too. But when it is freely, freely, freely, men turn away. "What! am I to have it for nothing at all, without doing anything?" Yes, Sir, you are to have it for nothing, or else not at all; it is "freely." "But may I not go to Christ, lay some claim to his mercy, and say, Lord, justify me because I am not so bad as others?" It will not do, Sir, because it is "by his grace." "But may I not indulge a hope, because I go to church twice a day?" No, Sir; it is "by his grace." "But may I not offer this plea, I mean to be better?" No, sir; it is "by his grace." You insult God by bringing your counterfeit coin to pay for his treasures. Oh! what poor ideas men have of the value of Christ's gospel, if they think they can buy it! God will not have your rusty farthings to buy heaven with. A rich man once, when he was dying, had a notion that he could buy a place in heaven by building a row of almshouses. A good man stood by his bed-side, and said, "How much more are you going to leave?" "Twenty thousand pounds." Said he "That would not buy enough for your foot to stand on in heaven; for the streets are made of gold there, and therefore of what value can your gold be, it would be accounted nothing of, when the very streets are paved with it?" Nay, friends, we cannot buy heaven with gold nor good works, nor prayers, nor anything in the world. But how is it to be got? Why it is to be got for asking only. As many of us as know ourselves to be sinners may have Christ for asking for him. Do you know that you want Christ? You may have Christ! "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." But if you cleave to your own notions, and say, "No, Sir, I mean to do a great many good things, and then I will believe in Christ."— Sir, you will be damned if you hold by such delusions. I earnestly warn you. You cannot be saved so. "Well, but are we not to do good works?" Certainly you are; but you are not to trust in them. You must trust in Christ wholly, and then do good works afterwards. "But," says one, "I think if I were to do a few good works, it would be a little recommendation when I came." It would not, sir; they would be no

recommendation at all. Let a beggar come to your house in white kid gloves, and say he is very badly off, and wants some charity; would the white kid gloves recommend him to your charity? Would a good new hat that he has been buying this morning recommend him to your charity? "No," you would say, "you are a miserable impostor; you do not want anything, and you shall not have anything either! Out with you!"

The best livery for a beggar is rags, and the best livery for a sinner to go to Christ in, is for him to go just as he is, with nothing but sin about him. "But no;" say you, "I must be a little better, and then I think Christ will save me!" You cannot get any better, try as long as you please. And besides—to use a paradox—if you were to get better, you would be all the worse; for the worse you are, the better to come to Christ. If you are all unholy come to Christ; if you feel your sin, and renounce it, come to Christ; though you have been the most debased and abandoned soul, come to Christ; if you feel yourself to have nothing about you that can recommend you, come to Christ.

"Venture on him, venture wholly;  
Let no other trust intrude."

I do not say this to urge any man to continue in sin. God forbid! If you continue in sin, you must not come to Christ; you cannot; your sins will hamper you. You cannot be chained to your galley- oar—the oar of your sins—yet come to Christ, and be a free man. No, sir, it is repentance; it is the immediate leaving off the sin. But mark thee, neither by repentance, nor by leaving off thy sin, can save thee. It is Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ only.

But I know you will go away, many of you, and try to build up your own Babel-tower, to get to heaven. Some of you will go one way to work, and some another. You will go the ceremony way: you will lay the foundation of the structure with infant baptism, build confirmation on it, and the Lord's supper. "I shall go to heaven," you say; "Do not I keep Good Friday and Christmas-day? I am a better man than those dissenters. I am a most extraordinary man. Do I not say more prayers than any one?" You will be a long while going up that treadmill, before you get an inch higher. That is not the way to get to the stars. One says, "I will go and study the Bible,



and believe right doctrine; and I have no doubt that by believing right doctrine I shall be saved." Indeed you will not! You can be no more saved by believing right doctrine than you can by doing right actions. "There," says another, "I like that; I shall go and believe in Christ, and live as I like." Indeed you will not! For if you believe in Christ he will not let you live as your flesh liketh; by his Spirit he will constrain you to mortify its affections and lusts. If he gives you the grace to make you believe, he will give you the grace to live a holy life afterwards. If he gives you faith, he gives you good works afterwards. You cannot believe in Christ, unless you renounce every fault, and resolve to serve him with full purpose of heart. Methinks at last I hear a sinner say, "Is that the only door? And may I venture through it? Then I will. But I do not quite understand you; I am something like poor Tiff, in that remarkable book 'Dred.' They talk a great deal about a door, but I cannot see the door; they talk a great deal about the way, but I cannot see the way. For if poor Tiff could see the way, he would take these children away by it. They talk about fighting, but I do not see any one to fight, or else I would fight." Let me explain it then. I find in the Bible, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." What have you to do, but to believe this and trust in him? You will never be disappointed with such a faith as that. Let me give you over again an illustration I have given hundreds of times, but I cannot find another so good, so I must give it again. Faith is something like this. There is a story told of a captain of a man-of-war, whose son—a young lad—was very fond of running up the rigging of the ship; and one time, running after a monkey, he ran up the mast, till at last he got on to the maintruck. Now, the maintruck, you are aware, is like a large round table put on to the mast, so that when the boy was on the maintruck there was plenty of room for him; but the difficulty was—to use the best explanation I can—that he could not reach the mast that was under the table; he was not tall enough to get down from this maintruck, reach the mast, and so descend. There he was on the maintruck; he managed to get up there, somehow or other, but down he never could get. His father saw that, and he looked up in horror; what was he to do? In a few moments his son would fall down, and be dashed to pieces! He was clinging to the main-truck with all his might, but in a little time he would fall down on the deck, and there he would be a mangled corpse. The captain called for a speaking trumpet; he

put it to his mouth, and shouted, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea." It was, in truth, his only way of escape; he might be picked up out of the sea, but he could not be rescued if he fell on the deck. The poor boy looked down on the sea; it was a long way; he could not bear the idea of throwing himself into the roaring current beneath him; he thought it looked angry and dangerous. How could he cast himself down into it? So he clung to the main-truck with all his might, though there was no doubt that he must soon let go and perish. The father called for a gun, and pointing it up at him, said, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea, or I'll shoot you!" He knew his father would keep his word; the ship lurched on one side, over went the boy splash into the sea, and out went brawny arms after him; the sailors rescued him, and brought him on deck. Now, we, like the boy, are in a position of extra-ordinary danger, by nature, which neither you nor I can possibly escape of ourselves. Unfortunately, we have got some good works of our own, like that maintruck, and we cling to them so fondly, that we never will give them up. Christ knows that unless we do give them up, we shall be dashed to pieces at the last, for that rotten trust must ruin us. He, therefore, says, "Sinner, let go thine own trust, and drop into the sea of my love." We look down, and say, "Can I be saved by trusting in God? He looks as if he were angry with me, and I could not trust him." Ah, will not mercy's tender cry persuade you?—"He that believeth shall be saved." Must the weapon of destruction be pointed directly at you? Must you hear the dreadful threat—"He that believeth not shall be damned?" It is with you now as with that boy—your position is one of imminent peril in itself, and your slighting the Father's counsel is a matter of more terrible alarm, it makes peril more perilous. You must do it, or else you perish! Let go your hold! That is faith when the poor sinner lets go his hold, drops down, and so is saved; and the very thing which looks as if it would destroy him, is the means of his being saved. Oh! believe on Christ, poor sinners; believe on Christ. Ye who know your guilt and misery come, cast yourselves upon him; come, and trust my Master, and as he lives, before whom I stand, you shall never trust him in vain; but you shall find yourselves forgiven, and go your way rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

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## **Kept From Iniquity**

I kept myself from mine iniquity - Psalm 18:23

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards his servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul; he deserved so well of the king that it was doubly hard for him to be treated so ill. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to fly for his life, like a partridge upon the mountains, and all the while, no doubt, Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did not attribute to David; but he was upright before God, and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so; for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he disdained to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and in great grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver his servant. If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again; if he does not do so in this life, remember that at the resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. "They say. What do they say? Let them say." Let them say till they have done saying; it little matters what they say; yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument, it cutteth like a razor, and pierceth even to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms, and crush the arches of heaven, than fail to deliver his servant. He will do so still, depend upon it. "He shall never

suffer the righteous to be moved."

David attributes his providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct: "I kept myself from mine iniquity." Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through; but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your own fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking falsehood, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience, will find that he has made a great mistake. Do thou so trust in God as to hold to thine integrity. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Ponder the path of thy feet, and God will bring thee through as surely as he is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as thou art alive; for, as the Lord liveth, before whom we stand, he will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve him faithfully.

This is the passage we have to consider, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." Here is, first, a personal danger: "mine iniquity." And, secondly, here is a special guard: "I kept myself." And then, thirdly, here is a happy result. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." There was no boasting in this declaration; but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man he defended himself, for he was able truthfully to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER: "mine iniquity."

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house; a man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have each of us to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every house. I do not know whether that is true; but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal; and it takes a special shape in each good man. There is some particular sin which he may call "mine iniquity." Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too; each man has his own way of sinning,

so that he can speak of "mine iniquity."

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its speciality, perhaps, from our natural constitution. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine; they are expecting great things, and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament, who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion; they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief, and even into despair, which will be very grievous to the God who is ever gracious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favoured by God with a godly ancestry who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity, and proud of their own uprightness; and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear friend, thou hast some tendency peculiar to thyself, and there is a special point where thou liest open to the attacks of temptation. Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin, and it behoves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity.

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the looking-glass than look out at the window. Looking out of the window, thou seest one for whom thou art not responsible; but looking in the glass, thou seest one of whom thou must give account to God, and thou wilt do well to ask God to keep that one. Thou wilt, likely enough, within a day's march, not see a much worse man than he is, if thou dost know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge's quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the portraits of many ministers; and he would say to his friend, "Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and- so;" and then, leading his visitor to a looking-glass, he would say, "Here is the devil." Yes, he is somewhere about there where thou art looking. If thou lookest long

enough, thou mayest detect some of his handiwork at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all. Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that "mine iniquity" may be engendered by education. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother's fingers when we are fifty years of age, and it is not gone from us even when we are old and grey-headed. Things that were done at our father's home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard, when we were very young, may abide with us, and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it, and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us recollect that, as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint therefrom, and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery! I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by sovereign grace out of very dens of iniquity. There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord; and when they go home to-night, it will be a great pain to them, as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the house of God where they have worshipped. Well, my dear brother or sister, we sympathize with you in your trial, and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow out of our particular condition. The young man has his iniquity; it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people, pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of the life-passage through which you are going. He who quits the shores of England for Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view. Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal;

but let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that, within a few days, he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along we need keeping.

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches; but with God all things are possible. Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through. His straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition; and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations; so that, whether thou hast much or little, pray God that thou mayest keep thyself from thine iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one; but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very fast, you are very like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night prayer-meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition. Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Saviour go, which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God, and to put forth your hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, thou who art losing everything, that he will keep thee from thine iniquity. Thou needest not pray, like Pharaoh, "Take away the frogs;" but pray like David, "Take away mine iniquity." That is the prayer of the true child of God.

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity," for great talent is a very

dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great grace. And, if thou hast but one talent, thine iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five. Therefore, pray the Lord to keep thee from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which thou art found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to "cut the thing fine," as they say, and to cut the truth much finer than anything else, and say a great deal that is not true, under the notion that somehow or other it will help his business. If there be customs in your trade which all others follow, and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them; but say, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity." You need not begin to say, "Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans, all have their iniquities." Think about your own; quite enough iniquities may crowd into your shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I do know; I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working-men and Christian working-women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this house of prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, "We cannot live there, and we do not know where to live to keep our children out of the temptations which now surround them." I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of to-day should make Christians walk very near to God; and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as ever we can, and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist, not conforming to the world, to be out and out



Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation.

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be that iniquity which thou hast oftenest fallen into in thy previous life. What has been thy sternest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is thine iniquity. Doubt and mistrust? That is thine iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which hitherto has stained thy life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless thou dost watch, and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for thy protection. That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, ay, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts not to do it, that is your iniquity. That which you have returned to after having smarted for it, that which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again, and which yet has in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried thee away with a rush,—that is thine iniquity. Oh, how canst thou keep thyself from it unless God shall keep thee? Cry unto the Most High to enable thee to keep thyself from thine iniquity. That is thine iniquity which has overtaken thee even after thou hast prayed against it, and laboured against it, that thou hast concluded that surely thou wilt never do it again, and yet thou hast done it.

Let me tell you one thing more; that which you do not like to hear condemned, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you to wriggle in your seat, and feel, "I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home," that is your iniquity. And if thou canst not bear that thy wife should speak to thee about it, or that thy brother or thy sister should give thee a friendly word of advice concerning it, that which thou art most loath to hear, probably has to do with thine iniquity. We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which thou art most loath to hear that thou hast most need to hear; instead of being angry with him who points it out to thee thou shouldst be willing to pay him for doing it. When you go to your doctor, and ask him to examine you, if he says, "There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs," do you knock him down? Do you get into a passion with him

for telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea, and thank him even for imparting evil news. And should we not thank those who rebuke us, and tell us of our faults? When God sendeth thee not a faithful friend, I pray him to send thee an honest enemy, who will deal straightly with thee, and let thee know where thy weakness is, that thou mayest then cry to God, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity."

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD: "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

Someone may perhaps say, "I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it." Let me ask you first who you are; are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, "No," I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ, and ask for cleansing in his precious blood, and renewal by the Holy Spirit; but I am now talking to the child of God, the man who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear brother, because you can, by God's grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must find out what it is. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you, and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavour to get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God. Ask the Lord to make thee hate most that sin to which thou art most inclined. Remember that thou art a child of God; it ill becomes thee to be friendly with any of the King's enemies. Remember that Christ has bought thee; thou belongest to him, thou shouldst not be the slave of any sin, thou must not be such if the life of God be in thee. The life of God in the soul hates sin; thou canst not take pleasure in any sin if thou art indeed a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to thee, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of thy particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as thou hast an extraordinary horror of it, thou mayest set that over against thy tendency to it.

Then, be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately; but, if thou hast one

sin that is more to thee than another, drag it out from the crowd, and say, "Thou must die if no other does. I will hang thee up in the face of the sun." Strive against thine anger; strive against thy covetousness; strive against thine envy; strive against thine evil temper, thy malice, if that be thy fault; for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till thou gettest thy foot upon its neck. "I cannot do it," says one. Why, the Lord has said that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely, if you are to have the devil under your foot, you can get all sin under your feet by God's help; and you must do it. It is a part of that work that must be wrought in us to bring every thought into captivity to divine grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ; but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master thee. I tell thee that, if thou let any sin master thee, thou wilt be lost. If any sin should remain unconquered, thou art ruined; for this is the way of salvation, the absolute conquest of every sin through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It must be so with thee ere thou canst enter heaven, and thou art able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ. If thou hast an iniquity that more than another haunts thee, then keep away from all that tempts thee to it. Is there a house where thy company is much liked, but where thou art never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house. It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once sported. You may go into some company to do good; but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire; they may be themselves pulled into it. No, come ye out from among them, be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing. You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin; that necessity should warn you not to go there.

The true path of safety is to pray and believe against all sin. We conquer sin by faith in Christ. This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree, and there is no other that will do so. Believe thou in Jesus Christ the Saviour, who died for thee; and then believe in him as living again, and willing to help thee in every conflict against sin. Go thou, having Christ crucified with thee, and ask him to crucify thy sin, and nail it up to his cross. So thou shalt be helped to overcome; but there must be care, and prayer, and

watchfulness, and trust, and continual looking up to the Lord for grace. Only so can you say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

### III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." He does not say that he could not sin, but that he would not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, "I do not sin like those young people." No, because you cannot; it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do. That is not what we want; it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you; it is a change of heart that is wanted. "I kept myself from mine iniquity;" that is, "though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the grace of God I would not yield."

I do pray, my brothers and sisters, that, if we live ten, twenty, thirty, or fifty more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, "By his great grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from mine iniquity," because, if we do so, see what a blessing it will be to us, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble. If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men, who were great losers at first by being godly; but they kept themselves right, and they had to thank God for it ever afterwards. I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker's clerk. On a certain day, he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest; and he told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month's notice. It was a country bank, and he was not sent about his business at once; and he had to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children; and when he went home, it was not easy to tell the wife that the excellent situation that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity, he said that he was sure God would bring him safely through, and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do. It was within twelve months that he obtained the situation of manager for that very bank, and it belongs to him at this moment; he very speedily became a man in a much better position than

he could have expected to have obtained, simply from the fact that it had been proved that he could be trusted. It is not always so; some people have to be a long time under a cloud; but, in the long run, if thou as a child of God wilt but stand fast, God will not let thee be a loser. If he does, it shall be thy glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish thy character. Thou shalt find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong. If you are able to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity," then you shall also be able to say with David, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

Next, if you act thus, it will be a triumph of divine grace. Brethren, we want to show the world what grace can do, and every member of the church ought to feel that he is put upon his behaviour to prove what the grace of God has done in him. What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that, if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go at last where worldlings go. If grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ's honour is in danger by our ill behaviour, and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, this will be our best testimony to others. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips; but you can all preach with your feet, and by your lives, and that is the most effective preaching. The preaching of holy lives is living preaching. The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew. God help you to do this!

And, lastly, what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience! Though we know we are saved by grace, hear this, ye ungodly. There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort

upon our dying bed, and bid farewell to all our dear ones and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory, and thank and praise his holy name. Begin at the cross; there is the source of your salvation. Then go, and live like the living Saviour. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

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## **The Key-Note Of A Choice Sonnet**

My soul doth magnify the Lord. - Luke 1:46

Mary had received a wonderful intimation from heaven of which she herself scarcely understood the full length and breadth. Her faith had apprehended a great promise, which as yet her mind hardly comprehended. Her prayer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word," showed her joyful submission and childlike confidence, and this made her blessed with the blessedness of patient hope. Under divine guidance she made a speedy journey into the hill country to see her cousin Elisabeth, and from her she received a confirmation of the wonderful tidings which the angel had brought to her. Elisabeth herself had been favored from above, for the Lord had looked upon her, and taken away from her the reproach of barrenness. Amongst other choice words, Elisabeth said to her, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." When Mary had thus been comforted by her friend, and her spirit had been elevated, and her confidence confirmed, she began to sing unto the Lord most sweetly, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Now, if it is a good time with any of you—if in communion with some

older believer your confidence has been strengthened, make sure that the Lord has a return for it. When your own heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord. Exalt him when he exalts you. You will perhaps tell me that the Virgin had very especial reason for magnifying the Lord, and I answer, Assuredly she had. "Blessed is she among women," and we are not backward to own the eminent honor which was put upon her. Blessed indeed she was, and highly favored. But yet, is there any true believer who has not also received special favor of the Lord? Sitting down quietly in our chamber, can we not each one say that the Lord has favored him or her with some special token of divine love? I think there is something about each believer's case which renders it special. We are none of us exactly like our brethren, for the manifestations of divine grace are very various; and there are some bright lines about your case, brother, which will be seen nowhere else, and some peculiar manifestations about your happiness, my sister, of which no one else can tell. I might not be straining words if I were to say to many a sister in Christ here, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." And I might say the same to many a brother here: "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among men. The Lord hath done great things for thee, and let thy spirit be glad." True, there is one point in which we cannot be compared to Mary literally. She was to be the mother of the human nature of our Lord; but there is a parallel case in each one of us in which a higher mystery—a more spiritual mystery—gives us a like privilege, for, behold, the Holy Ghost dwells in each believer. He lives within us as within a temple, and reigns within us as in a palace. If we be partakers of the Holy Ghost, what more can we desire by way of favor from God, and what greater honor can be bestowed upon us? It was by her that the Word became incarnate, but so also is it by us, for we can make God's Word stand out visibly in our lives. It is ours to turn into actual, palpable existence among the sons of men the glorious Spirit of grace and truth which we find in the Word of God. Truly did our Lord speak when he said to his disciples, "These are my mother, and sister, and brother." We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother, and we in some sense take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to him. May he be formed in us the hope of glory, and may it be ours to tend his infant cause in the world, and watch over it as a nurse does over a child,

and spend our life and strength in endeavoring to bring that infant cause to maturity, even though a sword should pass through our own heart while we cherish the babe.

But now, having introduced to you her magnificat, we will dwell upon these words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and I do earnestly hope that many of us can adopt the language without being guilty of falsehood: we can as truly say as Mary did, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." If there are any of you present to-night who cannot say it, get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and cry to the Lord to help you to do so; for as long as a man cannot magnify God he is not fit for heaven, where the praises of God are the eternal occupation of all the blessed spirits. If you cannot magnify God, it probably is because you are magnifying yourself. May the Lord cut self down and make nothing of you, and then you will make everything of him. When you sink in your own estimation, then will God rise in your esteem. May God the Holy Ghost make it so.

I. Touching these words, I notice that, first, our text suggests to us AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLE: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord, and have been born into his family.

Observe, it is an occupation which may be followed by all sorts of people. This humble woman speaks of her low estate, and yet she could magnify the Lord. All believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. There are some things that you cannot do, but this one thing every gracious heart can do, and should delight to do, namely, to magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation which can be followed in all places. You need not go up to the meeting-house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home: you need not step out of your own quiet little room, for you may sit still, and all alone you may magnify the Lord. You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust his name, and be calm, and so magnify him. Or, you may be no traveler, and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that.



"Where'er we seek him he is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground";

and in every place this hallowed occupation may be carried out, and we may always say—at least the place will not prevent our saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, it can be fitly performed in solitude. I suppose that this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elisabeth. There is a quorum for God's praise even where there is only one; but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceeding sweet. Ah, my dear sisters, you will never stand up to speak to thousands, and many of my brethren now present would be very timid if they had to praise the Lord before a score. Never mind about that. Praise does not require even two or three, but in the quiet of the night, or in the loneliness of the wood far away from the haunts of men, your soul may pursue this blessed task, and daily, hourly, constantly sing—" My soul doth magnify the Lord."

This is an occupation also, dear friends, which requires no money. Mary was a poor maiden. She had no gold or silver, and yet did she sweetly say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." It is an honorable thing to be entrusted with this world's treasure to lay it out for Jesus. The church has its temporal needs, and happy is that man who is privileged to supply them: but this kind of work can be followed by the child who has no money, and by the workwoman who scarcely knows how to find herself in bread. It may be followed by the poor man reduced to the workhouse; and by the poor woman who lies in the infirmary breathing out her life. "My soul doth magnify the Lord," is as fit for paupers as for peers. Oh! these are golden notes, and those that use them have golden mouths, as golden as Chrysostom of old, even though they have to say, "Silver and gold have I none."

And this is an occupation, dear friends, which I commend to all here present, because it does not require great talent. A simpleton may sing "My soul doth magnify the Lord." We have each one a soul, and when that soul has been renewed by grace it can follow this blessed pursuit of magnifying the Lord, Perhaps you have not the abilities of Mary, for she

was, doubtless, a woman of considerable culture, like Hannah who preceded her, whose song she partly borrowed. Hannah seems to me to be one of the most gifted women of the Old Testament, and to be worthy of more notice than is generally given to her. But if you could not write a hymn, if you could not compose a verse, if you have no ability that way, ay, and if you cannot sing—and there are some of us that have such cracked voices that we never shall, and there are one or two brethren here who have such bad ears for time that I generally hear them a note behind everybody else, as I did to-night—well, never mind about that, our souls can magnify the Lord. It is an occupation that does not depend upon the voice, or upon any kind of talent whatever. Those who sing worst to the ear of man may, perhaps, sing best to the ear of God; and those who have the least apparent ability may, from the warmth of their heart and the ardor of their devotion, really have the greatest capacity in God's judgment for magnifying his name.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." I would invite all my brothers and sisters here to take this for their occupation as long as they live, and never to cease from it. Nay, even should death for a moment suspend it, let them so praise God that it shall be no new work for them to begin again and praise him for ever in heaven.

Dear friends, albeit that this magnifying of the Lord is an occupation to be taken up by all Christians, do not let us think little of it. To magnify the Lord seems to me the grandest thing we mortals do, for, as I have already said, it is the occupation of heaven. When the saints of the Most High pass into their glorified state they have nothing else to do but to magnify the Lord. The word signifies, to put it in a Saxon form instead of a Latin one, to "greaten God." We cannot make him really greater, but we can show forth his greatness. We can make him appear greater. We can make others have greater thoughts of him, and that we do when we are praising him. We can ourselves try to have greater and yet greater thoughts of him—make him to our apprehension a greater God than we once knew him to be; and this, I say, is no mean occupation, because it is followed in heaven by all redeemed and perfected spirits. Even here, it is the end of everything. Praying is the end of preaching, for preaching and hearing are nothing in themselves except men be brought to Christ and led to prayer.

But then praying is not the end: praising is the end of praying. Prayer is the stalk of the wheat, but praise is the ear of the wheat: it is the harvest itself. When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed. We are to be saved for this end, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." We are not saved for our own sakes. How often does the Scripture tell us this in sense, and sometimes in words, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." The glory of God is to my mind the highest conceivable end—it certainly is the chief end of my being. So, my dear brother, if you cannot go out to preach—if after looking over all your condition you feel that your sickness and other circumstances may excuse you from active service, and even if you are compelled to keep your bed, do not suppose that you are useless as to the highest end of your being. You may still serve it by lying upon the couch of pain and magnifying the Lord by patience. Have you ever looked at those lovely lilies which adorn our gardens with their golden petals and their milk-white leaves? How they praise God! And yet they never sing. You do not even hear a rustle, but they stand still and praise God by existing—by just, as it were, enjoying the sun and the dew, and showing what God can do. A genuine Christian shut up under pain and sickness may glorify God by being his beloved child, by receiving the love of God, by showing in his common-place daily character, which is only noticeable from its holiness, what the grace of God can do. Oh may this be the occupation of us all since it is so noble a pursuit! "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Come, what are you doing to-night? Have you been during this day murmuring and complaining and grumbling? End that, and begin praising. Some of you are farmers, and I have no doubt you have grumbled because of the weather. I do not wonder, but I hope that you will not do it any more, but rather believe that God knows better about skies and clods and clouds and crops than you do. If we had the management of the weather, I have no doubt we think we should do it very splendidly, but I question whether we should not ruin all creation. Our great Lord and Master knows how to manage everything. Let us cease from all criticism of what he does, and say, "My soul does not grumble. My soul does not complain; I have taken up a better business than that. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' That is her one engagement

from which she will never cease."

II. Secondly, if you look at the text from another point of view, it provides for us A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION.

If any one of us had been favored, as the Virgin was, with the promise that we should become the parent of the Savior, do you not think that we should have felt exceedingly lifted up? It was natural that she should be proud, but it was gracious on her part that she was humble. Instead of magnifying herself she magnified the Lord. It was a great thing, and somebody must be magnified for it. Nature would have said, "Mary, magnify thyself"; but grace said, "Mary, magnify the Lord." If the Lord has been very gracious to any one of us, our only way to escape from vain-glorious pride, which will be exceedingly wicked if we indulge in it, is by giving vent to our feelings in quite another direction. Do you notice how she sets off the greatness of God by her own insignificance? "He that is mighty hath done to me great things." "To me," she says. "They are great things, and he is mighty, but they are to me. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Over against the greatness of God's goodness to you be sure to set in contrast your own meanness and unworthiness. Has the Lord redeemed you, called you, justified you, sanctified you, set you in his church, and given you a name and a place among his people? When you are inclined to run up the topgallants, and to hang out all the flags, and to glory in your flesh, recollect who you are and what you are, and the hole of the pit whence you were drawn, and the rock out of which you were hewn, and say, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" Begin to magnify the name of the Lord, and that will be a death-blow to the temptation to pride.

Mary had a specialty: no one else should be the mother of our Lord: but so have we. Electing love has pitched on us. Many have been passed by, but the Lord has loved us with a special love; yet we cannot rejoice in it so as to glory in ourselves, for this election is according to his sovereign will, and not of ourselves. It is all of grace and free favor, and not according to merit. Hence my soul doth magnify the Lord for everlasting love and special redemption. Whence is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou, O Lord, shouldst choose me?

Mary knew also that she was to be famous. "All generations shall call me blessed." But do notice how she balances her fame with another fame. She says, "Holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him." She magnifies the name of the Lord. If he has given her a measure of honor, she lays it at his feet. Mind you do the same. Be not so vain as to be lifted up with a little success. We have all passed through this test of character, and in the fining-pot how few of us have borne the fire without loss! Perhaps you have preached a sermon and God has blessed it; the congregation is increased, and crowds are gathering; the probability is that the devil whispers, "You are a capital preacher. Well done! You put your point admirably: God is blessing you. There must be something admirable in your character and abilities." Away, away, thou fiend of the pit! This is ruinous pride! But suppose, dear brother, that the fiend will not go away while he finds you musing upon your success, what are you to do? Try him with this—"My soul doth magnify the Lord." Praise the name of the Lord that ever he should make use of such a poor, unsuitable instrument as yourself. Give him all the honor and all the glory, if honor and glory there be, and see if the arch-enemy does not take to flight, for God's praises are abhorrent to the devil.

In whatever capacity you are serving the Lord, if he puts any honor upon you, mind you give it all back to him. Sedulously and carefully endeavor to do this, for robbery here will be fatal; he will not give his glory to another. If we begin to pilfer even a little of the praise, we shall find that our Master will reckon us to be unfaithful stewards, and give us a discharge. If we glory in our strength, we may have to go out and shake ourselves like Samson when his hair was lost, because the Lord has taken our strength away from us. A heart that is lifted up with self-esteem will soon be cast down in the mire. Mary knew that God's favors are given to us, not that we may congratulate ourselves, but that we may worship him; and she acted accordingly. If grace be come to thee, my brother, it is a wanton waste of it to pride thyself upon it. Like the manna in the Israelite's house when kept till the morning, it will breed worms and stink: no worm ever brought swifter decay than pride. Bear the shield of thine honor as an armor-bearer for thy Lord, Know that thou hast nothing but what belongs to him. Use all for him, and glorify him for all, and in all; and so wilt thou do well. I recommend the text, then, as a cure

for pride: "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

III. Thirdly, and I will be brief on each point, the text is A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. "My soul doth magnify the Lord," is evidently the overflow of a full soul.

There must have been great mixture of feeling in the heart of this holy woman; but these few words furnished expression for every variety of her emotions. Those feelings were of an opposite character, and yet they all spoke by this one sentence. It is clear that she was filled with wonder. Her thoughtful spirit asked, how can so great a thing be true to me? Shall the Son of the Highest be born of Mary, the village maiden? Oh, miracle of condescension! With the amazement there was mingled, not the unbelief which too often comes of wonder, but an expectation of the promised marvel. She believed that the things which were spoken to her would be performed by the Lord, and she looked that God should keep his word to her. How sweetly those two feelings, wonder and expectation, are blended, hidden away and yet expressed, in these few words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord"! It is as though she had said, "I cannot understand the favor promised me. How glorious in his grace is the Lord my God! But I expect the blessing: I am sure of it, for the Lord is true! So I praise him concerning it." The sentence is tinged with two fair colors, the vermilion of wonder and the azure of hope, and they meet harmoniously upon the same ground. The words are wonderful on that account.

Now take two other mental states. The first would be her believing. She was not like Zacharias, who needed to be struck dumb because he doubted the word of the Lord. Mary had faith, and yet, at the same time she must have been awe-stricken by the revelation. That she should give birth to the Son of the Highest must have utterly abashed and overwhelmed her. Now both these states of mind are here—faith and awe. Faith says, "I know that the angel's message is true, and therefore my soul doth magnify the Lord." Awe says, "What a solemn thing it is that God should come to dwell in my breast! My soul doth magnify the Lord." Thus in these words confidence and reverence have met together, assurance and adoration have kissed each other. Here is faith with its familiarity, and devotion with its godly fear.

Here, also, you very clearly perceive two other holy emotions. Her humility is apparent, and in the text it seems to ask the question, "How can this happen to me? How can it be that such a poor woman, affianced to a humble carpenter, should be the mother of my Lord?" Humility sheds its perfume here, like a violet hidden away. She seems to say, "Not unto me, not unto me be the glory! My soul doth magnify the Lord." But that humility is not of the cringing and crouching kind which draws back from God, for it is clearly mixed with love. "I rejoice in my gracious Lord," she seems to say, "I bless him: I love him: I praise him. My soul doth magnify the Lord. I am not worthy of his promised visitation, but it will be mine, and infinite condescension will do this thing unto me. Therefore do I love my God, and I draw near to him. My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Brothers and sisters, you will often find the language of my text the most expressive of utterances for all that is good in your minds. Many sweet passions, like little birds, may fold their wings, and dwell together in this one well-compacted nest,— "My soul doth magnify the Lord," Holy emotions may fly hither in swarms, and make the text like a hive of bees, stored with honey. As I turn and think it over, it sheds abroad its own spirit within me, as spices breathe out their own perfume, and I cry, "My soul doth magnify him."

I think I perceive in these words a singular mixture of admiration and calm thought: a wonder in which there is no surprise. The blessed Virgin is evidently, as I have said before, wonder-struck that such a thing should come to her, and yet there is about that wonder no startling of amazement, but a marvelling which is the result of previous careful thought. She had considered the prophecies and promises, and saw them about to be fulfilled in her seed. She sang in the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth verses, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." She had turned over the subject in her mind, and she came to the conclusion, "He has said he will do this. It is as he spake." So, oftentimes, when you get a mercy given to you, you will be surprised at it at first, but afterwards you will say, "This is even as the Lord promised to me. He doeth no new thing to his servant. It is only my forgetfulness that has made me to be

astonished. Did he not promise that he would help me—that he would deliver me—that he would give me all that I needed? And inasmuch as he has done it in this surprising way, my soul doth magnify him twice over for the wonderful mercy, and for the faithfulness of his covenant love which kept the ancient promise which he made to be yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Again, I say, I commend the text as an expression of your feelings. How sweet are the words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord"! They are full, many-sided, and natural, and yet most spiritual.

IV. Fourthly, I think my text may be used as A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS.

It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to everything. The mood which bids us sing "My soul doth magnify the Lord" is full of a hope which will be useful in a thousand ways. For instance, concerning our own providential condition, let us magnify the Lord. Surrounded with difficulties, let us walk on with confidence, because our great God is equal to every emergency, and can both level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Burdened with labors and stripped by necessities, let us maintain an unchanging cheerfulness, because we magnify the might and the bounty of the eternal Jehovah, whose name is God All-sufficient. When danger is magnified by fear, let God be magnified by faith. When the troubles of our heart are enlarged, let our expectations from the Lord be enlarged also.

The same God-magnifying spirit should attend our glances into futurity, if we indulge in any, and we are all too apt to do so. Ah! we would like to know, some of us, what is going to happen to us. Fain would we steal a glance behind the screen, and each one see

"What gloomy lines are writ for me,  
Or what dark scenes arise"

There is a desire in most persons' minds to draw away the curtain which God has so wisely placed over the future. This is very wrong of us, and yet it is as common as it is blamable. We all turn prophets every now and then, and when we do we prophesy evil, and therefore it would be well if we could catch the spirit of Mary with regard to our forecasts of the



future, and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Why do we set our blear-eyed anxieties to watch the signs of heaven? If we must pry, and guess, and speculate, why not employ our brighter powers, and let blue-eyed hope scan the ensigns of the sky? When we meddle with the future how dare we foretell that which would dishonor the Lord? If we must needs write bitter things against ourselves, yet we ought not to write untruthful things against him. When we do forecast the future at all, let us do it in the spirit wherewith we sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Let us be certain that we shall find him to be a great God in the future, greatly good, wondrously gracious, magnifying his mercy. We shall have troubles, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she foresees that we shall ride out all storms with Jesus at the helm, and come safe into port. Our anxious eye foresees necessities, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sees him with a golden key opening the treasures of David, and supplying all her wants. Our troubled ear can hear the wolf, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sings, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and he will preserve me." In this spirit you may look forward to the swellings of Jordan, magnifying the living God while you yourself lie down to die. If you faint and begin to say, "Ah! I shall never be able to die triumphantly," you are minimizing, and not magnifying, the Lord. You are making him little, and not great. Try and say, "How marvellously will he show his grace to me, a dying worm! Oh, how wondrous he will be in the eyes of angels that will crowd the banks to' hear a poor trembling soul like me go singing through the stream! My God will be great in that day; then will he lay bare his arm, and therefore will I fear no evil, for he will be with me; his rod and his staff will comfort me." Think great things of God. Greaten God. Magnify his name whenever you look forward to the future. Chase from your mind any imagination or foreboding which would detract from the greatness or the goodness of your God.

Judge in the same manner with regard to the salvation of your fellow-men. Never say, "It is of no use inducing such a man to attend the means of grace. He is a blaspheming wretch. All that he would do if he heard a sermon would be to make sport of it for the next week. I have no faith in taking such a man to hear a ministry which he would be sure to ridicule." Such unbelieving talk is making little of God. Is it not so? Is it not dishonoring God to think that his gospel cannot reach the most depraved

hearts? Why, if I knew that a man had seven thousand devils in him, I believe the gospel could drive them all out. Get the sinners under the sound of the word, and the worse they are, oftentimes, the more does God love to display the greatness of his grace in casting down the power of their sin. Believe great things of God. I can honestly say this—that since God saved me I never doubted his power to save anybody. All things are possible now that he has brought me to his feet, and kept me these years as his loving child. I must think great things of God who has done such great things for so great a sinner as I am. Greaten God, my brethren; greaten God. Believe great things of him. Believe that China can be made into a province of the celestial kingdom. Believe that India will cast her riches at Jesus' feet. Believe that the round world will yet be a pearl on Christ's finger-ring. Do not go in for the dispiriting, despairing, unmanly, un-Christly ideas of those who say, "The world is not to be converted. It is a poor wreck that will go to pieces, and we are to fish off here and there one from the water-logged hulk." Brethren, never believe that we are to stand by and see the eternal defeat of God. Deem not that our God is unable to win upon the old lines, and must needs shift the plan of the campaign. It shall never be said that God could not save the world by the preaching of the gospel, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore must needs bring in the advent of the Lord to do it. I believe in the coming of the Lord, but, blessed be his name, I believe also that the battle which he has begun in the Spirit he will fight out in the old style, and finish with a victory in the very manner in which he opened the conflict. It pleases him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and it will please him to continue to do so till the whole round earth shall ring with hallelujahs of praise to the grace of God, who by the feeblest of his creatures shall have defeated sin, and death, and hell. Do not get into a desponding state of mind, and rush into half-insane theories of prophecy in order to excuse your unbelief and idleness. Never throw down your weapons, and pretend that the victory is to be won by doting and dreaming: we are to fight to the end with the same weapons, and in the same name. We will drive the devil out of the world yet, by the grace of God, by the old, efficient weapons of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Greaten God, and magnify his name, by believing in the success of the gospel of his dear Son.

As to the nearer future, never believe any human prophecy that does not glorify God. Expect great things of God, and if you hear any prediction that is not to the glory of God, conclude that it is a blunder. "Oh!" said one to me, "this country will go back to Romanism: the gospel light will be quenched in England." Ah, dear me! Some brethren are mightily fond of this prognostication. But, my dear friend, there is one thing that always comforts me, namely, that God is not dead: and he is not going to be defeated by the pope of Rome, or fifty popes of Rome. He will win the victory yet. Always have courage, for it is God's cause, and it is in God's hands, and, being in God's hands, it is safe enough. See what you do:—because you cannot trust God's hand you trust your own! You thrust out your sacrilegious arm to interfere with God's peculiar work. What are you at? You are about to defile God's ark. Recollect the story of Uzzah. Pluck your hand back, and leave the ark alone. The Lord will help you to do such work as he gives you to do, but he has not made you Lord of empires, nor director of providence. Leave to his sovereign sway the purposes of his eternal grace, and depend upon it he will bring the world to Jesus' feet. Christ himself shall come: be you looking for him every day, but be constant in his service, working for him every hour. Believe, too, that he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and where amidst Judea's glades Christ has been dishonored and the false prophet has ruled, there too shall he reign, and Jew and Gentile shall worship and adore his ever-blessed name. I say again, magnify the Lord with all your souls. Greaten God. Expect great things in the future, and with the cheery note of confidence go forward to battle for him whose is the victory for ever and ever.

V. Once more, and I have done. Our text should be used as a GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. We will finish with that. Here is a very useful test for young disciples who are beginning to study God's word. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." If you will carry this with you it will often save you from error, and guide you into truth. There is certain teaching which makes a great deal of man: it talks much of man's free-will, ability, capacity, and natural dignity. It evidently makes man the center and end of all things, and God is placed in a position of service to his creature. As for the Fall: father Adam slipped and broke his little finger, or something of the kind, but this theology sees no great ruin as the result of the fall. As

for salvation: it is a slight cure for a small ill, and by no means the infinite grace which we consider it to be. Dear brethren, let those have this theology who like it, but do not you touch it even with a pair of tongs. It is of no use to man, for it mistakes his position, and only ministers to his pride. Man's place is not on the throne, but at the foot of the cross. Listen to another theology, in which the sinner is laid low, his sinfulness is exposed, his corruption is unfolded, Christ's redemption is magnified, free grace is extolled, and the Holy Ghost is adored. That is the theology for you, believe it: that is the theology of the Scriptures, accept it. I do not think that you will often be led wrong if this be your mode of judgment: that which glorifies God is true, and that which does not glorify God is false.

Sometimes you will meet with an undoubted teaching of God's word which you do not understand. You know that the doctrine is taught in the word, but you cannot make it coincide with some other truth, and you cannot quite see, perhaps, how it glorifies God. Then, dear brother, dear sister, glorify God by believing it. To believe a doctrine which you see to be true by mere reason is nothing very wonderful. There is no very great glory to God in believing what is as clear as the sun in the heavens; but to believe a truth when it staggers you—oh, gracious faith! oh, blessed faith! You will perhaps remember an illustration taken from Mr. Gough, where the little boy says, "If mother says it is so, it is so if it is not so." That is the kind of believing for a child towards its mother, and that is the sort of believing we ought to exercise towards God. I do not see the fact, and I cannot quite apprehend it, but God says it is so, and I believe him. If all the philosophers in the world should contradict the Scriptures, so much the worse for the philosophers; their contradiction makes no difference to our faith. Half a grain of God's word weighs more with us than a thousand tons of words or thoughts of all the modern theologians, philosophers, and scientists that exist on the face of the earth; for God knows more about his own works than they do. They do but think, but the Lord knows. With regard to truths which philosophers ought not to meddle with, because they have not specially turned their thoughts that way, they are not more qualified to judge than the poorest man in the church of God, nay, nor one-half so much. Inasmuch as the most learned unregenerate men are dead in sin, what do they know about the living

things of the children of Cod? Instead of setting them to judge we will sooner trust our boys and girls that are just converted, for they do know something of divine things, but carnal philosophers know nothing of them. Do not be staggered, brothers and sisters, but honor God, glorify God, and magnify him by believing great things and unsearchable—past your finding out—which you know to be true because he declares them to be so. Let the ipse dixit of God stand to you in the place of all reason, being indeed the highest and purest reason, for God, the Infallible, speaks what must be true.

So, then, I come back to where I started. Let us go forth and practically try to magnify the name of the Lord. Go home and speak well of his name: gather your children together and tell them what a good and great God he has been. Some of you who have a swarm of youngsters could not do better than spend half an hour in telling them of his goodness to you in all your times of trouble. Leave to your children the heirloom of gratitude. Tell them how good the Lord was to their father, and how good he will be to his children: tell your servants, tell your work-people, tell anybody with whom you come in contact what a blessed God the Lord is. For my part, I never can speak well enough of his adorable name. He is the best of masters, his service is delight; he is the best of fathers, his commands are pleasure. Was there ever such a god as our God, our enemies themselves being judges?

Magnify his name by the brightness of your countenances. Rejoice and be glad in him. When you are in sorrow and must needs fast, yet appear not unto men to fast, but anoint your faces and still wear a smile. Let not the world think that the servants of a king go mourning all their days. Make the world feel what a great God you serve, and what a blessed Savior Christ is, and thus evermore let your soul magnify the Lord. God grant you grace to do so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The King In His Beauty**

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. -Isaiah 33:17

When the Assyrians had invaded Judea with an immense army, and were about to attack Jerusalem, Rab-shakeh was sent with a railing message to the king and his people. When Hezekiah heard of the blasphemies of the proud Assyrian, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord, and sent the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth to consult with Isaiah the prophet. The people of Jerusalem, therefore, had seen their king in most mournful array, wearing the garments of sorrow, and the weeds of mourning; they were, however, cheered by the promise that there should be so complete a defeat to Sennacherib, that the king should again adorn himself with the robes of state, and appear with a smiling countenance in all the beauty of joy. Moreover, through the invasion of Sennacherib, the people had not been able to travel; they had been cooped up within the walls of Jerusalem like prisoners. No journeys had been made, either in the direction of Dan or Beersheba, even the nearest villages could not be reached; but the promise is given, that so completely should the country be rid of the enemy, that wayfarers should be able to see the whole of their territory, even that part of the land which was very far off; it should be safe for them to make the longest voyages; they should no longer be afraid of the oppressor, but should find the highways, which once lay waste, to be again open and safe for traffic.

In these days of gospel truth, dear friends, we see in this text a meaning far surpassing that which gladdened the citizens of Zion. We have a nobler King than Hezekiah; he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We have seen our well-beloved Monarch, in the days of his flesh, humiliated and sore vexed; for he was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow as his daily dress; shame was his mantle, and reproach was his vesture. None more afflicted and sorrowful than he. Yet now, inasmuch as he has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King in his beauty,

returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendor of victory. No longer does he wear the purple robe of mockery; but he is clothed with a garment down to the foot, and gird about the paps with a golden girdle. We also, his joyful subjects who were once shut up and could not come forth, are now possessed of boundless gospel liberty. Now that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, we freely possess to its utmost bounds the covenant blessings which he has given to us; and we rejoice that if the land of happiness should sometimes seem to be very far off, it is nevertheless our own, and we shall stand in our lot in the end of the days. The Savior highly exalted, and ourselves at a happy liberty-these are two rich themes for thought; may God the Holy Spirit grant that we may find wines on the lees well refined stored in the text.

I. Proceeding, without further preface, to the text itself, we remark that WE HAIL THE LORD JESUS CHIST AS OUR KING.

We-I must not speak for you all-I wish I could; but there are some here, at any rate, who have bowed the knee to that great Son of David, who is the Son of God; who delight to feel that Jesus is their heart's Lord, the unrivalled Master of their affections. I speak of such- we hail Immanuel as King. His right to royalty lies first in his exalted nature as the Son of God. Who should be king but Jehovah? And, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is very God of very God, let him reign, let his kingdom come, let him in all things have the pre-eminence. Bow down, ye creatures of his hand, and do him homage, for the Lord is King for ever and ever. Hallelujah! Let his opposers tremble at the unchangeable decree, for the Son of God must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet; for it is not to be endured that God should not be King in his own world; neither will it for ever be suffered that God in the earth which he has fashioned, should be forgotten or blasphemed. He who is God over all, blessed forever, shall yet be worshipped by every knee, while every tongue shall confess that he is Lord. Jesus has a right to reign because he is the Creator. "Without him was not anything made that was made." Shall not the potter exercise lordship over his own clay? If the Son of God hath made and formed us, shall he not command us? Who are the potsherds that shall set themselves in array against him? Surely he shall break them as with a rod of iron, and dash them into shivers. Besides this, the Lord Jesus is the

preserver of all men; for by him all things consist. It is by virtue of his intercession that the barren trees are not cut down: by the force of his tender love sinners are spared upon the earth. Should he not reign? If the breath of our nostrils be in his keeping, and we are ourselves the sheep of his pasture, we should cheerfully yield to his generous rule. Besides this, and over and above the natural rights of Christ to reign, he governs by virtue of his headship of the mediatorial kingdom. He is not merely King because he is God, but he is King in his complex nature as God and man. Here he has the rights of divine delegation, for God has made him King. Some of the worst of tyrants have delighted to call themselves kings by right divine; emperors, by the will of God; monarchs, by the grace of God, and the like. It may be so; I doubt not many of earth's tyrants require much grace, lest their crimes should bring them to speedy ruin; and doubtless it is sometimes the will of God to inflict great scourges upon guilty nations; but, my brethren, Jesus Christ is no despotic claimant of divine right, but he is really and truly the Lord's Anointed! "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." God hath given to him all power and all authority. As the Son of man, he is now head over all things to his church, and he reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at his girdle. "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We recognize him as King by right divine. We see in him most clearly that true deity which "doth hedge a king," and meekly we bow before him whom God has "appointed to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins." Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by the popular will, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in his church. If it could be put to the vote whether he should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown him. O that we could crown him more gloriously than we do! We should count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. Suffering should be pleasure, and loss should be gain, if thereby we could surround his brow with brighter crowns, and make him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, he shall reign. Long live the King. All hail to thee, King Jesus! Go forth, ye virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at his feet, strew his way with lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude; "bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all." Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in



Zion by right of conquest. He has taken and carried by storm the hearts of his people, and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of his own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins; shall he not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law, shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are his portion, whom he has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow, who shall snatch his conquest from his hand? All the rights of conquest support the throne of the Lord's Anointed; for God has declared that he will give him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: we are that spoil; we are trophies of his victory, the treasure for which he laid down his life, that he might redeem us unto himself. We, therefore, who have believed in him, accept him to be King, and do not for a moment question his right. We see him to be established upon the throne of his Father, and rejoice that though the people rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, yet hath the Lord set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, and said: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." All hail, Jesus, King of our souls!

Now, my brethren, in this great kingdom of our Lord Jesus, it behoves us, since we thus verbally acknowledge him to be King, distinctly to understand what this involves. We look upon the Lord Jesus as being to us the fountain of all spiritual legislation. He is a King in his own right-no limited monarch-but an autocrat in the midst of his church, and in the church all laws proceed from Christ and Christ only. As for us, his people, we reject with scorn and disdain all the spiritual legislation of kings and parliaments, of bishops and councils. We are loyal subjects of political rulers in political things, and none honor the king more than we do. In whatever state the Christian is cast, he counts it to be his Christian duty to submit himself to the powers that be; but, within the church of God, we know no royal sway of Caesar; we have another King, one Jesus: let Caesar mind his own, and never venture to touch the crown-right of Jesus. Out upon that base Erastianism which has laid the church of God at the foot of kings and princes, so that they, forsooth, can put their feet upon the neck of the free bride of our Lord Jesus Christ! We deny that either king or parliament can legislate for Christ's church; for Thomas Cranmer's church they may if they please, but for Christ's church, never!

In the midst of those churches which are true to Christ's authority, the Bible is the only statute book, and the living Jesus the only lawgiver. As Christ alone is the fountain of all spiritual legislation, so he alone gives authority to that legislation. If we be commanded to baptize, we baptize not because we have been authorised by a consistory, or have been licensed by a bishop or a presbytery, but we baptize because Christ has said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." If we come together to break bread, it is not in the name of a denomination or a court, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you rest any church practice upon the authority of Augustine, Chrysostom, or Calvin, or Luther, or base your faith upon some living preacher, and depend upon the force of his oratory, or upon the cogency of his argument, you put Christ out of his proper place. The reason why we should believe revealed truth is because Jesus has borne witness to it. His ipse dixit is the great ground of all our theology, for he is "the word of God;" and his regal supremacy is the argument for obedience to his commands. Where you have no command from Christ, your teaching is nought. Stand away, sir, you have no place here! Where you have no teaching of Christ at your back, your word is the word of man, and nothing more: it is not a word before which the subjects of King Jesus can bow themselves. If Christ be King, we both receive laws from him, and the force which makes the law, its dominion over our consciences. If he be King, my brethren, it should be our joy to obey him. We have nothing to do with setting up our opinions and views, and thoughts and tastes, where he alone is supreme. When we turn to this good and blessed old statute book, we must do what he bids us therein. We are not to cut, and pick, and choose, and take this and leave the other, for the royal imprimatur is put upon every page of the statute book, and it is our part, like little children, obedient to a gentle parent, to subject our wills at once. We should, like Mary, sit at Jesus' feet to learn, and then rise and carry into practice what we have learned in so good a school. Once more, if Jesus be King, then he is the Captain in all our warfare. When we fight, my brethren, if we contend after our own ways, with our own weapons, and duot under the guidance of Christ, we may expect defeat; but if we follow Christ, believing the truth, because he has revealed it, and contending for the truth as his truth, careless of man's esteem, and only caring for the esteem of Christ, then we shall be

honored of him in the day when he shall put the laurel upon the head of the conquerors. May God grant us grace to be such!

I am afraid that many Christians do not understand the mediatorial royalty of Christ in the church. I see so many of them acting as if they were not subjects of a King at all, but were mere bandits fighting on their own account, doing just according to their own judgment. I hear so many professors quoting this man's authority, and that. I am of the same mind as the apostle, who spoke of some of whom he said he feared lest their faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. If it does so, you forget that your faith and everything else must stand in Christ, and that Christ must in all your graces and in all your actions be acknowledged as head over all things to his church, which is his body, or else you err, not holding the Head. We are the spouse, he is the husband: He loves and cares for us; but the wife's business is to be obedient to her lord. Let us not prove unfaithful to the marriage-bond, and violate the conjugal vow by being unkind, unfaithful, and disobedient to our Husband, but by his grace let us watch to know his will, make haste to do it when it is known, and ever ask him to teach us his way and guide us in his paths till he takes us to his rest. We sincerely and cheerfully acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to be a King-our King.

## II. Secondly, WE DELIGHT TO KNOW THAT OUR KING POSSESSES SUPERLATIVE BEAUTY.

There is a natural beauty, which belongs to our beloved. Who can be more beautiful than God, who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders"? There is a natural beauty in the character of Christ. Indeed, so beautiful is that character that those who have railed most against Christianity, have scarcely had the heart to say a word against Christ, and they have first been compelled to belie the narrative of his life before they could raise objections against him. Perfect in love, goodness, and truth, never spake man like this man. Never was there a character which could rival his inimitable excellence. But the beauty intended in the text is not that of his nature and his character, but the beauty of position. As I told you in regard to Tiekiah, the people could see his beauty and character as well when in sackcloth as in cloth of gold, but the beauty they were to see was the public state of royalty and happiness; and such is the

beauty which we believe our Lord Jesus now has. He had this glory originally. He speaks of the glory which he had with his Father before the world was. From of old he was inconceivably great; the cherubim and seraphim hastened to obey him who sat upon a throne, high and lifted up, whose train filled the temple. Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Among the gods, who is like unto thee? He was the express image of his Father's person, and the brightness of his Father's glory. But you know how he came from heaven, undressing all the way, taking off robe after robe, and jewel after jewel, till here he wrapped his Godhead in a veil of our inferior clay. He cast off even the beauty, which naturally belonged to his manhood; and though he was fairer than any of the children of men, yet his visage became more marred than that of any man. You know at last how, having given his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair, hiding not his face from shame and spitting, he at last consented that the cold seal of death should be set upon his blessed visage; and though he saw no corruption, yet did he sleep in the sombre depths of the tomb. Herein was his humiliation; but, beloved, our King is now in his beauty. He was in his beauty at the moment of the resurrection, when the watchmen in terror fled far away, or, fainting, became as dead men. He somewhat hid his resurrection splendor when he sojourned for forty days below; yet it must have been a lovely sight to see him at Emmaus, when he was known of the disciples in breaking of bread; or, again, when he took a piece of a fish and a part of a honeycomb, and did eat before them. Oh, happy was that Thomas, though to be chidden for his unbelief, who was privileged to put his finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into the wound of that blessed body! How that body must have sparkled with glory in the eyes of seraphs, when a cloud received him out of mortal sight, and he ascended up to heaven! Brethren, it is yonder that the King is in his beauty; he is now crowned with the crown, which God has given him, as a reward for his tremendous labors and his terrific sufferings. Now he wears the glory which he had with God or ever the earth was, and yet another glory above all-that which he has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and hell. Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for he hath redeemed us unto God by his blood!" Hark how the hallelujah, which went up before of old time, has a sweeter note to it, when they sing, "For thou wast slain." More deep and more

melodious are the harpings of the harpers, and the swellings of that song which is comparable to great thunders, and to the mighty waves of the sea-

"Worthy is he that once was slain,  
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died;  
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign  
At his Almighty Father's side:"

The King this day wears the beauty of an intercessor who can never fail, of a Prince who can never be defeated, of a conqueror who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart's allegiance of every subject, of a well-beloved who is adored in the depths of all regenerate hearts. Jesus wears all the beauty which the pomp of heaven can bestow upon him, all the glory which ten thousand times ten thousand angels can minister to him. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; Jesus is in the midst of them as in the holy place. You cannot with your utmost stretch of imagination conceive the beauty which now adorns our King; yet, brethren, there will be a further revelation of it when he shall appear on earth in his glory, for he is yet to descend from heaven in great power. "We believe that thou shalt shortly come to be our Judge." We expect to see the King on earth again, it may be as a King to rule over all the nations; it may be, it must be, as a Judge to separate the people as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Oh, the splendor of that glory! It will ravish his people's hearts, but those who in derision crowned him, mocking thus his gracious claim, shall weep and wail because of him, when they shall look on him whom they have pierced but find no salvation, seeing they rejected him in the day of grace. Amidst the splendours of that day, it shall be the joy of the Christian to see the King in his beauty. Nor is this the close, for eternity shall sound his praise: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever! For ever shall Christ be fair and lovely in the esteem of his Father, in the sight of all intelligent spirits, lovely to the ends of the universe, lovely while the cycles of ages shall roll, chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Thus beloved, the King is arrayed in rarest beauty.

III. Furthermore, THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN WE SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

We see the King in his beauty at this moment, not with these eyes, but with the far clearer spiritual eye of faith. Eyes are impediments to spiritual sight, faith is the true eyeball of the soul; confidence in God substantiateth the things that are not seen, gives solid form and shape to that which eye hath not beheld. Let me tell you briefly when some of us have seen the King in his beauty: we saw him in that day when he pardoned all our sins. You remember it; that day when Jesus met you, and you were able to cast all your sins on him, and see them all forgiven; did you ever see such a lovely sight before? Well do I recollect that day; well will some of you remember the time when you laid your sins on Jesus, the appointed Lamb of God. You had had many friends, but never such a friend as he. You had derived much comfort at different times, but never such comfort as he gave you. Oh, those dear wounds, that thorn-crowned head, that blood-besprinkled person! How you could have kissed those feet! With what alacrity would you have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, to have poured it on his head, if you could have done so! He was precious to you; he is precious now at the bare recollection of that happy day. When the king writes the felon's pardon, how fair is his handwriting! When the King says, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud," even the weak and bloodshot eyes of a penitent sinner can discern the inexpressible loveliness of such a gracious Lord. But, dear brethren, Jesus Christ was in his beauty seen by us more fully, when after being pardoned, we found how much he had done for us. You had no idea when you were first saved that there was so much in store for you; you conceived that if your sins were forgiven, it would be all you wanted; but lo! you found you were made a child of God, introduced into the family of the Most High, that you were covered with a robe of righteousness, that your feet were set upon the Rock of Ages, that a new song was put into your mouth, and that you had a portion in the skies. Do you recollect, some of you, when first of all you learned the doctrine of Jesus Christ's eternal love to you? I know it came to my mind, when first I understood it, like a new discovery. Columbus, when he discovered America, could not have been so overjoyed as my heart was when I learned the lesson of those words, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Oh, you saw the King in his beauty when you discovered that not only had he loved you with an

everlasting love, but always would he do so; that from his bosom he never could or would divorce you; that you were his in time, and would be his in eternity. Do you recollect when you could grasp that glorious truth-

"Immutable his will,  
Though dark may be my frame,  
His loving heart is still  
Eternally the same:  
My soul through many changes goes,  
His love no variation knows."

Let me say to you, beloved, the more you know about Christ, the less you are satisfied with superficial views of him, and the more you deeply study his transactions in the eternal covenant, his engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fullness of his grace which shines in all his offices, the more will you be seeing the King in his beauty. Be much in such outlooks! Long more and more to see Jesus! There are times also, when, in our contemplation's, we see his beauty. Meditation and contemplation are often like windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which we see the Redeemer. Meditation puts the telescope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus after a better sort than we could have seen him if we had lived in the days of his flesh; for now we see not only Jesus in the flesh, but the spiritual Jesus; we see the spirit of Jesus, the core and essence of Jesus, the very soul of the Savior. O happy you, that spend much time in contemplations! I wish that we had less to do, that we might do more of this heavenly work. Would that our conversation were more in heaven, and that we were more taken up with the person, the work, the beauty of our incarnate Lord. More meditation, and you would see the King in his beauty better.

Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before, when we come to die. Many saints in dying have looked up from amidst the stormy waters, and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, and heard him say, "It is I, be not afraid." I have heard expressions from some dying men and women, that I never met with in the best written book. They have seemed to me as if they knew more about my Master than I had ever learned, or than the old divines, or the best of writers, had ever been able to communicate. Ah,

yes! when the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away, we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the sunlight of heaven comes streaming through. But, brethren, if we want to see the King in his beauty, we must go to heaven for it, or the King must come here in his person. It may be he will spare us till he cometh; but, just as likely is it that he will take us away to see him where he is. Do you never long for him? Do you never grow weary of this prison-house? Do you never pant to see your beloved? Those sweet words of our hymn, do they never come across your mind?-

"My heart is with him on his throne,  
And ill can brook delay;  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
'Rise up, and come away.'"

He is our Husband, and we are widowed by his absence; he is our brother sweet and fair, and we are lonely without him. Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true life: when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? When shall the veil be rent again and the glory of God be seen? When shall we leave these childish things, leave the glass in which we see our beloved darkly, and see him face to face? Oh, long-expected day begin!

Mine eyes shall see the King in his beauty. As I pause over this verse, I would like to ask every hearer here whether he expects to see the King with joy? You never will unless you see him here on earth as your Savior. You must see him by faith in his sufferings, or else you will never see him by sight in his beauty. Let the question go along these seats, "Shall mine eyes see the King in his beauty, or, must I say with Balaam, 'I shall see him, but not nigh; I shall behold him, but not now; I shall see him as a Judge, but his beauties shall increase my alarm; I shall flee from him and say to the rocks and to the hills, hide me from the face of him that sitteth on the throne.'" Dear hearer, I hope that will not be your dreadful lot, but look to him this morning by faith, for still he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Cast your spirits upon his finished work this moment, and then joyfully sing -

"There shall my disimprison'd soul



Behold him and adore;  
Be with his likeness satisfied,  
And grieve and sin no more.  
Shall see him wear that very flesh  
On which my guilt was lain;  
His love intense, his merit fresh,  
As though but newly slain.  
These eyes shall see him in that day,  
The God that died for me;  
And all my rising bones shall say,  
Lord, who is like to Thee?"

IV. THE EXCEEDING GLORY OF THIS SIGHT may well detain us for a minute or two. I shall set out this exceeding glory to you by way of contrast. What a sight that was which Abraham beheld one morning when he lifted up his eyes "and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." I think I see the prophet all alone, gazing upon the dreadful sight. He had interceded and wrestled with God with arguments, but yet Sodom and the cities of the plain are all gone! A fire-shower has destroyed them, and their smoke darkens the sky. Can you put yourself in such a position, and on a far more terrible scale, look at the judgments of the lost, of which we are told in the book of the Revelation- "their smoke goeth up for ever and ever"? What a vision! And you would have been there, not as a spectator but yourself dwelling with everlasting burnings unless love had delivered you. Contrast what you deserve, with what grace has prepared for you! O believer in Christ, no smoke of furnace, no terrors of devouring flame, but for you the promise, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Glory be to superabounding grace, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Contrast this again with another sight. The prophet Ezekiel was taken to the temple, and after seeing the image of jealousy set up, he was shown yet greater abominations; for behold, there was a hole in the wall, and within were all forms of creeping things and abominable beasts, and a voice said to the prophet, "I will show thee greater abominations than

these," and he saw yet filthier and fouler forms of idolatry. You and I have been like that prophet; we have had to gaze into our own hearts, and we have seen the idols there; and as we have looked longer, we have seen worse idols than we had seen aforesaid; and if your daily experience be like mine, you have often heard that mysterious voice, "Son of man, I will show thee greater abominations than these." Yet, although all this inbred sin was within us, and some of it is still there, yet our eyes shall see the King in his beauty. What a change from fighting with corruption to full communion with Christ! What an exchange from a sense of sin to the perfect image of our best beloved! Rejoice, then, dear brethren, exceedingly, when you look at the contrast.

Again, let me try to show you the great beauty of this sight by comparison. Our Lord had a very remarkable sight when he was taken up to an exceeding high mountain, and he was shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof by the evil spirit. A fair sight-you and I might be glad of the vision, though not of the temptation which followed it; but among all that was to be seen from this mount of temptation, there is nothing to equal the sight of the King in his beauty. Verily I say unto you, that all the kings of the earth, in all their splendor, with all their hosts and armies in their glittering array, are not to be compared to him who is altogether lovely. Compare yourself, again, with the queen of Sheba; she came from afar to see the wisdom of Solomon; but, behold, a greater than Solomon is to be seen by you. When she saw the king's riches, and his servants, and his pomp, no heart was left in her; but Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like the Savior of men. He was not worthy to be a waiting footman at the table of our great King. Even the sight that Moses saw hardly bears comparison. He looked from Pisgah upon the land that flowed with milk and honey, and he tracked the land from Lebanon's snow-crested peaks far away to the blue sea, and to the tawny desert that goeth down to Egypt. With joyful eyes he beheld the cities where the tribes would dwell, and saw the hills which are round about Jerusalem; but he died, and entered not into the land. You and I see Jesus, and in that day we enter fully into possession of him; all the milk and honey that ever flowed in Sharon's plains, or Eshcol's valleys, never could be compared for a single second to the everlasting joy and beatific blessedness that are to be found in a sight of Christ. I think our sight of

Christ will be even nearer and clearer than that of John in Patmos, though that is the nearest approach to it. John saw his Master but for a season, we shall behold him forever, and see the Savior in his own person, and not a mere picture upon the camera of the imagination.

V. Lastly. From the text it appears that THIS SIGHT OF CHRIST EMINENTLY AFFORDS LIBERTY TO THE SOUL.

When we see not Christ, we cannot receive the possessions of the covenant; but when we get a view of the King in his beauty, then we see the land that is very far off. A sight of Christ gives us a view of the dim past: a view of electing love we sweetly enjoy when we see the King in his beauty. And the future, which is dark with excessive brightness-that we also see when we see Jesus, and know that we shall be like him when we see him as he is. If we live near to Jesus, we shall count no covenant mercy too great for him to bestow. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Do any of you want to enjoy the high doctrine of eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you long to understand mysteries? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then, beloved, you must get to see the King in his beauty. He who understands Christ, receives an anointing from the Holy One, by which he knows all things. Christ is the great master-key of all the chambers of God; there is no treasure-house of God which will not open, and yield up all its wealth to the soul that lives near to Jesus. O that he would dwell in my bosom! Would that he would make my heart to be his house, his dwelling-place forever. Open the door, beloved hearers, and he will come into your souls. He has long been knocking, and it is that which he has wanted, that he may sup with you, and you with him. He sups with you because you find the house or the heart, and you with him because he brings the provision. He could not sup with you if it were not in your heart, you finding the house; nor could you sup with him, for you have a bare cupboard, if he did not bring the provision with him. Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul. He will come with that love which you long to feel; he will come with that joy into which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit; he will bring you joy which now you have not; he will come with his flagons of wine and sweet

apples, and cheer you till you shall have no other sickness but that of love over-powering, love divine. Only open the door, then, but have no other sickness than that of love. Only open the door, then, to him; drive out his enemies; give him the keys of your heart, and he will dwell there for ever, and your eyes shall see the King in his beauty. May the Lord give his blessing to these few remarks of ours, and cause them to live in his people's souls, so that they may live near to him and dwell in him. You who never knew the Lord, take my word for it, you do not know what happiness is. If you have never seen my Lord, you have never seen anything worth seeing; if you have never rested in him, you have not cast your anchor where it will hold. O hunger after Jesus! long for Jesus! Never rest till you win him! He is waiting to receive you: he has a great heart to receive sinners.

"He sits on Zion's hill,  
And receives poor sinners still."

Do but come to him. As for your sin and your righteousness- throw both of those away-come to him as you are: he will never reject the soul that longs to be saved entirely by him. May God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **The King's Highway Opened And Cleared**

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. - Acts 16:31

You will remember that when the children of Israel were settled in Canaan, God ordained that they should set apart certain cities to be called the Cities of Refuge, that to these the man-slayer might flee for security.

If he killed another unawares, and had no malice aforethought, he might flee at once to the City of Refuge; and if he could enter its gates before the avenger of blood should overtake him, he would be secure. We are told by the rabbis that once in the year, or oftener, the magistrates of the district were accustomed to survey the high roads which led to these cities. they carefully gathered up all the stones, and took the greatest possible precautions that there should be no stumbling-blocks in the way which might cause the poor fugitive to fall, or might by any means impede him in his hasty course. We hear, moreover, and we believe the tradition to be grounded in fact, that all along the road there were hand-posts with the word "Refuge" written very legibly upon them, so that when the fugitive came to a crossroad, he might not need to question for a single moment which was the way of escape; but seeing the well-known word "Refuge," he kept on his breathless and headlong course until he had entered the suburb of the City of Refuge, and he was then at once completely safe.

Now, my brothers and sisters, God has prepared for the sons of men a City of Refuge, and the way to it is by FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is needful, however, that very often the ministers of Christ should survey this road, lest there should be any stumbling-blocks in the path of the poor sinner. I propose this morning to go along it, and, by God's grace, to remove any impediment which Satan may have laid upon the path, and may God so help me, that this survey may be of spiritual benefit to all your souls, that any of you who have been made to stumble in the path of faith may now pluck up courage, and run joyfully forward; hoping yet to escape from the fierce avenger of your sins.

Well may the minister be careful to keep the road of faith clear for the seeking sinner, for surely the sinner hath a heavy heart to carry, and we ought to make the road as clear and as smooth as we can. We should make straight paths for the feet of these poor benighted souls. It should be our endeavor to cast loads of promises into every slough that runs across the path, that so it may be a king's highway, and may be safe and easy for travelling for those weary feet that have to carry such a heavy heart. Besides, we must remember that the sinner will make stumbling-blocks enough for himself, even with our greatest and most scrupulous care to remove any others that may naturally lie in his way. For this is one

of the sad follies of the poor desponding soul - that it spoils its own road. You have sometimes seen, perhaps, the newly-invented engine in the streets, the locomotive that lays down its own pathway and then picks it up again. Now, the sinner is the very reverse of that; he spoils his own road before himself, and then carries behind him all the mire and dirt of his own mishaps. Poor soul! he flings stones before himself, cuts out valleys, and casts up mountains in his own pathway. Well may the ministers, then, be careful to keep this road clear. And, let me add there is another weighty reason. Behind him comes the furious avenger of blood. Oh, how swift is he! There is Moses armed with all the wrath of God, and Death following hard after him - a mounted rider upon his pale horse; and after Death there cometh Hell with all the powers and legions of Satan, all athirst for blood and swift to slay. Make straight the road, oh ministers of Christ, level the mountains, fill up the valleys; for this is a desperate flight, this flight of the sinner from his ferocious enemies towards the one City of Refuge - the atonement of Jesus Christ.

I have thus given the reasons why I am compelled in spirit to make this survey this morning. Come, O Spirit, the Comforter, and help us now, that every stone may be cast out of the high road to heaven.

The road to heaven, my brethren, is BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is not by well-doing that you can be saved, though it is by ill-doing that you will be damned if you put not trust in Christ. Nothing that you can do can save you. Albeit that after you are saved it will be your delightful privilege to walk in the ways of God and to keep his commandments, yet all your own attempts to keep the commandments previous to faith, will but sink you deeper into the mire, and will by no means contribute to your salvation. The one road to heaven is BY FAITH IN CHRIST. Or to make it plainer still as the countryman said, there are but two steps to heaven - out of self into Christ, and, then, out of Christ into heaven. Faith is simply explained as trusting in Christ. I find that Christ commands me to believe in him, or to trust him. I feel that there is no reason in myself why I should be allowed to trust him. But he commands me to do so. Therefore altogether apart from my character or from any preparation that I feel in myself, I obey the command, and sink or swim, I trust Christ. Now, that is faith, - when with the eye shut as to all evidence of hope in ourselves, we

take a leap in the dark right into the arms of an Omnipotent Redeemer. Faith is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being a leaning upon Christ; a casting of one's self upon him, or, as the old Puritans used to put it, (using a somewhat hard word) it is recumbency on Christ - the leaning of the whole weight upon his cross; ceasing to stand by the strength of one's own power and resting wholly upon the rock of ages. The leaving of the soul in the hands of Jesus is the very essence of faith. Faith is receiving Christ into our emptiness. There is Christ like the conduit in the marketplace. As the water flows from the pipes, so does grace continually flow from him. By faith I bring my empty pitcher and hold it where the water flows, and receive of its fullness, grace for grace. It is not the beauty of my pitcher, it is not even its cleanness that quenches my thirst: it is simply holding that pitcher to the place where water flows. Even so I am but the vessel, and my faith is the hand which presents the empty vessel to the flowing stream. It is the grace, and not the qualification of the receiver which saves the soul. And though I hold that pitcher with a trembling hand, and much of that which I seek may be lost through my weakness, yet if the soul be but held to the fountain, and so much as a single drop trickle into it, my soul is saved. Faith is receiving Christ with the understanding, and with the will, submitting everything to him, taking him to be my all in all, and agreeing to be henceforth nothing at all. Faith is ceasing from the creature and coming to the Creator. It is looking out of self to Christ, turning the eye entirely from any good thing that is here within me, and looking for every blessing to those open veins, to that poor bleeding heart, to that thorn-crowned head of him whom God hath set forth "to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world."

Well, having thus described the way, I now come to my real business of removing these stones.

1. A very common impediment in the pathway of the soul that is desiring to be saved, is the recollection of its past life. "Oh," saith the sinner, "I dare not trust Christ, because my past sins have been of an unusually black dye. I have been no common sinner, but I have been one singled out from the herd, a very monster in sin. I have taken the highest degree in the devil's college, and have become a master of Belial. I have learned to

sit in the seat of the scornful, and have taught others to rebel against God." Ah, soul, I know very well what this impediment is, for once it laid in my way, and very sorely did it trouble me. Before I thought upon my soul's salvation, I dreamed that my sins were very few. All my sins were dead as I imagined, and buried in the graveyard of forgetfulness. But that trumpet of conviction which aroused my soul to think of eternal things, sounded to all my sins, and oh, how they rose up in multitudes more countless than the sands of the sea! Now, I saw that my very thoughts were enough to damn me, that my words would sink me lower than the lowest hell; and as for my acts of sin they now began to be a stench in my nostrils, so that I could not bear them. I recollect the time when I thought I had rather have been a frog or a toad than have been made a man; when I reckoned that the most defiled creature, the most loathsome and contemptible was a better thing than myself; for I had so grossly and grievously sinned against Almighty God. Ah, my brethren, it may be that this morning your old oaths are echoing back from the walls of your memory. You recollect how you have cursed God, and you say, "Can I, dare I trust him whom I have cursed?" And your old lusts are now rising before you; midnight sins stare you in the face, and snatches of the lascivious song are being yelled in the ear of your poor convinced conscience. And all your sins as they rise up, cry, "Depart, thou accursed one! Depart! thou hast sinned thyself out of grace! Thou art a condemned one! Depart! There is no hope, there is no mercy for thee!"

Now, permit me in the strength and name of God to remove this stumbling block out of your way. Sinner, I tell thee that all thy sins, be they never so many cannot destroy thee if thou dost believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If now thou castest thyself simply on the merits of Jesus, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Only believe. Dare to believe that Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Take him at his word and trust him. And thou hast a warrant for doing it; for remember it is written "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Thou art commanded to believe, therefore, be thou never so black a sinner, the command is, thy warrant - oh, may God help thee to obey the command. Now, just as thou art, cast thyself on Christ. It is not the greatness of the sinner that is the difficulty; it is the hardness of the sinner's heart. If now thou art conscious of the



most awful guilt, thy guilt becomes as nothing in the eye of God when once he sees the blood of Christ sprinkled upon thee. I tell thee more, if thy sins were ten thousand times as many as they be, yet the blood of Christ is able to atone for them all. Only dare to believe that. Now, by a venturesome faith trust thyself in Christ. If thou art the most sick of all the wretches that ever this divine physician essayed to cure, so much the more glory to him. When a physician cures a man of some little finger-ache or some little disease, what credit doth he get? But when he heals a man who is all over diseased, who has become but a putrid mass, then there is glory to the physician. And so will there be to Christ when he saveth thee. But to put this block out of the way once for all. Remember, sinner, that all the while thou dost not believe in Christ, thou art adding to thy sin this great sin of not believing, which is the greatest sin in the world. But if thou obey God in this matter of putting thy trust in Christ, God's own Word is guaranteed that thy faith shall be rewarded, and thou shalt find that thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. By the side of Saul of Tarsus and of her, out of whom was cast seven devils, shalt thou one day stand. With the thief shalt thou sing of love divine, and with Manasseh shalt thou rejoice in him who can wash away the foulest crimes. Oh, I pray God there may be some one in this great crowd today, who may be saying in his heart, "Sir, you have described me. I do feel that I am the blackest sinner anywhere, but I will risk it, I will put my trust in Christ and Christ alone." Ah, soul, God bless thee; thou art an accepted one. If thou canst do this, this morning, I will be God's hostage that he will be true to thee and true to his Son, for never sinner perished yet that dared to trust the precious blood of Christ.

2. Now let me endeavor to upheave and eject another stumbling block. Many an awakened sinner is troubled because of the hardness of his heart and the lack of what he thinks to be true penitence. "Oh," saith he, "I can believe that however great my sins are they can be forgiven, but I do not feel the evil of my sins as I ought:" -

"My heart how dreadful hard it is;  
How heavy here it lies!  
Heavy and cold within my breast,  
Just like a rock of ice."

"I cannot feel," says one, "I cannot weep, I have heard of the repentance of others, but I seem to be just like a stone. My heart is petrified, it will not quake at all the thunders of the law, it will not melt before all the wooings of Christ's love." Ah, poor heart, this is a common stumbling-block in the way of those who are really seeking Christ. But let me ask thee one question. Dost thou read anywhere in the Word of God that those who have hard hearts are not commanded to believe? Because if thou canst find such a passage as that, I will be sorry enough to see it, but then I may excuse thee for saying, "I cannot trust Christ because my heart is hard." Do you not know that the Scripture runs thus? "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, if thou believest, though thy heart be never so hard, thy believing saves thee; and what is more, thy believing shall yet soften thy heart. If thou canst not feel thy need of a Savior as thou wouldst, remember that when thou hast a Savior thou wilt begin then to find out more and more how great was thy need of him. Why, I believe that many persons find out their needs by receiving the supply. Have you never walked along the street, and looking in at a shop window have seen an article, and have said, "Why, that is just what I want." How do you know that? Why, you saw the thing and then you wanted it. And I believe there is many a sinner who when he is hearing about Christ Jesus is led to say, "That is just what I want." Did not he know it before? No, poor soul, not till he saw Christ. I find my sense of need of Christ is ten times more acute now than it was before I found Christ. I thought I wanted him for a good many things then, but now I know I want him for everything. I thought there were some things which I could not do without him; but now I find that without him I can do nothing. But you say, "Sir, I must repent before I come to Christ." Find such a passage in the Word if you can. Doth not the Word say? "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Doth not one of our hymns translate that verse into rhyme and put it thus?

"True belief and true repentance.  
Every grace that brings us nigh -  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Oh, these graces are not of nature's spinning. We cannot make these in the loom of the creature. If you would know your need of Christ, take him now by faith and sense and feeling shall follow in the rear. Trust him now for everything. Dare to trust him. Hard as your heart is, say, "Just as I am, without a plea, but that thou commandest me, and bid'st me come, I come to thee!" Thy heart shall be softened by the sight of Christ, and love divine shall so sweetly commend itself to thee, that the heart which terrors could not move shall be dissolved by love.

Do understand me, my dear hearers. I wept to preach in the broadest manner I possibly can this morning the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone; that man is commanded to believe, and that altogether apart from anything in man, man has a right to believe. Not from any preparation that he feels, not from anything good he discerns in himself, but he has a right to believe simply because he is commanded to believe; and it; relying upon the fact that he is commanded, God the Holy Spirit enables him to believe, that faith will surely save the soul, and deliver him from the wrath to come. Let me take up, then, that stumbling stone about hardness of heart. Oh, soul, trust Christ and thy heart shall be softened. And may God the Holy Spirit enable thee to trust him hard heart and all, and then thy hard heart shall soon be turned into a heart of flesh, and thou shalt love him who hath loved thee.

3. Now, for a third stumbling block. "Oh," saith some poor soul, "I do not know whether I believe or not, sir. Sometimes I do believe; but oh, it is such little faith I have that I cannot think Christ can save me." Ah, there you are again you see, looking to yourself. This has made many trip and fall. I pray God I may put this out of your way. Poor sinner, remember it is not the strength of thy faith that saves thee, but the reality of thy faith. What is more, it is not even the reality of thy faith that saves thee, it is the object of thy faith. If thy faith be fixed on Christ, though it seems to be in itself a line no thicker than a spider's cobweb, it will hold thy soul throughout time and eternity. For remember it is not the thickness of this cable of faith, it is the strength of the anchor which imparts strength to the cable, and so shall hold thy ship in the midst of the most fearful storm. The faith that saves man is sometimes so small that the man himself cannot see it. A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds,

and yet if thou hast but that quantity of faith, thou art a saved man. Remember what the poor women did. She did not come and take hold of Christ's person with her hand, she did not throw her arms about his knees; but she stretched out her finger, and then - she did not touch Christ's feet or even his dress - she touched but the ravelling, the fringe of his garment and she was made whole. If thy faith be but as little as that, seek to get more of it, but still remember that it will save thee. Jesus Christ himself compares Little-faith to a smoking flax. Does it burn? is there any fire at all! No; there is nothing but a little smoke and that is most offensive. "Yes," saith Jesus, "but I will not quench it." Again, he compares it to a bruised reed. Of what service is it? It is broken, you cannot bring music from it; it is but a reed when it is whole, and now it is a bruised reed. Break it, snap it, throw, it away? "No," says he. "I will not break the bruised reed." Now, if that is the faith thou hast, the faith of the smoking flax, the faith of the bruised reed, thou art saved. Thou wilt have many a trial and many a trouble in going to heaven, with so little faith as that, for when there is little wind to a boat there must be much tugging at the oar; but still there will be wind enough to land thee in glory, if thou dost simply trust Christ, be that trust never so feeble. Remember a little child belongs to the human race as much as the greatest giant; and so a babe in grace is as truly a child of God as is Mr. Great-heart, who can fight all the giants on the road. And thou may'st be as much an heir of heaven in thy minority, in the infancy of thy grace, as thou wilt be when thou shalt have expanded into the full grown Christian, and shalt become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It is not, I tell thee, the strength of thy faith, but the object of thy faith. It is the blood, not the hyssop; not the hand that smites the lintel, but the blood that secures the Israelite in the day when God's vengeance passes by. Let that stumbling block be taken out of the way.

4. "But," saith another, "I do think sometimes I have a little faith, but I have so many doubts and fears. I am tempted every day to believe that Jesus Christ did not die for me, or that my belief is not genuine, or that I never experienced the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Tell me Sir, can I be a true believer in Christ if I have doubts and fears?" My answer is simply this, there is no Scripture which saith, that "He that believeth, shall be damned, if that faith be mixed: with doubts." "He that

believeth shall be saved," be that faith never so little, and even though it be intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that memorable story of our Savior, when he was on board a ship with his disciples. The winds roared, the ship rocked to and fro, the mast was strained, the sails were rent, and the poor disciples were full of fear: - "Lord save us or we perish." Here were doubts. What did Jesus say when he rebuked them? "Why are ye fearful" - O ye of no faith? No, "O ye of little faith." So there maybe little faith where there are great doubts. There is light at eventide in the air; even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if thy faith should never come to noon-day, if it do but come to twilight, thou art a saved man. Nay, more, if it doth not come to twilight, if thy faith is but starlight, nay, candlelight, nay, a spark - if it be but a glow-worm spark, thou art saved; and all thy doubts, and all thy fears, and thy distresses, terrible though they may be, can never trample thee in the dust, can never destroy thy soul. Do you not know that the best of God's children are exercised with doubts and fears even to the last? Look at such a man as John Knox. There was a man who could face the frowns of a world, who could speak like a king to kings, and fear no man; yet on his dying bed he was troubled about his interest in Christ, because he was tempted to self-righteousness. If such a man have doubts, dost thou expect to live without them? If God's brightest saints are exercised, if Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway, why how canst thou expect to live without clouds? Oh, my dear man, drop the idea that the prevalence of thy doubts disproves the truth of the promise. Again believe; away with all thy doubts; sink or swim; cast thyself on Jesus; and thou canst not be lost, for his honor is engaged to save every soul that puts its trust in him.

5. "Ah," says another, "but you have not yet hit upon my fear." I used when I first knew the Savior, to try myself in a certain manner, and often did I throw stumbling blocks in my path through it, and therefore I can speak very affectionately to any of you who are doing the same. Sometimes I would go up into my chamber, and by way of self-examination, I used to ask myself this question - Am I afraid to die? If I should drop down dead in my chamber, can I say that I should joyfully close my eyes? Well, it often happened that I could not honestly say so. I used to feel death would be a very solemn thing. Ah, then I said "I have

never believed in Christ, for if I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus, I should not be afraid to die, but I should be quite confident. I do not doubt that there are many here who are saying, "Sir, I cannot follow Christ, because I am afraid to die; I cannot believe that Jesus Christ will save me, because the sight of death makes me tremble." Ah, poor soul, there are many of God's blessed ones, who through fear of death, have been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. I know precious children of God now: I believe that when they die, they will die triumphantly; but I know this, that the thought of death is never pleasing to them. And this is accounted for, because God has stamped on nature that law, the love of life and self-preservation. And again, the man that hath kindred and friends, it is natural enough that he should scarce like to leave behind those that are so dear. I know that when he gets more grace he will rejoice in the thought of death; but I do know that there are many quite safe, who could die triumphantly, who, now, in the prospect of death feel afraid of it. I remember my aged grandfather once preach a sermon which I have not forgotten. He was preaching from the text "The God of all grace," and he somewhat interested the assembly, after describing the different kinds of grace that God gave, by saying at the end of each period "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." After each sentence there came the like, "But there is one kind of grace you do not want." And, then, he wound up by saying, "You don't want dying grace in living moments, but you shall have dying grace when you want it." Now, you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. If you are placed in the condition, you shall have grace enough if you put your trust in Christ. In a party of friends we were discussing the question, whether if the days of martyrdom should come we were prepared to be burned. Well, now, I must frankly say, that speaking as I feel to-day, I am not prepared to be burned. But I do believe if there were a stake in Smithfield, and I knew that I were to be burned there at one o'clock, that I should have grace enough to be burned at one o'clock; but I have not yet got to a quarter past twelve, and the time is not come yet. Do not expect dying grace, until you want it, and when the time comes, you may be sure you will have sufficient grace to bear it. Cast out that stumbling-block then. Rest thyself on Christ, and trust a living Christ to help thee in thy dying hour.

6. Another most grievous perplexity to many a seeking soul is this: "Oh, I

would trust Christ, but I feel no joy. I hear the children of God singing sweetly about their privileges. I hear them saying that they have been to the top of Pisgah and have viewed the promised land, have taken a pleasant prospect of the world to come; but oh, my faith yields me no joy. I hope I do believe, but at the same time I have none of those raptures. My worldly troubles press heavily upon me, and sometimes even my spiritual woes are greater than I can bear." Ah, poor soul, let me cast out that stone from thy road. Remember, it is not written "he that is joyful shall be saved," but "he that believeth shall be saved." Thy faith will make thee joyful by-and-bye, but it is as powerful to save thee even when it does not make thee rejoice. Why, look at many of God's people, how sad and sorrowful they have been. I know they ought not to be. This is their sin; but still it is such a sin that it does not destroy the efficacy of faith. Notwithstanding all the sorrows of the saint, faith still keeps alive, and God is still true to his promise. Remember, it is not what you feel that saves you, it is what you believe. It is not feeling but believing. "We walk by faith, not by sight." When I feel my soul as cold as an iceberg, as hard as a rock, and as sinful as Satan, yet even then faith ceases not to justify. Faith prevails as truly in the midst of sad feelings as of happy feelings, for then, standing alone, it proves the majesty of its might. Believe, O son of God, believe in him, and look not for aught in thyself.

7. Then, again, there are many that are distressed because they have blasphemous thoughts. Here, too, I can heartily sympathise with many. I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a certain country town, along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Savior. On a sudden the most fearful oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my heart. I put my hand to my mouth to prevent the utterance. I had not, that I know of, ever heard those words; and I am certain that I had never used in my life from my youth up so much as one of them, for I had never been profane. But these things sorely beset me: for half an hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God. That temptation passed away; but ere many days it was renewed again; and when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thought would pour in upon me more than at any other time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it. He said to me, "Oh, all this many of the people of God have

proved before you. But," said he, "do you hate these thoughts?" "I do," I truly said. "Then," said he, "they are not yours; serve them as the old parishes used to do with vagrants - whip them and send them on to their own parish. So" said he, "do with them. Groan over them, repent of them, and send them on to the devil, the father of them, to whom they belong - for they are not yours." Do you not recollect how John Bunyan hits off the picture? He says, when Christian was going through the valley of the shadow of death, "There stepped up one to him, and whispered blasphemous thoughts into his ear, so that poor Christian thought they were his own thoughts; but they were not his thoughts at all, but the injections of a blasphemous spirit." So when you are about to lay hold on Christ, Satan will ply all his engines and try to destroy you. He cannot bear to lose one of his slaves: he will invent a fresh temptation for each believer so that he may not put his trust in Christ." Now, come, poor soul, notwithstanding all these blasphemous thoughts in thy soul, dare to put thy trust in Christ. Even should those thoughts have been more blasphemous than any thou hast ever heard, come trust in Christ, come cast thyself on him. I have heard that when an elephant is going over a bridge he will sound the timber with his foot to see if it will bear him over. Come thou, who thinkest thyself an elephantine sinner, here is bridge that is strong enough for thee, even with all these thoughts of thine: - "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven thee." Throw that in Satan's face, and trust thyself in Christ.

8. One other stumbling-block, and I will have done. Some there be that say; Oh, sir, I would trust in Christ to save me if I could see that my faith brought forth fruits. Oh, sir, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Excuse my always bringing in my own feelings as an illustration, but I feel when I am preaching to tried sinners that the testimony of one's own experience is generally more powerful than any other illustration that can be found. It is not, believe me, any display of egotism, but the simple desire to come home to you, that makes me state what I have felt myself. The first Sunday after I came to Christ I went to a Methodist chapel. The sermon was upon this text: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ, and I knew that, when I sat in that house of prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on



the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and look; and I came up to that chapel groaning, because "when I would do good evil was present with me." The minister said that when Paul wrote the verse I have quoted, he was not a Christian; that this was his experience before he knew the Lord. Ah, what error, for I know that Paul was a Christian, and I know the more Christians look to themselves the more they will have to groan, because they cannot be what they want to be. What, you will not believe in Christ until you are perfect? Then you will never believe in him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust him with! Then you will never trust him at all. For rest assured you will never be perfect till you see the face of God in heaven. I knew one man who thought himself a perfect man and that man was hump-backed. This was my rebuke to his pride, "Surely if the Lord gave you a perfect soul he would give you a perfect body to carry it in." Perfection will not be found this side of the grave. Your business is to trust in Christ. You must depend on nothing but the blood of Christ. Trust in Christ and you stand secure. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." It is our duty to fight against corruption; it is our privilege to conquer it; it is our honor to feel that we are fighting against sin, it shall be our glory one day to tread it beneath our feet. But to-day expect not complete victory. Your very consciousness of sin proves that you are alive. The very fact that you are not what you want to be, proves that there is some high and noble thoughts in you that could not come by nature. You were content with yourself some six weeks ago, were you not? And the fact that you are discontent now, proves that God has put a new life into you, which makes you seek after a higher and better element in which to breathe. When you become what you want to be on earth, then despair. When the law justifies you, then you have fallen from grace; for Paul has said, "When we are justified by the law we are fallen from grace." But while I feel that the law condemns me it is my joy to know that believing in Christ, "There is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And now though I have been trying to clear the way I feel conscious that very likely I have been putting a stone or two in the road myself. May God

forgive me - it is a sin of inadvertance. I would lay this road as straight and clear as ever was turnpike road between one city and another. Sinner, there is nothing which can rob thee of thy right to believe in Christ. Thou art freely invited to come to the marriage banquet. The table is spread, and the invitation freely given. There are no porters at the door to keep thee out; there are none to ask a ticket of admission of thee:

"Let not conscience make you linger;  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him;  
This he gives you;  
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Come to him just as thou art. But, ah, I know that when we sit in our studies it seems a light think to preach the gospel and make people believe in Christ, but when we come to practice, it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing you would do it; but simply, when it is, "Believe, wash and be clean!" you will not do it. If I said, "Give me ten thousand pounds," you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that was ever concocted; but this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit. Ah, sinner, art thou too proud to be saved? Come, man, I beseech thee by the love of Christ, by the love of thine own soul, come with me, and let us go together to the foot of the cross. Believe on him who hangs groaning there, oh, put thy trust in him, who is risen from the dead, and has led Captivity captive. And if thou trustest him, poor sinner, thou shalt not be disappointed; it shall not be trust misplaced. Again I say it, I am content to be lost if thou art lost trusting in Christ; I will make my bed in hell with thee should God reject thee, if thou puttest thy simple trust in Christ. I dare to say that, and to look that boldly in the face; for thou wouldst be the first sinner that was ever cast away trusting in Jesus. "But, oh," saith one, "I cannot think that such a wretch as I am can have a right to believe." Soul, I tell thee it is not whether thou art a wretch, or not a wretch; it is the command that is thy warrant. Thou art commanded to believe. And when a command comes home with power the power comes with the command; and he who is commanded, being made

willing, casts himself on Christ, and he believes, and is saved.

I have labored this morning to try and make myself as clear as I can about this doctrine. I know if any man is saved it is the work of God the Holy Ghost from first to last. "If any man is regenerate, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God." But I do not see how that great truth interferes with this other, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." And I would again, even to the falling down on my knees, as though God did beseech you by me, pray you "In Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." And this is the reconciliation, "That ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," that ye trust Christ. Do you understand me? That ye cast yourself on him; that ye depend on nothing but what he has done. Saved you must be, lost you cannot be, if you fling yourself wholly upon Christ, and cast the whole burden of your sins, your doubts, your fears, and your anxieties wholly there. Now, this is preaching free grace doctrine. And if any wonder how a Calvinist can preach thus, let me say that this is the preaching that Calvin preached, and better still it is the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. We have divine warrant when we tell you, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

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## **The Kingly Priesthood Of The Saints**

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. - Revelation 5:10

"Music hath charms." I am sure sacred music has; for I have felt something of its charms whilst we have been singing that glorious hymn just now. There is a potency in harmony; there is a magic power in melody, which either melts the soul to pity, or lifts it up to joy unspeakable. I do not know how it may be with some minds; they possibly may resist the influence of singing; but I cannot. When the saints of God, in full chorus, "chaunt the solemn lay," and when I hear sweet syllables fall from their lips, keeping measure and time, then I feel elevated; and, forgetting for a time everything terrestrial, I soar aloft towards heaven. If such be the sweetness of the music of the saints below, where there is much of discord and sin to mar the harmony, how sweet must it be to sing above, with cherubim and seraphim. Oh, what songs must those be which the Eternal ever hears upon his throne! What seraphic sonnets must those be which are thrilled from the lips of pure immortals, untainted by a sin, unmingled with a groan: where they warble ever hymns of joy and gladness, never intermingled with one sigh, or groan, or worldly care. Happy songsters! When shall I your chorus join? There is one of your hymns that runs -

"Hark! how they sing before the throne!"

and I have sometimes thought I could "hark! how they sing before the throne." I have imagined that I could hear the full burst of the swell of the chorus, when it pealed from heaven like mighty thunders, and the sound of many waters, and have almost heard those full-toned strains, when the harpers harped with their harps before the throne of God; alas, it was but imagination. We cannot hear it now; these ears are not fitted for such music; these souls could not be contained in the body, if we were once to hear some stray note from the harps of angels. We must wait till we get

up yonder. Then, purified, like silver seven times, from the defilement of earth, washed in our Saviour's precious blood, sanctified by the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit -

"We shall, unblemished and complete,  
Appear before our Father's throne,  
With joys divinely great."

"Then loudest of the crowd we'll sing,  
Whilst heaven's resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Our friend John, the highly favoured apostle of the Apocalypse, has given us just one note from heaven's song; we shall strike that note, and sound it again and again. I shall strike this tuning-fork of heaven, and let you hear one of the key notes. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." May the great and gracious Spirit, who is the only illumination of darkness, light up my mind whilst I attempt, in a brief and hurried manner, to speak from this text. There are three things in it: first, the Redeemer's doings - " and hast made us; secondly, the saints' honors - " and hast made us kings and priests unto our God;" and, thirdly, the world's future - " and we shall reign upon the earth."

I. First, then, we have THE REDEEMER'S DOINGS. They who stand before the throne sing of the Lamb - the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who took the book and broke the seals thereof - " Thou hast made us kings and priests unto our God." In heaven they do not sing

"Glory, honor, praise, and power  
Be unto ourselves for ever;  
We have been our own Redeemers; - Hallelujah!"

They never sing praise to themselves; they glorify not their own strength; they do not talk of their own free-will and their own might; but they ascribe their salvation, from beginning to end, to God. Ask them how they were saved, and they reply, "The Lamb hath made us what we are." Ask them whence their glories came, and they tell you, "They were bequeathed to us by the dying Lamb." Ask whence they obtained the gold

of their harps, and they say, "It was dug in mines of agony and bitterness by Jesus," Inquire who stringed their harps, and they will tell you that Jesus took each sinew of his body to make them. Ask them where they washed their robes and made them white, and they will say -

"In yonder 'fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Some persons on earth do not know where to put the crown; but those in heaven do. They place the diadem on the right head; and they ever sing -  
" And he hath made us what we are."

Well, then, beloved, would not this note well become us here? For " what have we that we have not received?" Who hath made us to differ? I know, this morning, that I am a justified man; I have the full assurance that

"The terrors of law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Saviour's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view."

There is not a sin against me in God's book they have all been for ever obliterated by the blood of Christ. and cancelled by his own right hand. I have nothing to fear; I cannot be condemned. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for he hath justified; not Christ. for he hath died. But if I am justified, who made me so? I say - "And hath made me what I am." Justification from first to last. is of God. Salvation is of the Lord alone.

Many of you are sanctified persons, but you are not perfectly sanctified, you are not redeemed altogether from the dross of earth; you have still another law in your members, warring against the law of your mind; and you always will have that law while you tabernacle in faith; you never will be perfect in your sanctification until you get up yonder before the solemn throne of God, where even this imperfection of your soul will be taken away, and your carnal depravity rooted out. But yet, beloved, there is an inward principle imparted; you are growing in grace - you are making progress in holiness. Well, but who made you have that progress?

Who redeemed you from that lust? Who ransomed you from that vice? Who bade you say farewell to that practice in which you indulged? Cannot you say of Jesus, "And hath made us!" It is Christ who hath done it all, and to his name be honor, and glory, and praise, and dominion.

Let us dwell one moment on this thought, and show you how it is that it can be said that Christ hath made us this. When did Christ make his people kings and priests? When could it be said, "And hath made us kings and priests unto our God?"

1. First of all, he made us kings and priests, virtually, when he signed the covenant of grace. Far, far back in eternity, the Magna Charta of the saints was written by the hand of God, and it needed one signature to make it valid. There was a stipulation in that covenant that the Mediator should become incarnate should live a suffering life, and at last endure a death of ignominy; and it needed but one signature, the signature of the Son of God, to make that covenant valid, eternal, and "ordered in all things and sure." Methinks I see him now, as my imagination pictures the lofty Son of God grasping the pen. See how his fingers write the name; and there it stands in everlasting letters - " THE SON!" O sacred ratification of the treaty; it is stamped and sealed with the great seal of our father in heaven. O glorious covenant, then for ever made secure! At the moment of the signature of this wondrous document, the spirits before the throne - I mean the angels - might have taken up the song, and said of the whole body of the elect, "And hast made you kings and priests unto your God;" and could all the chosen company have started into existence, they could have clapped their hands and sung, "Here we are by that very signature constituted kings and priests unto our God."

2. But he did not stop there. It was not simply agreeing to the terms of the treaty; but in due time he filled it all - yes, to its utmost jot and tittle. Jesus said, "I will take the cup of salvation;" and he did take it - the cup of our deliverance. Bitter were its drops; gall lay in its depths; there were groans, and sighs, and tears, within the red mixture but he took it all, and drank it to its dregs, and swallowed all the awful draught. All was gone. He drank the cup of salvation, and he ate the bread of affliction. See him, as he drinks the cup in Gethsemane, when the fluid of that cup did mingle with his blood, and make each drop a scalding poison. Mark how the hot

feet of pain did travel down his veins. See how each nerve is twisted and contorted with his agony. Behold his brow covered with sweat; witness the agonies as they follow each other into the very depths of his soul. Speak, ye lost, and tell what hell's torment means; but ye cannot tell what the torments of Gethsemane were. Oh! the deep unutterable! There was a depth which couched beneath, when our Redeemer bowed his head, when he placed himself betwixt the upper and nether millstones of his Father's vengeance, and when his whole soul was ground to powder. Ah! that wrestling man-God - that suffering man of Gethsemane! Weep o'er him, saints - weep o'er him; when ye see him rising from that prayer in the garden, marching forth to his cross; when ye picture him hanging on his cross four long hours in the scorching sun, overwhelmed by his Father's passing wrath - when ye see his side streaming with gore - when ye hear his death-shriek, "It is finished," - and see his lips all parched, and moistened by nothing save the vinegar and the gall, - ah! then prostrate yourselves before that cross, bow down before that sufferer, and say, "Thou hast made us - thou hast made us what we are; we are nothing without thee." The cross of Jesus is the foundation of the glory of the saints; Calvary is the birth-place of heaven; heaven was born in Bethlehem's manger; had it not been for the sufferings and agonies of Golgotha we should have had no blessing. Oh, saint! in every mercy see the Saviour's blood; look on this Book - it is sprinkled with his blood; look on this house of prayer - it is sanctified by his sufferings; look on your daily food - it is purchased with his groans. Let every mercy come to you as a blood-bought treasure; value it because it comes from him; and ever more say, "Thou hast made us what we are."

3. Beloved, our Saviour Jesus Christ finished the great work of making us what we are, by his ascension into heaven. If he had not risen up on high and led captivity captive, his death would have been insufficient. He "died for our sins," but he "rose again for our justification." The resurrection of our Saviour, in his majesty, when he burst the bonds of death, was to us the assurance that God had accepted his sacrifice; and his ascension up on high, was but as a type and a figure of the real and actual ascension of all his saints, when he shall come in the clouds of judgment, and shall call all his people to him. Mark the man-God, as he goes upward towards heaven; behold his triumphal march through the skies, whilst stars sing



his praises, and planets dance in solemn order; behold him traverse the unknown fields of ether till he arrives at the throne of God in the seventh heaven, Then hear him say to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; behold me and the children thou hast given me; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have done all; I have accomplished every type; I have finished every part of the covenant; there is not one iota I have left unfulfilled, or one tittle that is left out; all is done." And hark, how they sing before the throne of God when thus he speaks: "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Thus have I briefly spoken upon the dear Redeemer's doings. Poor lips cannot speak better; faint heart will not rise up to the height of this great argument. Oh! that these lips had language eloquent and lofty, that they might speak more of the wondrous doings of our Redeemer!

"Crown him! crown him!  
Crowns become the Saviour's brow."

II. Now, secondly, THE SAINT'S HONORS: "and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." The most honorable of all monarchs have ever been esteemed to be those who had a right not only to royal, but to sacerdotal supremacy - those kings who could wear at one time the crown of loyalty, and at another the mitre of the priesthood, who could both use the censer and hold the sceptre - who could offer intercession for the people, and then govern the nations. Those who are kings and priests are great indeed; and here you behold the saint honored, not with one title, or one office, but with two. He is made not a king merely, but a king and a priest; not a priest merely, but a priest and a king. The saint has two offices conferred upon him at once, he is made a priestly monarch, and a regal priest.

I shall take, first of all, the royal office of the saints. They are **KINGS**. They are not merely to be kings in heaven, but they are also kings on earth; for if my text does not say so, the Bible declares it in another passage: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." We are kings even now. I want you to understand that, before I explain the idea. Every saint of the living God, not merely has the prospect of being a king in

heaven, but positively, in the sight of God, he is a king now; and he must say, with regard to his brethren and himself, "And hast made us," even now, "unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign upon the earth." A Christian is a king. He is not simply like a king, but he is a king, actually and truly. However, I shall try and show you how he is like a king.

Remember his royal ancestry. What a fuss some people make about their grand fathers and grandmothers, and distant ancestors. I remember seeing in Trinity College, the pedigree of some great lord that went back just as far as Adam, and Adam was there digging the ground - the first man. It was traced all the way up. Of course I did not believe it. I have heard of some pedigrees that go back further. I leave that to your own common sense, to believe it or not. A pedigree in which shall be found dukes, marquises, and kings, and princes. Oh! what would some give for such a pedigree? I believe, however, that it is not what our ancestors were, but what we are, that will make us shine before God; that it is not so much in knowing that we have royal or priestly blood in our veins, as knowing that we are an honor to our race - that we are walking in the ways of the Lord, and reflecting credit upon the church, and upon the grace that makes us honorable. But since some men will glory in their descent, I will glory that the saints have the proudest ancestry in all the world. Talk of Caesars, or of Alexanders, or tell me even of our own good Queen: I say that I am of as high descent as her majesty, or the proudest monarch in the world. I am descended from the King of kings. The saint may well speak of his ancestry - he may exult in it, he may glory in it - for he is the son of God, positively and actually. His mother, the Church, is the Bride of Jesus; he is a twice-born child of heaven: one of the blood royal of the universe. The poorest woman or man on earth, loving Christ, is of a royal line. Give a man the grace of God in his heart, and his ancestry is noble. I can turn back the roll of my pedigree, and I can tell you that it is so ancient, that it has no beginning; it is more ancient than all the rolls of mighty men put together; for, from all eternity my Father existed: and, therefore, I have indeed a right royal and ancient ancestry.

And then, again, the saints, like monarchs, have a splendid retinue. Kings and monarchs cannot travel without a deal of state. In olden times, they had far more magnificence than they have now; but even in these days we

see much of it when royalty is abroad. There must be a peculiar kind of horse, and a splendid chariot, and outriders; with all the etceteras of gorgeous pomp. Ay! and the kings of God, whom Jesus Christ has made kings and priests unto their God, have also a royal retinue. "Oh!" say you, "but I see some of them in rags; they are walking through the earth alone, sometimes without a helper or a friend." Ah! but there is a fault in your eyes. If you had eyes to see, you would perceive a body-guard of angels always attending every one of the blood-bought family. You remember Elijah's servant could not see anything around Elijah, till his master opened his eyes; then he could see that there were horses and chariots round about Elijah. Lo! there are horses and chariots about me. And thou, saint of the Lord: where'er thou art, there are horses and chariots. In that bed-chamber, where I was born, angels stood to announce my birth on high. In seas of trouble, when wave after wave seems to go over me, angels are there to lift up my head; when I come to die, when sorrowing friends shall, weeping, carry me to the grave, angels shall stand by my bier; and, when put into the grave, some mighty angel shall stand and guard my dust, and contend for its possession with the devil. Why should I fear? I have a company of angels about me; and whenever I walk abroad, the glorious cherubim march in front. Men see them not, but I see them; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We have a royal retinue: we are kings, not merely by ancestry, but by our retinue.

Now, notice the insignia and regalia of the saints. Kings and princes have certain things that are theirs by perspective right. For instance, Her Majesty has her Buckingham Palace, and her other palaces, her crown royal, her sceptre, and so on. But, has a saint a palace? Yes. I have a palace! and its walls are not made of marble, but of gold; its borders are carbuncles and precious gems; its windows are of agates; its stones are laid with fair colours; around it there is a profusion of every costly thing; rubies sparkle here and there; yea, pearls are but common stones within it. Some call it a mansion; but I have a right to call it a palace too, for I am a king. It is a mansion when I look at God, it is a palace when I look at men; because it is the habitation of a prince. Mark where this palace is. I am not a prince of Inde - I have no inheritance in any far-off hand that men dream of - I have no El Dorado, or Home of Prester John; but yet I

have a substantial palace. Yonder, on the hills of heaven it stands; I know not its position among the other mansions of heaven, but there it stands; and "I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Have Christians a crown too? O yes; but they do not wear it every day. They have a crown, but their coronation day is not yet arrived. They have been anointed monarchs, they have some of the authority and dignity of monarchs; but they are not crowned monarchs yet. But the crown is made. God will not have to order heaven's goldsmiths to fashion it in after-time; it is made already hanging up in glory. God hath "laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Oh, saint, if thou didst just open some secret door in heaven, and go into the treasure chamber, thou wouldst see it filled with crowns. When Cortes entered the palace of Montezuma, he found a secret chamber bricked up, and he thought the wealth of all the world was there, so many different things were there stowed away. Could you enter God's secret treasure-house, what wealth would you see!" "Are there so many monarchs," you would say, "so many crowns, so many princes?" Yes, and some bright angel would say, "Mark you that crown? It is yours;" and if you were to look within, you would read, "Made for a sinner saved by grace, whose name was - ;" and then you would hardly believe your eyes, as you saw your own name engraved upon it. You are indeed a king before God; for you have a crown laid up in heaven. What ever other insignia belong to monarchs, saints shall have. They shall have robes of whiteness; they shall have harps of glory; they shall have all things that become their regal state; so that we are indeed monarchs, you see; not mock-monarchs, clothed in purple garments of derision, and scoffed at with "Hail, king of the Jews;" but we are real monarchs. "He hath made us kings and priests unto our God."

There is another thought here. Kings are considered the most honorable amongst men. They are always looked up to and respected. If you should say, "a monarch is here!" a crowd would give way. I should not command much respect if I were to attempt to move about in a crowd; but if any one should shout, "here is the Queen!" every one would step aside and make room for her. A monarch generally commands respect. Ah! beloved,

we think that worldly princes are the most honorable of the earth; but if you were to ask God, he would reply, "my saints, in whom I delight, these are the honorable ones." Tell me not of tinsel and gewgaw; tell me not of gold and silver; tell me not of diamonds and pearls; tell me not of ancestry and rank; preach to me not of pomp and power; but oh! tell me that a man is a saint of the Lord, for then he is an honorable man. God respects him, angels respect him, and the universe one day shall respect him, when Christ shall come to call him to his account, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." You may despise a child of God now, sinner; you may laugh at him; you may say he is a hypocrite; you may call him a saint, a methodist, a cant, and everything you like; but know that those titles will not mar his dignity - he is the honorable of the earth, and God estimates him as such.

But some persons will say, "I wish you would prove what you affirm, when you say that saints are kings; for, if we were kings, we should never have any sorrows; kings are never poor as we are, and never suffer as we do." Who told you so? You say if you are kings, you would live at ease. Do not kings ever suffer? Was not David an anointed king? and was he not hunted like a partridge on the mountains? Did not the king himself pass over the brook Kedron, and all his people weeping as he went, when his son Absalom pursued him? And was he not a monarch when he slept on the cold ground, with no couch save the damp heather? O yes, kings have their sorrows - crowned heads have their afflictions. Full oft

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Do not expect that because you are a king, you are to have no sorrows. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink." And it is often so. The saints get but little wine here. It is not for kings to drink the wine of pleasure; it is not for kings to have much of the intoxicating drink and the surfeits of this world's delight. They shall have joy enough up yonder, when they shall drink it new in their Father's kingdom. Poor saint! do dwell on this. Thou art a king! I beseech thee, let it not go away from thy mind; but in the midst of thy tribulation, still rejoice in it. If thou hast to go through the dark tunnel of infamy, for Christ's name; if thou art ridiculed and reviled, still rejoice in the fact, "I am a king, and all the dominions of the earth shall be mine!"

That last idea, and I have done with this part of the subject. Kings have dominion. Do you know I am a fifth monarchy man? In Cromwell's time some said there had been four monarchies, and the fifth would come and overturn every other. Well, I never wish to do as they did; but I believe with them, that a fifth monarchy shall come. There have now existed four great empires, arrogating universal dominion, and there never shall be another world-wide monarchy until Christ shall come. Jesus, our Lord, is to be King of all the earth, and rule all nations in a glorious spiritual, or personal reign. The saints, as being kings in Christ, have a right to the whole world. Here am I this morning, and my congregation before me. Some persons say, "Keep to your own place and preach," and I have heard the advice, "Do not go out of your parish." But Rowland Hill used to say he never went out of his parish in his life; his parish was England, Scotland, and Wales, and he never went out of it. I suppose that is my parish, and the parish of every gospel minister. When we see a city full of sin and iniquity, what should we say? That is ours, we will go and storm it. When we see a street or some crowded area, where the people are very bad and wicked, we should say, "That is our alley, we will go and take it." When we see a house where people will not receive the gospel, we should say, "That is our house, we will go and attack it." We will not go with the strong arm of the law; we will not ask the policeman, or government to help us; but take with us "the weapons of our warfare," which "are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." We will go, and by God's Spirit we shall overcome. There is a town where the children are running about the street, uneducated; we will go and take those children - kidnap them for Christ. We will have a Sabbath school. If they are ragged urchins who cannot come to a Sabbath school, we will have a ragged school. There is a part of the world where the inhabitants are sunk in ignorance and superstition: we will send a missionary to them. Ah! those who do not like missionary enterprise, do not know the dignity of the saint. Talk of India; talk of China.; "it is mine," saith the saint. All the kingdoms of the earth are ours. "Africa is my washpot - I will triumph over Asia. They are mine! they are mine!" "Who shall bring me into the strong city?" Is it not thou, O Lord? God shall give us the kingdom of Christ. The whole earth is ours; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, Bel shall bow, Nebo shall stoop, the gods of the

heathen, Budha and Brahma, shall be cast down, and all nations bow before the sceptre of Christ. "He has made us kings."

Our second point, upon which I shall be very brief, is, "He hath made us kings and PRIESTS." Saints are not only kings, but priests. I shall go to it at once, without any preface.

We are priests, because priests are divinely chosen persons, and so are we. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But we have that calling and election; we were all ordained to it from the foundations of the world. We were predestinated to be priests, and in process of time we had a special effectual call, which we could not and did not resist, and which at last so overcame us, that we became at once the priests of God. We are priests, divinely constituted. When we say we are priests, we do not talk as certain parties do, who say they are priests, wishing thereby to arrogate to themselves a distinction. I always have an objection - I must state it strongly - to calling a clergyman, or any man that preaches, a priest. We are no more so than you are. All saints are priests. But, for a man to stand up and say he is a priest, any more than those he preaches to, is a falsehood. I detest the distinction of clergy and laity. I like scriptural priestcraft; for that is the craft or work of the people, who are all priests; but all other priestcraft I abhor. Every saint of the Lord is a priest at God's altar, and is bound to worship God with the holy incense of prayer and praise. We are priests, each one of us, if we are called by divine grace; for thus we are priests by divine constitution.

Then, next, we are priests, because we enjoy divine honors. None but a priest might enter within the vail; there was a court of the priests into which none might ever go, except the called ones. Priests had certain rights and privileges which others had not. Saint of Jesus! heir of heaven! thou hast high and honorable privileges, which the world wots not of! Hast thou ever been within the vail in communion with Christ? Hast thou ever been in the court of the Lord's house, the court of the priests, where he has taught thee, and manifested himself to thee? Hast thou? Yes, thou knowest thou hast; thou enjoyest constant access to God's throne; thou hast a right to come and tell thy griefs and sorrows into the ear of Jehovah. The poor worldling must not come there; the poor child of

wrath has no God to tell his troubles to. He must not go within the veil; he has no wish to go: but thou mayest; thou mayest come to God's ear, swing the censer before the throne, and offer thy petition in the name of Jesus. Others have not these divine honors. Thou art divinely honored, and divinely blessed.

Then another remark, to finish up with, shall be, we have a divine service to perform; and as I want you all, this morning, to turn this chapel into one great altar - as I want to make you all working priests, and this the temple for sacrifice - hook earnestly at your service. You are all priests, because you love his dear name and have a great sacrifice to perform; not a propitiation for your sins, for that has been once offered, but a sacrifice this day of holy thanksgiving. Oh! how sweet in God's ear is the prayer of his people! That is the sacrifice that he accepts; and when their holy hymn swells upwards towards the sky, how pleasant it is in his ears; because then he can say, "My hosts of priests are sacrificing praise." And do you know, beloved, there is one point in which most of us fail in our oblations before God? We offer our prayer, we present our praise; but how little do we sacrifice of our substance unto the Lord! I had thought this morning, seeing I desire to make you amazingly liberal, to have made this my text, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine;" and I had thought of showing that our substance was the Lord's, that we were bound to devote no small portion of it to him, and that if we did do so we might expect prosperity even in worldly business, for he would make our barns full and our presses burst with new wine. However, I conceive it to be needless to preach a collection sermon - I thought I would rather tell your about your honor and dignity, and then you shall just give what you like, for the only free-will I like, is a free-will offering. Suffer, ye beloved, a few words. God has said in his Word that you are to honor him with your substance. As a priest of the Lord, will you not sacrifice something to the Lord this day? Here we have a great object before us; we want more room for the crowds who come to hear the gospel. It seems important, when such a throng is gathered, that none should go away. Ought we not to bless God that they come? There was a time you were few indeed, and the cry was, "Who hath believed our report?" But God has given us great success, the ministry



here has been blessed to the conversion of not a few souls; I have many cases, now in this chapel, of broken hearts and contrite spirits; doubtless, there are many more than I know of, and I believe the blessed Spirit will bring them out in due time. Oh! do you not grieve that any should have to turn away from the voice of the ministry - that any who come here should have to go away, perhaps to spend the Sabbath in sin. You know not where they have to go, when they cannot get within these walls. The thing is, we have come to the resolution that this chapel should be enlarged, so that there should be accommodation for a larger number. Now, ye priests, sacrifice to the Lord. Let the priests build the house of Lord; let those who worship in the sanctuary take up the trowel today; let the mortar and the brick be laid, and let this house be once more filled with the glory of the Lord, and an abundant congregation.

III. Now, I have to close up with THE WORLD'S FUTURE. "We shall reign on the earth." I have not much time for this, and I dare say it is expected that I shall tell you about the millennium and the personal reign of Christ. I shall not at all, because I don't know anything about it. I have heard a great many people talk of it; and, if anybody shows me a book on the millennium, I say, "I cannot read it just yet." A good man has lately written a book on it, and a gentleman recommended it to me so strongly, that I could not but buy it out of courtesy; but I elevated it to the aristocratic region of library, in the higher ranks, and there it rests in quiet repose. I do not think myself capable of threading the labyrinths of the subject, and I do not believe the very respectable author can do it. It is a subject so dark, and I have read so many different views upon it, that it is all a phantasmagoria with me. I believe all the Bible says of a glorious future, but I cannot pretend to be a maker of charts for all time. Only this I gather as a positive fact, that the saints will one day reign on the earth. This truth appears to me clear enough, whatever may be the different views on the millennium. Now, the saints do not reign visibly; they are despised. They were driven, in old times, into dens and caves of the earth: but the time is coming when kings will be saints, and princes the called ones of God - when queens shall be the nursing mothers, and kings the nursing fathers of Christ's church. The hour is coming when the saint, instead of being dishonored, shall be honored; and monarchs, once the foes of truth, shall become its friends. The saints shall reign. They shall

have the majority; the kingdom of Christ shall have the upper hand; it shall not be cast down - this shall not be Satan's world any longer - it shall again sing with all its sister stars, the never ceasing song of praise. Oh! I believe there is a day coming when Sabbath bells shall sprinkle music over the plains of Africa - when the deep thick jungle of India shall see the saints of God going up to the sanctuary; and, I am assured that the teeming multitudes of China shall gather together in temples built for prayer, and, as you and I have done, shall sing, to the ever glorious Jehovah,

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Happy day! happy day! May it speedily come!

Now, to close up, one very practical inference. Ye are kings and priests unto your God. Then how much ought kings to give to the collection this morning? Thus speak ye to yourselves. "I am a king; I will give as a king giveth unto a king." Now, mark you, no paltry subscriptions! We don't expect kings to put down their names for trifles. Then, again: you are a priest. Well, priest, do you mean to sacrifice? "Yes." But you would not sacrifice a broken-legged lamb, or a blemished bullock, would you? Would you not select the best of the flock? Very right, then select the very best of the Queen's coins, and offer, if you can, sheep with golden fleece. Excuse my pressing this subject. I want to get this chapel enlarged; so do you; we are all agreed about it; we are all rowing in one boat. I have set my mind on £50, and I must, and will, have it to-day, if possible. I hope you won't disappoint me. It is not my own cause, but my Master's - at other times you have given liberally - I am not afraid of you - but hope to come forward, next Sabbath morning, with the cheering announcement that the £50 is all raised, and then I think my spirits will be so elevated, that, by the help of God, I will venture to promise you one of the best sermons I am capable of delivering.

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## **Knowledge. Worship. Gratitude.**

So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful. - Romans 1:20-21

Those who boast of their knowledge betray their ignorance. Knowledge is not a possession to be proud of, since it brings with it so great a responsibility that a nurse might as well be proud of watching over a life in peril. Knowledge may become good or ill according to the use which is made of it. If men know God, for instance, and then glorify him as God, and are thankful, their knowledge has become the means of great blessing to them; but if they know God, and fail to glorify him, their knowledge turns to their condemnation. There is a knowledge which does not puff up the mind, but builds up the soul, being joined with holy love. Did not our Lord say, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"? But for men to know God, and not to glorify him as God, and to be unthankful, is according to our text, no benefit to them: on the contrary, it becomes a savour of death unto them, because it leaves them without excuse. Our Saviour could plead for some, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But what plea is to be used for those who know what they do, and yet do evil; who know what they ought to do, and do it not? These have the light, and close their eyes; or, to use another figure, they have the light, and use it to sin by. They take the golden candlestick of the sanctuary into their hands, and by its help they perform their evil deeds the more dexterously, and run in the way of wickedness the more swiftly. Accursed is that man who heaps to himself knowledge till he becomes wise as Solomon, and then prostitutes it to base ends by using it to aggrandize his wealth, to pamper his appetites, to bolster his unbelief, or to conceal his vices. A man may by knowing more become all the more a devil. His growing information may only increase his condemnation. It is clear, then, that knowledge is not a possession of such unmingled good that we may grow vain of it; better far will it be if the more we know the more we watch and pray. Go on and read, young man. Go on and study with the utmost diligence. The more of knowledge you can acquire the better; but take

care that you do not, like Sardanapalus, heap up your treasures to be your own funeral pile. Do not by a rebellious pride curdle the sweet milk of knowledge, and sour your precious blessing into an awful curse. It is soon done, but not so soon undone. It was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil the eating of which brought all this evil upon us which ye see this day. Ye may eat of that tree still, if so it please you; but if ye taste not of the tree of life at the same time, your knowledge shall only open to you the gates of hell. Knowledge of itself alone is as land which may either become a blooming garden or a howling wilderness. It is a sea out of which you shall bring pearls or dead men's bones. Life and death, heaven and hell, are here: if it was said of old, "Take heed what you hear," I also say, "Take heed what you know."

The people mentioned by Paul in our text fell into two great evils, or rather into two forms of one great evil—atheism: the atheism of the heart, and the atheism of the life. They knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We will first consider the first sin mentioned here, and then the second. I shall not look at these two evils as if you were Romans, because I know that you are not, but I shall adapt the text to your own case, and speak of these sins, as Englishmen are too apt to commit them. Thirdly, let us view the consequences, or, what comes of men not glorifying God, and not being thankful. Then, fourthly, let us fly from these sins immediately, God helping us. O Holy Spirit, help the preacher now, for all his help is in thee!

I. At once, then, let us look at this first sin, a sin very common in these days. **THEY KNEW GOD, BUT THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD.** Even in old Rome, with all its darkness, there was some knowledge of God: how can the creature quite forget its Creator? Of course the people had not that spiritual knowledge which the Holy Ghost communicates to the renewed heart, for the carnal mind cannot know God spiritually: its fleshly ideas cannot come near to his holy spirituality. But Paul means that they perceived the eternal power and Godhead of the Great Former of all things; and they might have perceived much more of his divine character and glory if their foolish hearts had not been darkened by their evil passions. When you go among the heathen, whether they are

Pantheists or Polytheists, or whatever they may be, there is still a notion in the background of all their mythology of some one great superior being, elevated above those whom they call gods, some serenely just father, preserver, avenger, and rewarder of men. The most debased of mankind are still found to have some measure of knowledge of the great Creator: they hold the truth, though they hold it in unrighteousness. They can as soon shut their eyes to the sun, as completely blind their mind to the fact that there is a God. Some among the heathen no doubt attained to a very considerable knowledge of God, or at least they walked upon the borders of marvellous discoveries of the Godhead. We are greatly surprised at the language of Socrates, and Plato, and Seneca, and others: such men have lately been held up as patterns; but if their lives are studied, they will be found to be sadly defaced with what Paul fitly calls "vile affections." These were wise men, but the world by wisdom knew not God; they were great thinkers, but a clear revelation of God was not in all their thoughts. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so they remained steeped in loathsome vice which we dare not mention, for it is a shame even to speak of the things which were done of the most enlightened of them in secret. They had knowledge, but they forgot its responsibilities: they knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We may now let all the heathen go, for it is more true of us than it is of them, that we know God. Those to whom I am speaking to-night dwell where the name of God is familiar, where the gospel of God sounds like a trumpet in their streets, where the character of God is painted with the finger of light upon the blessed pages of the Bible, and where the Spirit of God takes care that the consciences of men shall be enlightened. We know God, but I am afraid that there are many thousands and millions of our fellow-creatures who glorify him not as God; let us see to it that we do not ourselves belong to the unhappy number.

Those do not glorify God as God who do not trace all their good things to God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," but many ungrateful hearts forget this truth, and receive the blessings of this life with dumb mouths and cold hearts. In the old time there were those who traced everything they saw to what they called "Chance"; that misformed

deity has been laid aside, and on its pedestal men have set up another idol known as "Nature." Nowadays swarms of people attribute everything that is great and wonderful to "Nature":— they talk for ever of "the beauties of Nature," "the grandeur of Nature," "the laws of Nature;" but God is as little spoken of as if he were not alive. As to laws of Nature, these occupy with moderns much the same place as the deities of Olympus with the ancients. What are laws of Nature but the ordinary ways in which God works? I know of no other definition of them. But these people attribute to them a sort of power apart from the presence of the Creator. One standing up in the street, venting his infidelity, said that we could not do better on Sunday than go abroad and worship Nature. There was nothing that was so refining and elevating to the mind as Nature. Nature did everything. A Christian man in the crowd ventured to ask, "What is Nature?" And the gentleman said, "Well, Nature—well—it is Nature. Don't you know what it is? It is Nature." No further definition was forthcoming; I fear the term is only useful as enabling men to talk of creation without being compelled to mention the Creator. I find nowadays that people talk about "Providence," and yet discard God. Among the vulgar and the ungodly this is another subterfuge to avoid the ascribing of their blessings to the Giver of them. A farmer, whose crops had failed a second time, was consoled by a clergyman, because he suffered from the hand of Providence. "Yes," said he, "that Providence is always treating me shamefully: but there's one above that will stop him." The poor soul had heard of Providence till he thought it an evil power, and hoped that the good God would curb its mischievous influence. This comes of not speaking plainly of God. For what is Providence? Can there be such a thing without the constant working of the Great Provider? Men talk of "Foresight." But is there any foresight without an eye? Is there not some living eye that is watching for our good, some living hand that is following up the eye, and providing our needs? Man does not like to think of his God. He wants to get away into a far country, away from God his Father; and he will adopt any sort of phrase which will help him to clear his language of all trace of God. He longs to have a convenient wall built up between himself and God. The heathen often attributed their prosperity, to "fortune"; some of them talked of "chance;" others discoursed of "fate." Anything is to man's taste rather than blessing the great Father, and adoring the one God. If they prospered, they were

"lucky"; this was instead of gratitude to God. They looked into the almanac to find lucky days; this instead of faith in the Most High. They were superstitious, and ask their priest to tell them what would be a fortunate time for commencing an undertaking; this instead of resting upon the goodness of the Lord. Have we not some now who bless their good luck, and still talk about their fortunate stars? God, whom they know they do not honour as God.

Yes, and we have among us men who talk neither of "fortune" nor of "Nature," but of themselves. They are styled "self-made men," and they are very prone to worship the great self who made them: they are never backward in that cult. Their adoration of themselves is constant, reverent, and sincere. "Self-made men," indeed! Infinitely better is it to be a God-made man. If there be anything about us that is worth the having, it must be from him from whom every good gift and every perfect gift has evermore descended; let us therefore give Him thanks. There is no other sun for our sky than your sun in the heavens: there is no other source of good but the ever-blessed God, who has made himself known to us, whom with all our hearts we now adore.

But may I not be addressing some who, at this moment, do not bow before God, and bless him for their prosperity? They attribute it to their industry, and to their good luck. Oh, sirs, you come under the head of those who know God, and yet do not glorify him as God; neither are you thankful. The Lord help such to confess this sin, and may his grace wash them clean of it, for indeed it is a great and heinous sin in the judgment of the Most High. Justice makes a black mark against those who do not ascribe their good things to God, from whom they flow with such sweet constancy of kindness.

But we can also commit that sin, in the next sense, by not feeling any obligation laid upon us through partaking of the divine bounty. Are there not many rich men to whom it never occurs to feel bound to serve the Lord who gave them power to get wealth? Are there not many healthy persons, sound of limb, and strong in constitution, who yet do not praise the God who has kept them from sickness and death? Are we any of us sufficiently grateful for our talents, our faculties, our friends, our daily provisions? Do we not all receive a large amount of blessing for which we

do not render praise to God? The fact that every mercy brings an obligation with it, and we that receive most ought to render most; for we receive nothing from God without being thereby naturally and of right laid under bonds to return to him the glory due unto his name. We are tenants, whose rent is to be paid in service and praise. It is a very blessed obligation! It is a happy bond to be bound to praise and bless God! Praise is no more a burden to a true heart than song to a bird, or perfume to a flower, or twinkling to a star. Adoration is no taxation. God's revenue of glory comes from myriads of free-will offerings, which gracious spirits delight to present to him all their days. Yet there are some who know God, but they glorify him not as God: they rob him of that which it should be their life to bring. They seem to say that they are their own, and not God's: they may live as they please; they may serve themselves. God is not in all their thoughts; and, as to spending and being spent in the service of him who gave them being, it has not yet crossed their minds. God's complaint concerning them is a just one,—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doeth not know, my people doeth not consider." God grant us grace to avoid this cruel provocation, and may we glorify God as God by practically owning the obligation under which his mercy places us.

Many may be met with who know God, but never glorify him as God, because they never adore him, and worship him, with the love of their hearts. They go to church or to some place of worship regularly, and sing psalms and hymns, and they may even have family-prayer at home; but their heart has never adored the living God with living love. Their worship has a name to live, but it is dead. They present to the Lord all the eternal harvest of worship, but the corn is gone, only the straw and the husk are there. And what is the value of your husky prayers? your prayers without a kernel, made up of the straw of words, and the chaff of formality? What is the value of professions of loyalty from a rebel? What is the worth of professed friendship to God when your heart is at enmity against him? Is it not a mockery of God to present to him a sacrifice "where not the heart is found"? When the Lord has to say—They come as my people, and they sit as my people, and they sing as my people, but



their heart is far from me,—can he take any pleasure in them? May not God thus complain of many? Oh, let it not be so with you! I know that there are some here against whom that charge would lie if we preferred it—that they know God, but they do not glorify him as God, for they do not love him. The name and service of God are much on their tongues, but they do not delight in him, they do not hunger and thirst after him, they do not find prayer and praise to be their very element, but such service as they render is merely lip-service, the unwilling homage of bond-slaves, and not the delighted service of those who are the children of God. Oh, my brethren, if we accept Jehovah as the living God, let us give him the utmost love of our souls. Will you call a man brother, and then treat him like a dog? Dare you call God your God, and then act towards him as though he were not worthy of a thought. With what joy does David cry, "I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds"! This is the kind of spirit with which to deal with the Lord. Oh, to rejoice in God all the day, and to make him our exceeding joy! Thus, and thus only, do we glorify him as God. Without the fire of love no incense will ever rise from the censer of praise. If we do not delight in God we do not fitly adore God.

There is another way of not glorifying God as God, and that is by never recognizing his omnipresence. Have we not among us those who on Sunday feel some kind of reverence of God, but during the six days of the week are godless? When they are in a place of worship they have some sense of God's being there; if they do not fear and tremble, yet they behave with decency and respect; but in other places they dare to act as if they were out of range of God. Do they fancy that God is not in that secret chamber where they follow out their passions? Do they imagine that he is not in that ribald company where they make mirth of sacred things? Do they imagine that out of man's sight is also out of God's sight? Do not some men so act and live as if God were either dead, or else were blind or deaf, utterly oblivious to everything that is done on the face of the earth? How blind must they be, who think God blind! May we never fall into this absurdity! May we feel that we cannot anywhere consent to sin for God is there. The whole earth is God's house: shall we abuse the King in his own palace? The skies are the roof of his temple, and beneath God's blue sky we ought not to find a place to sin in. Nowhere in time is there space for

evil, nor in the universe is there room for sin. Yet, alas, how few recognize, "Thou God seest me," as being a death-blow to sin? "They know God, but they glorify him not as God," but think that he is absent either in person or in mind, and that in some great secret places they can hide away from him, and with impurity follow their own desires.

Are there not some again, and many, who do not admit the true glory of God because the idea of his sovereignty is very horrible to them? I lay this charge against many professing Christians—that their God is not the God of the Bible, and that they have no notion of Jehovah, the true God. The one God of heaven and earth is Jehovah—that God who said of old, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Certain professed followers of Jesus will not have this God, but they make to themselves a god who is under some degree of obligation to his sinful creatures, of whom they say that he is bound to treat all alike. These are guilty of robbing Divinity of its most majestic attribute, namely, sovereignty. They are for dictating to the King of kings, and tying the hands of infinite compassion, lest the supreme will of God should have too much liberty. I know of no such God as that: the God I worship can never do other than right, yet is he under no bond to his creatures, but ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. I believe that if the Lord had denied me mercy, I had so sinned that I could never have impugned his justice. When I see him save a sinner, I look not at it as a deed which he was bound to do, but as a spontaneous act, free as the air, full of his own goodness which arises entirely from himself. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." I, for one, am perfectly satisfied with everything that God does, whether of power, justice, or mercy. My heart says, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." I could have sung the song of Moses at the Red Sea, when all Egypt was drowned, and found in the drowning of the foe a deep background of joy, because I should have seen in it the carrying out of the divine will, the reign of righteousness, and the avenging of cruel tyranny. I make bold to say that I would have praised God as the waves went over Pharaoh; for the Lord did it, and he did right. I would have cried with Moses, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." I expect to be among the number, though some

seem as if they would decline the service, who shall for ever bless God for all his dealings with mankind—the stern as well as those that seem more tender. The Lord God, even Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is the God whom I worship. I do not know this new god that has lately come up, who they say is all tenderness and has none of the stern attributes of righteousness and wrath. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in him my soul delights. Let him sway his sceptre even as he pleases. His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Again will we say Hallelujah, when all his everlasting purposes shall have been fulfilled, and the wicked shall be punished, and the righteous raised to their Father's throne. To know God, and to glorify him as God, is to regard him as supreme, ungoverned, the Arbiter of all things, whose will is law. I believe in God on his throne, God giving no account of his matters, but doing his own pleasure as God over all. Short of this I could not glorify him as God.

There are some others who know God, who fail to glorify him as God, because they do not trust him. In revelation God has presented himself as the object of trust to his creatures, and he has promised that all who trust in him shall be forgiven their transgressions through the atonement of his Son, Jesus Christ. Such as trust him he declares shall be saved; and he sends out a messenger of mercy to all mankind, proclaiming—"He that believeth in him is not condemned." He bids sinners come and trust under the shadow of his wing; and he declares that none that come to him will be ever cast out. Revealing himself in Christ Jesus, he pleads with guilty men. Asking nothing of them, he entreats them to accept his mercy, which he freely presents to them without money and without price. Making no distinction in the gospel-call, he bids men come to him, saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else." When proud man replies, "No, I shall trust in myself, trust in my own works, trust in my own prayers, but I shall not trust in Christ," then he knows God, but he glorifies him not as God, and when he perishes he will be without excuse. What kind of God is that whom we will not trust? How do we honour him when we refuse to believe him? Do we accept his Godhead, and yet refuse his mercy? This cannot be.

The counts are many against men, but this one more must be mentioned—many know God, but they never glorify him as God by submitting themselves to him, and yielding up their members to be instruments of his glory. If I glorify God as God, then I desire to obey God's commandments, to spread his glory, to magnify his name. I desire in all things to please him, if indeed I treat him as God should be treated. If I know God, and yet live for my own profit, for my own honour, for my own comfort, then I do not glorify God as God. Oh, sirs, when the Lord is glorified as God, we yield ourselves to his control without a murmur. He may take what he will away from us, and we say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." He may remove every comfort from us, and cover us with sore boils and blains, but we shall sit down with Job upon the dunghill, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Knowing him as God will make us submissive to suffer, and quick to act. We shall feel the force of Elijah's cry, "If the Lord be God, follow him." We shall rouse ourselves to the utmost energy to serve him when he stands before us as really God. If we serve man and are faithful, we do the best we can for our master; but if God be our Master, oh, what service we are bound to render to him! What enthusiasm ought to be kindled in our breast by the belief that we are God's servants! "I am thy servant," is our happy claim, our honoured challenge. This it is that makes a man of a man, and something more than man. Oh, to learn this lesson, and to practise it! To glorify God as God will make us akin to angels! Even you Christians may feel that this is much beyond you yet, but towards it you must ever fly. I shrink before my Lord in speaking of him, but I desire what I have not yet attained—that I may truly glorify him as my Lord and my God.

II. Now we come to consider the second sin. May the word which I may have to say about it, be blessed to many of my hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit! The second sin is "NEITHER WERE THANKFUL." Did you know, dear friends, that unthankfulness was such a sin as this? Have you ever thought of it in this light before—that men were without excuse because when they knew God they were not thankful? Unthankfulness is a sin for which there is no excuse if it be attended with knowledge. I fear there are thousands who call themselves Christians, who are not thankful, and yet they never thought themselves very guilty on that account. Yet

you see these sinners were without excuse, because they were guilty of a great sin before God, and that sin was unthankfulness. I tremble both for myself and you when I see want of thankfulness thus set in the front rank of sins.

How is it that we may be thankful?

I answer, first, there is in some a want of gratitude for mercies possessed. They receive many blessings without making a note of them, or even seeming to know that they have them. Their daily mercies seem to come in always at the back door, where the servants take them in, and never tell their master or mistress that they have arrived. They never receive their mercies at the front door with grateful acknowledgments; but they still continue dumb debtors, daily owing more, but making no attempt at a return. The Lord continues to bless them in things temporal, to keep them in health and strength, ay, and to give them the means of grace and spiritual opportunities; and they live as if these things were so commonplace that they were not worth thanking God for. Many professors are of that kind—recipients of countless mercies, but destitute of such common thankfulness as even beast might manifest. From them God hears no song of gratitude, no chirp of praise, though birds would charm the woodlands with their minstrelsy: these are worse than the dumb driven cattle, or the fishes in the brook, which do at least leap up, and mean their Maker's praise.

Some show this unthankfulness in another way, for they always dwell most on what they have not got. They have manna, and that is angels' food; but then they have no fish, and this is a ready theme for grumbling. They talk very loudly of "the fish we did eat in Egypt," and lament those ample feasts provided by the muddy Nile. Moreover, they have none of those delightful vegetables—the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions. They have none of these rank luxuries, and therefore again they murmur, and call the manna "light bread." They put this complaint over and over again to Moses, till Moses must have been sick of them and their garlic. They said that they could not get leeks, and cucumbers, and onions, and that they were therefore most hardly done by, and would not much longer put up with it. Thankless rebels! And have I not known some of God's servants say that they enjoy much of the presence of their Lord, but they

have no riches; and so they are not among the favoured ones. Over their poverty they fetch a deep groan. Some live in the presence of God, so they tell us, and they are full of divine delights, but yet they are greatly afflicted with aches and pains, and all the dolours of rheumatism, and therefore they murmur. I admit that rheumatism is a dreadful pain enough, but at the same time to dwell always on the dark side of things, and to forget our mercies, is a sad instance of ingratitude. We are few of us as thankful as we ought to be; and there are some people who are not thankful at all, for instead of a song concerning their mercies, their life is one long dirge for their miseries. Must we always hear the sackbut? Is the harp never to give forth a joy-note?

Some show their unthankfulness by fretting under their supposed ills. They know from Scripture that even their afflictions are working for their good, yet they do not rejoice in the prospect, or feel any gratitude for the refining process through which the Lord is passing them. Heaven and perfection are left unsung, but the present processes are groaned over without ceasing. Their monotonous note is always this pain, this loss, this burden, this uncomfortable sensation, this persecution from the world, this unkindness from the saints, and so on; all this goes to show that, though they know God, they do not glorify him as God, neither are they thankful.

We can be guilty of unthankfulness, also, by never testifying to the goodness of God. A great many people come in and out of your houses; do you ever tell them about God's goodness to you? Did you ever take up a single ten minutes with the tale of the Lord's lovingkindness to you? Oh, what backwardness there is to testify to God as God, and to all his goodness and love! Our mouths are full of anything rather than the goodness of the Lord. Shame on our wicked lips!

Some fail, also, in their singing of God's praises. I love to be singing in my heart, if I may not sing with my tongue. Is it not a good thing for you house-wives, when you are about the house, to sing over everything? I remember a servant that used to sing at the washtub, and sing in the kitchen; and when some one asked her why she was always singing, she said that if it did not do anything else it kept bad thoughts out of her mind. There is a great deal in that; for bad thoughts are bad tenants, who

pay no rent and foul the house. I knew a dear old Methodist preacher, who is now in heaven, who when he came downstairs of a morning was always tooting a bit of a hymn over, and he did the same in the barn, and the field. I have passed him in the street, and noted his happy melody: indeed he was always singing. He never took much notice of anybody, so as to be afraid of being overheard. Whether people heard him or not did not make much difference to him. He was singing to the Lord, not to them; and so he went on singing. I do not think he had much of a voice, or an ear for music, but his soul was made up of praise, and that is better than a musical education. God does not criticize our voice, but he accepts our heart. Oh, to be singing the praises of God every minute of our lives, and never ceasing therefrom! Do you not think that many fail in this respect? They are not preparing for heaven, where all is praise, or they would take up the joyful employment at once.

It is plain that many are not thankful to God, for they never praise him with their substance. Yet when the Jew was thankful, he took care to give a portion to the house of the Lord: before he would eat of his corn, he would send his sheaf to the sanctuary. If we are grateful to God, we shall feel that the first thing to do is to give of our substance an offering of thanksgiving to the Most High. But this does not strike some people, whose religion is so spiritual that they cannot endure to hear of money, and they faint at the sound of a collection. Their thankfulness rises to singing a hymn occasionally, but it never goes as far as giving a button to the cause of God. I am afraid their thankfulness is not worth more than what they pay to express it: that is to say, nothing at all. God deliver us from such a state of heart as that; and may we never, in any of these senses, be found amongst those professors, of whom it is said that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

III. Listen to me now carefully for two or three minutes while, in the third place, I mention, very briefly and solemnly, what was **THE RESULT OF THIS**.

They knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful. And the first result of it was that they fell into vain imaginings. If we do not glorify God, the true God, we shall soon be found setting up another god. This vain-imagination business is being done quite as

extensively now as in Paul's days. Depart from the inspiration of the Bible, and from the infallibility of the Spirit of God who wrote it, and where will you go? Well I cannot tell you where you will go. One wanders into one vain imagination, and one into another, till the dreamers are on all sides. I expect to see a new doctrine every day of the week now. Our thinkers have introduced an age of inventions, wherein everything is thought of but the truth of God. We do not want these novelties. We are satisfied with the word of God as we find it. But if we do not glorify God as God, and are not thankful to him for all his teachings, then away you go into vain imaginations.

And what next? Well, away goes the mind of man into all sorts of sins. The chapter describes unnatural lusts and horribly fierce passions. Men that are not satisfied and thankful—men that have no fear of God before their eyes—it were a shame for us to think, much more to speak, of what they will do. A heart that cannot feed at God's table will riot somewhere. He that is not satisfied with the cup that God has filled will soon be a partaker of the cup of devils. An unthankful spirit is, at bottom, an atheistic spirit. If God were God to us, we should not be unthankful to him. If God were glorified in our hearts, and we were thankful for everything that he did, we should walk in holiness, and live in submission. And if we do not thus behave ourselves, the tendency will be for us to go from bad to worse, and from worse to very worst. This has been done on a large scale by nations, whose downward course of crime began with want of thankfulness to God. It is done on a smaller scale by individuals, to whom departure from God is the beginning of a vicious career. Get away from God, and where have you gone? If you do not love him, and delight in him, whither will you stray? May the Lord tether us fast to himself, and even nail us to the cross.

It seems that these people, of whom Paul wrote, fell into all kinds of bitterness, such as envy, murder, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating of God. They became spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and so forth. Well, if your spirit is not sweetened by the adoration and the love of God, it will grow bitter. If love does not reign, hate will rule. Look at unthankful people. Hear them talk. Nobody's character is safe. There is no neighbour whom they will not slander.



There is no Christian man whom they will not misrepresent. The very angels of God would not be safe from suspicion if they lived near to people of that kind. But when you glorify God as God, and are thankful for everything—when you can take up a bit of bread and a cup of cold water, and say with the poor Puritan, "What, all this, and Christ too?"—then are you happy, and you make others happy. A godly preacher, finding that all that there was for dinner was a potato and a herring, thanked God that he had ransacked sea and land to find food for his children. Such a sweet spirit breeds love to everybody, and makes a man go through the world cheerfully. If you give way to the other order of feeling, and do not glorify God, but quarrel with him, and have no thankfulness for his mercies, then you will suck in the spirit of the devil, and you will get into Satan's mind, and be of his temper, and by-and-by his works you will do. Oh, brothers and sisters, dread unthankfulness! Perhaps you did not think that it was so bad, but it is horrible! God help you to escape from it!

IV. And that you may escape from it, let us finish up by this exhortation. **LET US FLY BY THE HELP OF GOD'S SPIRIT FROM THESE TWO SINS.** Let us glorify God, as God, every one of us.

"Oh," says one, "I am full of sin." Come and glorify God, then, by confessing it to him. "Oh, but I am not pardoned." Come and glorify him by accepting pardon through the blood of his dear Son. "Oh, but I am of an evil heart." Come and glorify him by telling him so, and asking his Spirit to renew you in your mind. Come, yield yourself to his sweet gospel. May his blessed Spirit incline you so to do. Come, take him now to be your God. Have you forgotten him? Remember him. Have you neglected him? Seek him. Have you offended him? Mourn before him. Say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father." Your Father waits to receive you. Glorify him as God.

And then, next, let us begin to be very thankful, if we have not been so before. Let us praise God for common mercies, for they prove to be uncommonly precious when they are once taken away. Bless God that you were able to walk here, and are able to walk home again. Bless God for your reason: bless him for your existence. Bless God for the means of grace, for an open Bible, for the throne of grace, for the preaching of the

Word. You that are saved must lead the song. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Bless him for his Son. Bless him for his Spirit. Bless him for his Fatherhood. Bless him that you are his child. Bless him for what you have received. Bless him for what he has promised to give. Bless him for the past, the present, and the future. Bless him in every way, for everything, at all times, and in all places. Let all that is within you bless his holy name. Go your way rejoicing. May his Spirit help you so to do!

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## **The Lad's Loaves In The Lord's Hands**

Jesus took the loaves. - John 6:11

Look, there are the people! Five thousand of them, as hungry as hunters, and they all need to have food given to them, for they cannot any of them travel to buy it! And here is the provision! Five thin wafers—and those of barley, more fit for horses than for men—and two little anchovies, by way of a relish! Five thousand people and five little biscuits wherewith to feed them! The disproportion is enormous: if each one should have only the tiniest crumb, there would not be sufficient. In like manner, there are millions of people in London, and only a handful of whole-hearted Christians earnestly desiring to see the city converted to Christ; there are more than a thousand millions of men in this round world, and oh, so few missionaries breaking to them the bread of life; almost as few for the millions, as were these five barley cakes for those five thousand! The problem is a very difficult one. The contrast between the supply and the demand would have struck us much more vividly if we had been there, in that crowd at Bethsaida, than it does sitting here, nearly nineteen

hundred years afterwards, and merely hearing about it. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency: none of the people went away without sharing in his bounty; they were all filled. Our blessed Master, now that he has ascended into the heavens, has more rather than less power; he is not baffled because of our lack, but can even now use paltry means to accomplish his own glorious purposes; therefore let no man's heart fail him. Do not despair of the evangelization of London, nor think it hopeless that the gospel should be preached in all nations for a testimony unto them. Have faith in God, who is in Christ Jesus; have faith in the compassion of the Great Mediator: he will not desert the people in their spiritual need, any more than he failed that hungry throng, in their temporal need, long ago.

We will now look at these biscuits and sardines, which seem to be truly an insufficient stock-in-trade to begin with, a very small capital indeed on which to conduct the business of feeding five thousand persons. I shall say of these loaves and fishes, first, that they had a previous history before being mentioned in our text; secondly, when we get to our text, we shall find these little things in a very grand position—"Jesus took the loaves"; and therefore, thirdly, they will trace have an after-history which is well worthy of being noted. When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles.

I. We will begin by saying that **THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A PREVIOUS HISTORY**. Andrew said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes."

Notice, first, then, the providence of God in bringing the lad there. We do not know his name; we are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little pedlar, who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes, and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and his friends? We do not know much about him; but he was the right boy in the right place that day. Be his name what it might, it did not matter; he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed. Christ never is in need but he has somebody at hand to supply that need. Have faith in the providence of God. What made the boy bring the loaves and fishes, I do not know. Boys often do

unaccountable things; but bring the loaves and fishes he did; and God, who understands the ideas and motives of lads, and takes account even of barley loaves and fishes, had appointed that boy to be there. Again I say, believe in the providence of God. Mr. Stanley tells us that, when he came out of that long journey of his through the forest, I think after a hundred and sixty days of walking in darkness, and found himself at last where he could see the sun, he felt that there was a special providence of God that had taken care of him. I am very glad that Mr. Stanley felt that it was the hand of God that had brought him out of the noisome shade; but I do not need to go to Africa to learn that we are beset behind and before by his goodness. Many of us have felt a special providence of God in our own bed-chambers; we have met with his hand in connection with our own children. Yea, every day we are surrounded by tokens of his care. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." "I am sure God took care of me," said one; "for as I was going along a certain street, I slipped on a piece of orange-peel, and had what might have been a serious fall; yet I was not hurt in the least." To which his friend replied, "I am sure God has taken care of me; for I have walked along that street hundreds of times, and have never slipped on a piece of orange-peel, or on anything else." Full often God draws near to us in common life.

"He comes to us all unaware,  
And makes us own his loving care."

Let us also believe in his providence with regard to the church of Christ: he will never desert his people; he will find men when he wants them. Thus it has ever been in the history of the saints, and thus it shall ever be. Before the Reformation there were many learned men who knew something of Christ's gospel; but they said that it was a pity to make a noise, and so they communed with one another and with Christ very quietly. What was wanted was some rough bull-headed fellow who would blurt the gospel out, and upset the old state of things. Where could he be found? There was a monk named Luther, who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled on the doctrine of justification by faith; he was the man: yet when he went to a dear brother in the Lord, and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, "Go back to thy cell, and pray and

commune with God, and hold thy tongue." But then, you see, he had a tongue that he could not hold, and that nobody else could hold, and he began to speak with it the truth that had made a new man of him. The God that made Luther, knew what he was at when he made him; he put within him a great burning fire that could not be restrained, and it burst forth, and set the nations on a blaze. Never despair about providence. There sits to-night, somewhere in a chimney corner in the country, a man that will turn the current of unbelief, and win back the churches to the old gospel. God never yet did come to a point of distress as to his truth but what suddenly one came forward, a David with a sling and a stone, or a Samson with a jawbone, or a Shamgar with an ox-goad, who put to rout the adversaries of the Lord. "There is a lad here." The providence of God had sent him.

Next, this lad with his loaves was brought into notice. When they were searching for all the provisions in the company, this obscure boy, that never would have been heard of else, was brought to the front, because he had his little basket of biscuits. Andrew found him out, and he came and said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes." So, rest assured, that if you have the Bread of Life about you, and you are willing to serve God, you need not be afraid that obscurity will ever prevent your doing it. "Nobody knows me," says one. Well, it is not a very desirable thing that anybody should know you: those of us who are known to everybody would be very glad if we were not; there is no very great comfort in it. He that can work away for his Master, with nobody to see him but his Master, is the happiest of men. "I have only one hundred people to preach to," said a country pastor to me; and I replied, "If you give a good account of those hundred, you have quite enough to do." If all you have is very little—just that pennyworth of loaves and fishes—use that properly, and you will do your Master service; and in due time, when God wants you, he knows where to find you. You need not put an advertisement in the paper; he knows the street you live on, and the number on the door. You need not go and push yourself to the front; the Lord will bring you to the front when he wants you; and I hope that you do not want to get there if he does not want you. Depend upon it, should you push forward when you are not required, he will put you back again. Oh, for grace to work on unobserved, to have your one talent, your

five loaves and two fishes, and only to be noticed when the hour suggests the need, and the need makes a loud call for you. We have thus seen, first of all, the loaves and fishes, in the desert, quite unnoticed, but put there by providence; and we now behold them by that same providence, thrust into prominence.

When brought into notice, the loaves and fishes did not fare very well; they were judged insufficient for the purpose; for Andrew said, "What are they among so many?" The boy's candle seemed to be quite snuffed out: so small a stock—what could be the use of that? Now, I dare say, that some of you have had Satan saying to you, "What is the use of your trying to do anything?" To you, dear mother, with a family of children, he has whispered, "You cannot serve God." He knows very well that, by sustaining grace, you can and he is afraid of how well you can serve God if you bring up those dear children in his fear. He says to the colporteur over yonder, "You have not much ability; what can you do." Ah, dear friend! he is afraid of what you can do, and if you will only do what you can do, God will, by-and-by, help you to do what now you cannot do. But the devil is afraid of even the little that you can do now; and many a child of God seems to side with Satan in despising the day of small things. "What are they among so many?" So few, so poor, so devoid of talent, what can any of us hope to do? Disdained, even by the disciples, it is small wonder if we are held in contempt by the world. The things that God will honor, man must first despise. You run the gauntlet of the derision of men, and afterwards you come out to be used of God.

Though seemingly inadequate to feed the multitude, these loaves and fishes would have been quite enough for the boy's supper, yet he appears to have been quite willing to part with them. The disciples would not have taken them from him by force; the Master would not have allowed it: the lad willingly gave them up to be the commencement of the great feast. Somebody might have said, "John, you know that you will soon be able to eat those five cakes and those two little fishes; keep them; get away into a corner: every man for himself." Is it not a good rule, "Take care of number one"? Yes, but the boy whom God uses will not be selfish. Am I speaking to some young Christian to whom Satan says, "Make money first, and serve God by-and-by; stick to business, and get on; then, after

that, you can act like a Christian, and give some money away," and so on? Let such a one remember the barley loaves and the fishes. If that lad had really wisely studied his own interests, instead of merely yielding with a generous impulse to the demand of Christ, he would have done exactly what he did; for if he had kept the loaves, he would have eaten them, and there would have been an end of them; but now that he brings them to Christ, all those thousands of people are fed, and he gets as much himself as he would have had if he had eaten his own stock. And then, in addition, he gets a share out of the twelve baskets full of fragments that remain. Anything that you take away from self and give to Christ is well invested; it will often bring in ten thousand per cent. The Lord knows how to give such a reward to an unselfish man, that he will feel that he that saves his life loses it, but he that is willing even to lose his life, and the bread that sustains it, is the man who, after all, gets truly saved.

This, then, is the history of these loaves. They were sent there through God's providence by a lad who was sought out and brought into notice. His stock-in-trade was despised, but he was willing to give it, whether it was despised or not. He would yield it to his Lord. Now, do you see what I am driving at? I want to get a hold of some of the lads, and some young men and young women—I will not trouble about your age, you shall be lads if you are under seventy—I want to get hold of you who think that you have very little ability, and say to you, "Come, and bring it to Jesus." We want you. Times are hard. The people are famishing. Though nobody seems to need you, yet make bold to come out; and who knows but that, like Queen Esther, you may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? God may have brought you where you are to make use of you for the converting of thousands; but you must be converted yourself first. Christ will not use you unless you are first his own. You must yield yourself up to him, and be saved by his precious blood, and then, after that, come and yield up to him all the little talent that you may have, and pray him to make as much use of you as he did of the lad with the five barley cakes.

II. But now I want to show you that **THESE BARLEY CAKES GOT INTO A GRAND POSITION**. The text says, "Jesus took the loaves." He took them into his own hands. From the trembling hands of the boy, or from his little basket, they were transferred to the blessed hands which one day

would bear the nail-prints. This may teach us several lessons.

First, they were now associated with Jesus Christ. Henceforth those loaves do not so much suggest the thought of the lad's sacrifice as of the Savior's power. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ, the living God, should associate himself with our feebleness, with our want of talent, with our ignorance, with our little faith? And yet he does so. If we are not associated with him, we can do nothing; but when we come into living touch with him, we can do all things. Those barley loaves in Christ's hands become pregnant with food for all the throng. Out of his hands they are nothing but barley cakes; but in his hands, associated with him, they are in contact with omnipotence. Have you that love the Lord Jesus Christ thought of this, of bringing all that you possess to him, that it may be associated with him? There is that brain of yours; it can be associated with the teachings of his Spirit: there is that heart of yours; it can be warmed with the love of God: there is that tongue of yours; it can be touched with the live coal from off the altar: there is that manhood of yours; it can be perfectly consecrated by association with Christ. Hear the tender command of the Lord, "Bring them hither to me," and your whole life will be transformed. I do not say that every man of common ability can rise to high ability by being associated with Christ through faith, but I do say this,—that his ordinary ability, in association with Christ, will become sufficient for the occasion to which God in providence has called him. I know that you have been praying, and saying, "I have not this, and I cannot do that." Stay not to number your deficiencies; bring what you have, and let all that you are, body, soul, and spirit, be associated with Christ. Although he will not bestow upon you new faculties, the faculties you have will have new power, for they will come into a new condition towards him; and what may not be hoped for by association with such wisdom and might?

But, further, they were transferred to Christ. A moment ago, they belonged to this lad, but now they belong to Christ. "Jesus took the loaves." He has taken possession of them; they are his property. Oh, Christian people, do you mean what you say when you declare that you have given yourselves to Christ? If you have made a full transfer, therein will lie great power for usefulness. But do not people often say, "If I might



make some reserve"? "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" What about that odd thousand that you put in the funds the other day? What about the money saved up for a new bonnet? You sometimes sing—

"Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I should give him all."

Ah, well! when you have really yielded all, you may sing that again; but I am afraid that there are but few who can sing it truly. Oh, that we had more real putting of the loaves into Christ's hands! The time that you have not used for self, but given to Christ; the knowledge that you have not stored, as in a reservoir, but given to Christ; the ability that you have not wielded for the world, but yielded to Christ; your influence and position, your money and home, all put into Christ's hands, and reckoned to be not your own, but to be his henceforth; this is the way in which London's need will be met, and the world's hunger will be satisfied. But we are staggered at the very outset by the lack of this complete dedication of everything to Christ.

What is better still, as these loaves were given to Jesus, so they were accepted by Jesus. They were not only dedicated, they were also consecrated. Jesus took the five barley loaves, Jesus took the two little fishes, and in doing so he seemed to say, "These will do for me." As the Revised Version has it, "Jesus therefore took the loaves." Was there any reason why he should? Yes, because they were brought to him; they were willingly presented to him; there was a need of them, and he could work with them, "therefore" he took the loaves. Children of God, if Christ has ever made use of you, you have often stood and wondered however the Lord could accept you; but there was a "therefore" in it. He saw that you were willing to win souls: he saw the souls needed winning, and he used you, even you. Am I not now speaking to some who might be of great service if they yielded themselves unto Christ, and Christ accepted them, and they became accepted in the Beloved? Only five barley cakes, but Jesus accepted them; only two small fishes, brought by a little lad, but the great Christ accepted them, and they became his own. Let us join one

now in heaven who on earth brought her all, and pray—

"Oh, use me, Lord, use even me,  
Just as thou wilt, and when, and where:  
Until thy blessed face I see,  
Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share."

But, what is better still, these loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ as he lifted up his eyes, and gave thanks to the Father for them. Think of it. For five little cakes and two sprats Christ gave thanks to the Father; apparently a meagre cause for praise, but Jesus knew what he could make of them, and therefore gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. "God loves us," says Augustine, "for what we are becoming." Christ gave thanks for these trifles because he saw whereunto they would grow. Do you not think that, having thanked the Father, he also thanked the boy? And in after years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed. Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift. Though high in glory to-day, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to him; still he thanks his Father when, with timid trembling hands, we offer to him our best, our all, however small; still is his heart gladdened when we bring him our scanty store that it may be touched by his dear hand, and blessed by his gracious lips. He loves us, not for what we are, but for what he will yet make us; he blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because his power will yet make them worthy of his praise. May the Lord thus bless every talent that you have! May he bless your memory; may he bless your understanding; may he bless your voices; may he bless your hearts; may he bless your heads; may he bless you all and evermore! When he puts a blessing into the little gift and into the little grace that we have, good work begins, and goes on to perfection.

And when the loaves had been blessed, the next thing was, they were increased by Christ. Peter takes one, begins to break it, and as he breaks it, he has always as much in his hand as he started with. "Here, take a bit of fish, friend," says he. He gives a whole fish to that man, he has a whole fish left. So he gives it to another, and another, and another, and goes on scattering the bread and scattering the fish everywhere, as quickly as he

can; and when he has done, he has his hands just as full of fish and as full of bread as ever. If you serve God you will never run dry. He who gives you something to say one Sunday will give you something to say another Sunday. These seven-and-thirty years and more, have I ministered to this same church and congregation, and every time that I have preached I have said all that I knew. Some very learned brethren are like the great tun of Heidelberg; they can hold so much wine that there is enough to swim in, but they put in a tap somewhere up at the top, and you never get much out. Mine is a very small barrel indeed, but the tap is down as low as it can be; and you can get more liquor out of a small tub, if you empty it, than you can out of a big vat if you are only permitted to draw a little from the top. This boy gave all his loaves, and all his fish—not much, truly—but Christ multiplied it. Be like him, give your all; do not think of reserving some for another occasion. If you are a preacher, do not think of what you will preach about the next time; think of what you are going to preach about now. It is always quite enough to get one sermon at a time: you need not have a store; because if you get a lot piled away somewhere, there will be a stale odour about them. Even the manna that came down from heaven bred worms and stank; so will your best sermons, even if the message is God-given; and if it does not come down from heaven, but from your own brain, it will go bad still more quickly. Tell the people about Christ. Lead them to Jesus, and do not trouble about what you will say next time, but wait till next time comes, and it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak.

But, mark once more: when Jesus took the loaves, it was not only to multiply, but also to dispose of them. They were distributed by Christ. He did not believe in multiplication, unless it was attended by division. Christ's additions mean subtraction; and Christ's subtractions mean additions. He gives that we may give away. He multiplied as soon as ever the disciples began to distribute; and when the distribution ended, the multiplication ended. Oh, for grace to go on distributing! If you have received the truth from Christ, tell it out! God will whisper it in your ear, and tell it in; but if you stop the telling out, if you cease the endeavor to bless others, it may be that God will no more bless you, nor grant you again the communion of his face.

Putting all this together, if we all would bring our loaves and fishes to the Lord Jesus Christ, he would take them, and make them wholly his own. Then, when he should have blessed them, he would multiply them, and he would bid us distribute them, and we could yet meet the needs of London, and the needs of the whole world even to the last man. A Christ who could feed five thousand can feed five millions. There is no limit. When once you get a miracle, you may as well have a great one. Whenever I find the critics paring down miracles, it always seems to me to be very poor work; for if it is a miracle, it is a miracle; and if you are in for a penny, you may as well be in for a pound. If you can believe that Christ can feed fifty, then you can believe that he can feed five hundred, five thousand, five millions, five hundred millions, if so it pleases him.

Thus have I tried to stir up God's people to believe in the Lord, and consecrate themselves to him. But some of you are saying, "He is not preaching to me." No, I am not preaching to you; but I am preaching for you; for if God's people begin to be roused, they will] soon look after you. You will have somebody asking you about your soul before you get out of the Tabernacle; and during the week, if you meet some of them, they will be troubling you, rousing up your conscience, and making you feel what an awful thing it is to be an enemy to God, and to live without Christ. I hope that it will be so. Oh, you that do not love my Lord, what are you at? Paul said that you would be Anathema Maranatha—cursed at his coming! I pray you, do not rest easy while that may be your portion. You are the people that we want to feed, you are the people whom we want to bless. Oh, that God in his mercy would but bless you! We do not ask to have the honor of it. We would be willing to have it quite unknown who it was that brought you to the Savior, so long as you did but come to him. May the Lord in mercy bring you!

III. But now, thirdly, and to conclude, THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD AN AFTER-HISTORY. They got into Christ's hands. What was the result?

First, a great deal of misery was removed by the lad's basketful of barley cakes. Those poor people were famished; they had been with Christ all day, and had had nothing to eat; and had they been dispersed as they were, tired and hungry, many of them would have fainted by the way;

perhaps some would even have died. Oh, what would we give if we might but alleviate the misery of this world! I remember the Earl of Shaftesbury saying, "I should like to live longer. I cannot bear to go out of the world while there is so much misery in it." And you know how that dear saint of God laid himself out to look after the poor, and the helpless, and the needy, all his days. Perhaps I speak to some who never woke up yet to the idea that, if they were to bring their little all to Christ, he could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many a wounded conscience, and that awful misery which will come upon men if they die unforgiven, and stand before the judgment bar of God without a Savior. Yes, young man, God can make you the spiritual father of many. As I look back upon my own history, little did I dream when first I opened my mouth for Christ, in a very humble way, that I should have the honor of bringing thousands to Jesus. Blessed, blessed be his name! He has the glory of it. But I cannot help thinking that there must be some other lad here, such a one as I was, whom he may call by his grace to do service for him. When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of nineteen years of age, happy among a very poor and lowly people in Cambridgeshire, who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London. But they returned it to me, and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord! Now, perhaps, these words come to some brother who has never yet laid hold of the idea that God can use him. You must not think that God picks out all the very choice and particularly fine persons. It is not so in the Bible; some of those that he took were very rough people: even the first apostles were mostly fishermen. Paul was an educated man, but he was like a lot out of the catalogue, one bow out of due time; the rest of them were not so, but God used them; and it still pleases God, by the base things and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are. I do not want you to think highly of yourself; your cakes are only five, and they are barley, and poor barley at that; and your fish are very small, and there are only two of them. I do not want you to think much of them, but think much of Christ, and believe that, whoever you may be, if he thought it worth his while to buy you with his blood, and is willing to make some use of you, it is surely worth your while to

come and bring yourself, and all that you have, to him who is thus graciously ready to accept you. Put everything into his hands, and let it be said of you to-night, "And Jesus took the loaves." It is a part of the history of the loaves that they assuaged a great mass of misery.

And next, Jesus was glorified; for the people said, "He is a prophet." The miracle of the loaves carried them back to the wilderness, and to the miracle of the manna; they remembered that Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." For this Deliverer they longed, and as the bread increased so grew their wonder, until in the swelling cakes they saw the finger of God, and said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." That little lad became, by his loaves and fishes, the revealer of Christ to all the multitude; and who can tell, if you give your loaves to Christ, whether thousands may not recognize him as the Savior because of it? Christ is still known in the breaking of bread. But the people went further with reference to Christ, after they had been fed by the loaves and fishes: they concluded that he was a prophet, and they began whispering among themselves, "Let us make him a king." Now, in a better sense than the text implies, I would to God that you and I, though humbly and feebly, might serve Christ till people said, "Christ is a Prophet. Let us make him a King." This sermon I offer my Master, if he will be pleased to accept it, though it is but a barley cake, and I pray that by it some may take Jesus Christ to be their King. Oh, that he had a throne in the hearts of many whom he shall feed at this time with the bread of heaven! Brethren, I know that you wish to glorify Christ. Here is the way. Bring your loaves and fishes to Christ, that he may use them in his divine commissariat, and then he shall be magnified in the eyes of all the people.

When the feast was finished, there were fragments to be gathered. This is a part of the history of the loaves—they were not lost; they were eaten, but they were there; people were filled with them, but yet there was more of them left than when the feast began. Each disciple had a basketful to carry back to his Master's feet. Give yourself to Christ, and when you have used yourself for his glory, you will be more able to serve him than you are now; you shall find your little stock grow as you spend it. Remember

Bunyan's picture of the man who had a roll of cloth. He unrolled it, and he cut off so much for the poor. Then he unrolled it, and cut off some more, and the more he cut it, the longer it grew. Upon which Bunyan remarks—

"There was a man, and some did count him mad;  
The more he gave away, the more he had."

It is certainly so with talent and ability, and with grace in the heart. The more you use it, the more there is of it. It is often so with gold and silver: the store of the liberal man increases, while the miser grows poor. We have an old proverb, which is as true as it is suggestive: "Drawn wells have the sweetest waters." So, if you keep continually drawing on your mind, your thoughts will get sweeter; and if you continue to draw on your strength, your strength will get to be more mighty through God. The more you do, the more you may do, by the grace of the Ever-blessed One!

Last of all, it came to pass, that these loaves had a record made about them. There is many a loaf that has gone to a king's table and yet never been chronicled; but this boy's five cakes and two little fishes have got into the Bible; and if you look, you will find the barley cakes in Matthew, you will find the barley cakes in Mark, you will find the barley cakes in Luke, you will find the barley cakes, where we have found our text, in John. To make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things, this story is told four times over, and it is the only one of Christ's miracles which has such an abundant record.

And now, as a practical issue, let us put it to the test. You young people who have lately joined the church, do not be long before you try to do something for Christ. You that have for a long time been trusting Christ, and have never yet begun to work, arouse yourselves to attempt some service for his sake. Aged friends and sick friends can still find something to do. Perhaps, at the last, it will be found that the persons whom we might have excused on account of illness, or weakness, or poverty, are the people who have done the most. That, at least, is my observation. I find that, if there is a really good work done, it is usually done by an invalid, or by somebody who might very properly have said, "I pray thee, have me excused." How is it that so many able-bodied and gifted Christians seem

to be so slow in the Master's service? If there is a political meeting, something about Liberals and Conservatives, how earnest you are! You are all there, every bit of you, over your politics, which are not worth a penny a year; but when it comes to souls being saved, many of you are mute as fishes. You go all the year round without caring even for the spiritual welfare of a little child. One of our friends gave a good answer to a brother who said to him, "I have been a member of a church now for forty years. I am a father in Israel." He asked him, "How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?" "Well," the man said, "I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ." Upon which our friend retorted, "Call yourself a father in Israel, and yet you have no children! I think you had better wait until you have earned the title." So do I. It would be better that we had no professors of that sort, but that all our members, even were they much fewer, should be men and women constantly bringing forth fruit unto God in the conversion of others. The Lord set you all to work with this object!

I have almost done; but again I cannot help reminding those who are not Christ's, that while I have not directly preached to them, I have tried, by a side wind, to be preaching to them all the time. Either you are the Lord's, or you are not. If you are Christ's servant, take a sheet of paper, and write down, "Lord, I bring my loaves and fishes to thee;" and if you are not Christ's, confess the awful truth to yourself, and face it. I wish that you would make a record of it in black and white, putting down both name and date, "I am not Christ's." Take a good look at it, try and grasp what it means, to withhold yourself from him who loves you, and waits to save; then ask yourself why you are not his. I remember a woman, not long ago, who said that at her work it came across her mind, "I am not saved." She was sweeping the room, and when she finished that, she said to herself, "I have to cook the dinner, but I am not saved." She went into the kitchen, and had her fire all ready, and her food; but all the while she was putting things in the pot she kept saying to herself, "I am not saved;" and so it was when she was busy all the afternoon; and when her husband came home, she could not help blurting it out to him, "Oh, husband, I am not saved!" But he was; and he pointed her to Christ; they knelt together, and oh, how he prayed with her! She found that which she so earnestly sought, and it was not very many days before she could say, "Oh,



husband, I am saved!" May that be the case with you! The Lord bless every one of you, wherever you may be! We shall all meet in the day of judgment. May you and I meet without fear there, to sing to the sovereign grace of God, which saved us from the wrath to come, and helped us while we were here to bring our little, and put it into Christ's hands! The Lord be with you! Amen.

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## **Lama Sabachthani?**

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? - Matthew 27:46

There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour: this cry came out of that darkness. Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it, bright, flashing light: but there is a centre of impenetrable gloom, where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness.

Our Lord was then in the darkest part of his way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours, and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of his anguish. This is his dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I do not think that the records of time or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitternesses, are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of his love, if it be ever measured, by the depth of his grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law! As you see this, say to yourselves: What manner of people ought we to be! What measure of love ought we to return to one who bore the utmost penalty, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive into this deep: I will only venture to the edge of the precipice, and bid you look down, and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord, as it rises up through the thick darkness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our first subject of thought will be the fact; or, what he suffered—God had forsaken him. Secondly, we will note, the enquiry; or, why he suffered: this word "why" is the edge of the text. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, thirdly, we will consider the answer; or, what came of his suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for he ceased from his anguish with the triumphant shout of, "It is finished." His work was finished, and his bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work he had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us first dwell upon THE FACT; or, what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain, so long as the spirit is hale and brave; but if the soul itself be touched, and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity, and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries. A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters, if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David, he dialogues with himself, and he enquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." But if the Lord be once withdrawn, if the comfortable light of his presence be shadowed even for an hour, there is a torment within the breast, which I can only liken to the prelude of hell. This is the

greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, "Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger." We can bear a bleeding body, and even a wounded spirit; but a soul conscious of desertion by God it beyond conception unendurable. When he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness?

This voice out of "the belly of hell" marks the lowest depth of the Saviour's grief. The desertion was real. Though under some aspects our Lord could say, "The Father is with me"; yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake him. It was not a failure of faith on his part which led him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us, and then we think that God has forsaken us; but our Lord's faith did not for a moment falter, for he says twice, "My God, my God." Oh, the mighty double grip of his unhesitating faith! He seems to say, "Even if thou hast forsaken me, I have not forsaken thee." Faith triumphs, and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is his faith, he feels that God has withdraw his comfortable fellowship, and he shivers under the terrible deprivation.

It was no fancy, or delirium of mind, caused by his weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of his spirit, or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst, and desolation; making no complaint of the cross, the nails, and the scoffing. We read not in the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, I thirst." All the tortures of his body he endured in silence; but when it came to being forsaken of God, then his great heart burst out into its "Lama sabachthani?" His one moan is concerning his God. It is not, "Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?" These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut him to the quick: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was no phantom of the gloom; it was a real absence which he mourned.

This was a very remarkable desertion. It is not the way of God to leave either his sons or his servants. His saints, when they come to die, in their great weakness and pain, find him near. They are made to sing because of the presence of God: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Dying saints have clear visions of the living God. Our observation has taught us that if the Lord be away at other times, he is never absent from his people in the article of death, or in the furnace of affliction. Concerning the three holy children, we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace; but there and then the Lord met with them. Yes, beloved, it is God's use and wont to keep company with his afflicted people; and yet he forsook his Son in the hour of his tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with his faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs, and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident presence of the Lord with his witnesses. Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did he ever forsake one of his testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the church has always been, that while the Lord has permitted his saints to suffer in body he has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors, and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions. The fire has not been a "bed of roses," but it has been a chariot of victory. The sword is sharp, and death is bitter; but the love of Christ is sweet, and to die for him has been turned into glory. No, it is not God's way to forsake his champions, nor to leave even the least of his children in the trial hour.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was singular. Did his Father ever leave him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which he complains of his Father for having forsaken him? No. He said, "I know that thou hearest me always." He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear; but now, for the first time, he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?" It was very remarkable. It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that he loved us and gave himself for us and in the execution of his loving purpose came even unto this sorrow, of mourning the absence of his God.

This forsaking was very terrible. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us, altogether; for he has expressly said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake

thee"; yet we have sometimes felt as if he had cast us off. We have cried, "Oh, that I know where I might find him!" The clear shinings of his love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Saviour felt when his God had for-saken him. The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject, and no cheering theme consoled him. It was the hour in which he was made to stand before God as consciously the sin-bearer, according to that ancient prophecy, "He shall bear their iniquities." Then was it true, "He hath made him to be sin for us." Peter puts it, "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Sin, sin, sin was every where around and about Christ. He had no sin of his own; but the Lord had "laid on him the iniquity of us all." He had no strength given him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into his wounds; but he was made to appear in the lone character of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; and therefore he must feel the weight of sin, and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; but now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was dumb. He was hung up as an accursed thing upon the cross; for he was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"; and the Lord his God did not own him before men. If it had pleased the Father, he might have sent him twelve legions of angels; but not an angel came after the Christ had quitted Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in his face, but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind him, and scourge him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen his shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails, and lift him up, and scoff at him; but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble, and release the Prince of life. No, he appeared to be forsaken, "smitten of God, and afflicted," delivered into the hands of cruel men, whose wicked hands worked him misery without stint. Well might he ask, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed hitherto

throughout his whole earthly life. He said himself, as you remember, "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Here was his constant comfort: but all comfort from this source was to be withdrawn. The divine Spirit did not minister to his human spirit. No communications with his Father's love poured into his heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar. Our Lord's faith did not fail him, as I have already shown you, for he said, "My God, my God": yet no sensible supports were given to his heart, and no comforts were poured into his mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of divine wrath, but only suffered a withdrawal of divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraw heat or create cold is all one. He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that he was near to God; and this, to his tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order. A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God "necessaries, but not suavities"; that which was meet, but not that which was sweet. Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life, and life to be a boon. You that know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious presence and love of God, you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Saviour was, now that he felt he had been forsaken of his God. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" To our Lord, the Father's love was the foundation of everything; and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when his own God, the God of his entire confidence, turned from him. Yes, God in very deed forsook our Saviour.

To be forsaken of God was much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us. "Oh," say you, "how is that?" I answer, because he was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing, and painful. If any man here, who is not at peace with God, could only know his true condition, he would swoon with fright. If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are, and what you are at this moment in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to him. Alas! we are insensible, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and therefore we do not feel our true condition. His perfect holiness made it

to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God.

I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to him. He had never known what the dark was till then: his life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of heaven upon earth; and how cold it would strike to your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a perfect man, you can see why to our Well-beloved it was a special trial. Remember, he had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up—I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God.

Do not forget that he was such a One that to him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part he was perfect, and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree. A sinful man has an awful need of God, but he does not know it; and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God, or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel! a seraph who has lost his God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness, and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find his God! I cannot picture him; perhaps a Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful, and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him. He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub: "My God, my God, my God, where art thou?" What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead. In proportion as he is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is his pining after it the more intense. As a Son, he is more able to commune with God than ever a servant-angel could be; and now that he is forsaken of God, the void

within is the greater, and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord's heart, and all his nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God, was to him a grief which could not be weighed. I see him in the text bearing desertion, and yet I perceive that he cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but his pure and holy nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity; and breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, he exclaims, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" He quarrels not with the suffering, but he cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if he must end the ordeal, not because of the pain, but because of the moral shock. We have here the repetition after his passion of that loathing which he felt before it, when he cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of substitute for guilty men.

There, friends; I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child, talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact, that our Lord Jesus was on the tree forsaken of his God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY or, why he suffered.

Note carefully this cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which crieth like this; but it is the agony of a godly soul; for only a man of that order would have used such an expression. Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from "the Book." Does it not show our Lord's love of the sacred volume, that when he felt his sharpest grief, he turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the twenty-second Psalm. Oh, that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score, but even weep to its music!

Note, again, that our Lord's lament is an address to God. The godly, in



their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them. The Saviour's outcry is not against God, but to God. "My God, my God": he makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here. The child in the dark is crying after his Father—"My God, my God." Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in his agony.

Still, observe, it is a faith-cry; for though it asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it first says, twice over, "My God, my God." The grip of appropriation is in the word "my"; but the reverence of humility is in the word "God." It is "'My God, my God,' thou art ever God to me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with thee. Thy rights are unquestioned, for thou art my God. Thou canst do as thou wilt, and I yield to thy sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites me, and with all my heart I cry, 'My God, my God.'" When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible still: when your mind wanders, let it roam towards the mercy seat; and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith, and still cry, "My God, my God."

Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of his mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning, and therefore tossed about. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not Jesus know? Did he not know why he was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly, and yet his manhood, while it was being crushed, pounded, dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief. He must be forsaken; but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter; but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it, and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror. At that moment the finite soul of the man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite justice of God. The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man, whose nature he had espoused. God was for him and with him in a certain unquestionable sense; but for the time, so far as his feeling went, God was against him, and necessarily withdrawn from him. It is not surprising that the holy soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite justice of God, even though its design was

only to vindicate that justice, and glorify the Law-giver. Our Lord could now say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" and therefore he uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism. Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own, which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you.

I think I see, in the expression, submission and resolve. Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question: they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely, he would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but the rather dedicates himself anew to God by the words, "My God, my God," and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which he is resolute to bear even to the bitter end. He would fain feel anew the motive which has sustained him, and must sustain him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God.

Do you not think that the amazement of our Lord, when he was "made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), led him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure being to be made a sin-offering was an amazing experience. Sin was laid on him, and he was treated as if he had been guilty, though he had personally never sinned; and now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills his holy soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks his heart, and he starts back from it, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why must I bear the dread result of contact I so much abhor?

Do you not see, moreover, there was here a glance at his eternal purpose, and at his secret source of joy? That "why" is the silver lining of the dark cloud, and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was needful in order that he might save the guilty, and he had an eye to that salvation as his comfort. He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to his heart that he yields to the passing evil, even though that evil be like death to him. He looks at

that "why," and through that narrow window the light of heaven comes streaming into his darkened life.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely our Lord dwelt on that "why," that we might also turn our eyes that way. He would have us see the why and the wherefore of his grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the reason of it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand "why." Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus the Saviour raises an inquiry not so much for himself as for us; and not so much because of any despair within his heart as because of a hope and a joy set before him, which were wells of comfort to him in his wilderness of woe.

Bethink you, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken his most obedient Son. He was ever with him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth, and we must look upon the Lord Jesus also in his official capacity, as the Surety of the covenant, and the sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon him who has become the substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God; and if, in order to its removal his own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome, and he who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God. This was the dread necessity of expiation; but in the essence of things the love of the great Father to his Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountain-head it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER, concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Saviour could

answer his own question. If for a moment his manhood was perplexed, yet his mind soon came to clear apprehension; for he said, "It is finished"; and, as I have already said, he then referred to the work which in his lonely agony he had been performing. Why, then, did God forsake his Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—he stood in our stead. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake him: he was perfect, and his life was without spot. God never acts without reason; and since there were no reasons in the character and person of the Lord Jesus why his Father should forsake him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way.

"Yet all the griefs he felt were ours,  
Ours were the woes he bore;  
Pangs, not his own, his spotless soul  
With bitter anguish tore.

"We held him as condemn'd of heaven,  
An outcast from his God;  
While for our sins he groaned, he bled,  
Beneath his Father's rod."

He bore the sinner's sin, and he had to be treated, therefore, as though he were a sinner, though sinner he could never be. With his own full consent he suffered as though he had committed the transgressions which were laid on him. Our sin, and his taking it upon himself, is the answer to the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

In this case we now see that His obedience was perfect. He came into the world to obey the Father, and he rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to him in solemn, avowed allegiance, still declaring before a mocking multitude his confidence in the afflicting God. It is noble to cry, "My God, my God," when one is asking, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes is falling, was not more true to his trust than he who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord's suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways: he must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God, because this is the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relation with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day? Assuredly not: he lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died, by being separated from God. The separation of the soul from God is spiritual death; just as the separation of the soul from the body is natural death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation, and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God could not have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking him, what must the doom of the actual sinner be! Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ himself, as a sin-bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason: there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man the law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered from sin, but for sin. If God will cheer and sustain him, he is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if he is manifestly succouring the smitten one. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt, if he had continued consciously to enjoy the fall sunshine of the Father's presence. It was essential to being a victim in our place that he should cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Beloved, see how marvellously, in the person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated his law! If to make his law glorious, he had said, "These multitudes of men have broken my law, and therefore they shall perish,"

the law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead thereof, he says, "Here is my Only Begotten Son, my other self; he takes on himself the nature of these rebellions creatures, and he consents that I should lay on him the load of their iniquity, and visit in his person the offences which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men: and I will have it so." When Jesus bows his head to the stroke of the law, when he submissively consents that his Father shall turn away his face from him, then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver. There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God, and all these will see, in the death of God's dear Son, a declaration of his determination never to allow sin to be trifled with. If his own Son is brought before him, bearing the sin of others upon him, he will hide his face from him, as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite love shines over all, but it does not eclipse his absolute justice any more than his justice is permitted to destroy his love. God hath all perfections in perfection, and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them. Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! but who could ever reach the height of this great argument?

Once more, when enquiring, Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father? we see the fact that the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord's own feet. Suppose, beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken, then one of his disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance, and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it. He would turn to his Leader and Captain, and say to him, "Didst thou, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?" Then the Lord Jesus would answer, "No. This is a descent such as I never made." What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad indeed.

There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment, a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherein we greatly rejoice at this time, and so often as we are cast down. Underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and are resting in him alone for salvation, let us lean hard, let us bear with all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusings no more when I hear Jesus cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I know that I deserve the deepest hell at the hand of God's vengeance; but I am not afraid. He will never forsake me, for he forsook his Son on my behalf. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my stead; yea, suffered so far as to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Behind this brazen wall of substitution a sinner is safe. These "munitions of rock" guard all believers, and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me; I hide in its rifts, and no harm can reach me. You have a full atonement, a great sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the law; wherefore rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever in our lives henceforth we should think that God hath deserted us, let us learn from our Lord's example how to behave ourselves. If God hath left thee, do not shut up thy Bible; nay, open it, as thy Lord did, and find a text that will suit thee. If God hath left thee, or thou thinkest so, do not give up prayer; nay, pray as thy Lord did, and be more earnest than ever. It thou thinkest God has forsaken thee, do not give up thy faith in him; but, like thy Lord, cry thou, "My God, my God," again and again. If thou hast had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now, and double the hold of thy faith. If thou canst not call Jehovah "Father," as was Christ's wont, yet call him thy "God." Let the personal pronouns take their hold—"My God, my God." Let nothing drive thee from thy faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost, it shall be at the foot of the cross. To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that he will be faithful to his Son, and true to the covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life: there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of heaven; and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door. What am I saying? I shall enter in; for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus; and Jesus saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The last of the three points is this, let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our beloved Lord. What an accursed thing is sin, which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and then come to God's house, on the Lord's-day morning, and think to worship him? Worship him! Worship him, with sin indulged in your breast! Worship him, with sin loved and pampered in your life! O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood? —if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it? Oh, that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths, whence it might never be brought to light again! Begone, o sin! Thou art banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for thou hast crucified my Lord, and made him cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" O my hearers, if you did but know yourselves, and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbour sin no longer. You would be indignant at sin, and cry,

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Lord, I will tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee,"

May that be the issue of my morning's discourse, and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you, bless you, and out of his darkness may your light arise! Amen.

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## **The Lamb Of God In Scripture**



Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God. - John 1:35-36

You all know the old, old story. The world was lost; God must punish sin; He sent His son to take our sin upon Him that He might honor the law of God, and establish God's government by being obedient to the law, and yielding Himself up to the death-penalty. He whom Jehovah loves beyond all else came to earth, became a man, and, as a man, was obedient unto death of the cross. It is He who is called in our text "the Lamb of God," the one Sacrifice for man's sin. There is no putting away of sin without sacrifice; there is only one Sacrifice that can put away sin, and that is, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is divine, yet human; Son of God, yet son of Mary. He yielded up His life, "the Just for the unjust," the Sinless for the sinful, "that He might bring us to God," and reconcile us to the great Father. That is the story, and whosoever believeth in Him shall live. Any man, the world over, who will trust himself to Christ, God's great Sacrifice, shall be saved, for this is our continual witness, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Tonight I do not intend so much to preach a sermon as to urge those who have seen the Lamb of God to look at him more intently, to study Him more, and especially to please for the power of the Holy Ghost to reveal Him to them. I want to entreat men, who have looked elsewhere, now to turn their eyes away from the fruitless search after peace and life, and to come and "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." May the Spirit of God open their eyes, and incline their hearts, that tonight, even tonight, they may look unto Him and live!

When John saw Jesus on that memorable day, he, first of all, beheld Him himself and then he said to others, "Behold the Lamb of God." "Looking upon Jesus as He walked," steadfastly beholding Him, watching Him, gazing with humble admiration at Him, he said, "behold the Lamb of God!" Brethren, we cannot preach what we have not practiced. If these

eyes have never looked to Jesus, how can I bid your eyes look at Him? Beholding Him, I found peace to my soul; I, who was disposed even to despair, rose from the depths of anguish to the heights of joy by looking unto Him; and I therefore dare to say to you, "Behold the Lamb of God?" Oh, that each one of you might believe our testimony concerning Jesus and look to Him and live!

What did John mean by saying, "Behold, in the Latin, ecce, is a note of admiration, of wonderment, of exclamation. "Behold the Lamb of God!" There was nothing of greater wonder ever seen than that God Himself should provide the Lamb for the burnt offering, that He should provide His only Son out of His very bosom, that He should give e the delight of His heart to die for us. Well may we behold this great wonder. Angels admire and marvel at this mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; they have never left off wondering and adoring the grace of god that gave Jesus to be the Sacrifice for guilty men. Behold and wonder, never leave off wondering; tell it as a wonder, think of it as a wonder, think of it as a wonder, sing of it as a wonder at this glorious Lamb of God.

I think that John also meant his disciples to consider when he said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God!" So we say to you, "Think of Him, study Him, know all that you about Him, look Him up and down. He is God; do you understand that He stood the sinner' stead? He is man; do you know how near akin He is to you, how sympathetic He is, a brother born for your adversity?" The person of Christ is a great marvel; how God and man can be in one person, it is impossible for us to tell. We believe what we cannot comprehend; and we rejoice in what we cannot understand. He whom God has provided to be your Saviour is both God and man; He can lay His hand upon both parties, He can touch your manhood in its weakness, and touch the Godhead in its all-sufficiency. Study Christ; the most excellent of all the sciences in the knowledged of a crucified Saviour. He is most learned in the university of heaven who knows most of Christ. He who hath known most of Him still says that His love surpasseth knowledge. Behold Him, then, with wonder, and behold Him with thankfulness.

But when John says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he means more that wondering or considering. "Looking" is used in Scripture for faith: "Look

unto me, and be ye saved." Therefore we sing—

There is life for a look at the crucified One,  
There is life at this moment for thee!

Beholding is a steady kind of looking. Believe then, in Christ with a solid, abiding confidence. Come, ye sinners, come, and trust your Saviour, not for tonight only, but forever. Believe that he is able and willing to save you, and trust Him to do so.

Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude.

Take your eyes off everything else, and behold the Lamb of God! You need not see anything else, nothing else is worth seeing; but behold Him. See how He takes your guilt, see how he bears it, see how He sinks under it, and yet rises from it, crying, "It is finished." He gives up the ghost, He is buried, He rises again from the dead because He is accepted of God, and His redeeming work is done. Trust Him, trust Him, trust Him. "Look and live," is now our nosegay; not "do and live," but "live and do." If you ask how you are to live, our answer is look, trust, believe, confide, rest in Christ, and the moment you do so, you are saved.

But once more, when John said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" It was a hint that they should leave off at John, and turn their attention wholly to Jesus, and follow Him. Hence we find that John's two disciples left him, and became the disciples of Christ. Beloved, we who preached long to have your attention, but when you give your attention to us, our longing then is to pass it on to Christ our Lord. Look on Him, not us. What can we do, poor creatures that we are? Look unto Him, mark His footsteps, tread in them. Do as He bids you, take Him for your Lord, become His disciples, His servants. Behold the Lamb of God, and always behold Him. Look to Him, look up to Him, and follow where He leads the way.

Thus I have put the text before you pretty simply. Now, I want to talk to you a little about beholding this Lamb of God, taking a hasty run through various Scripture references to the Lamb; and I will ask you, first, to

Behold the Lamb of God in His connections which men, and secondly, to Behold the Lamb of God in His benedictions to men.

I. Let us, first, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS CONNECTION WITH MEN.

How was the Lamb of God first seen in the world? It was the case of the lamb for one man, brought by one man for himself, and on his own behalf. You all know that I refer to Abel, who was a shepherd, and brought of the firstlings, of his flock, that is, a lamb, and he brought this lamb for himself, and on his own account, that he might be accepted by God, and that he might present to God an offering well-pleasing in His sight. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to God. I think that there was a difference in the sacrifice, as well as in the man bringing it, for the Holy Ghost says little about the difference of the man, but He says, "By faith Abel offered unto to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and he was accepted because he brought a more excellent sacrifice. The one sacrifice was bloodless, the fruit of the ground, the other was typical of Christ, the Lamb of God, and was therefore accepted: "and the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering."

Now, beloved, our first view of Christ usually is here, to know Him ourselves. I am a sinner, and I want to have communion with my God; how shall I obtain it? I am guilty, I am sinful; how shall I draw near to the holy God? Here is the answer. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be yours by faith, and bring Him to God; you must be accepted if you bring Christ with you. The Father never repelled the Son, nor one who was clothed with the Son's righteousness, or who pleaded the Son's merit. Come you, as Abel came, not with fruits of your own growing, but with the sacrifice of blood, with Christ the holy Victim, the spotless Lamb of God, and so coming, whoever you may be, you shall be acceptable before God by faith. Now, behold Him, each one of you for yourself!

I know what someone will say, "I hope to do that by-and-by." I hope you do not so deceive yourself. I have heard that there was once a great meeting in the den of the arch-enemy, and he was stirring up his myrmidons to seek the destruction of men. One of the them said, "I have gone forth, and I have told men that there is no God, and no hereafter,

and no difference between sin and righteousness, and that they may live as they like"; and there was considerable approbation among the evil spirits. But Satan himself said, "Thou hast done small service, for man has a conscience, and his conscience teaches him better; he knows that there is a God, he knows that there is a difference between sin and righteousness, he knows that there must be future punishment; you have done but little." Then another stood up, and said, "I have done better, I think, most mighty chieftain, for I have told them that the Bible is a worn-out book, that it was a fable at the first, and that they need not believe it." There was a round of cheers, for they said that he had done splendid service for the cause of darkness; but Satan said, "It is in vain that you meddle with the old Book, it has taken care of itself, and it can still do so. There is no shaking, it is like a rock. Thou hast done service for a time, but it will soon pass away." And scarcely did anyone of the fallen spirits venture to bring forward his boasting in the presence of the terrible master who sat it the midst of them; but, at last, one said, "I have told men that they have souls, and there is a God, and that the Bible is true. I have left them to believe as they will, but I have whispered in their ear that there is plenty of time to consider all this." Then there was a hush, and the great master of demons said, "Thou hast done best of all. This is my great net in which I take more souls than with any other, this net of procrastination or delay." Therefore say I to you, my hearers, disappoint the fiend. Fly to Jesus at once, Behold, not tomorrow, but tonight, behold the Lamb of God, each man for himself.

Now turn over the pages of the grand old Book, and you will find the Lamb in another connection. Israel was in Egypt, and there they had the lamb for the family, "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house." Oh, I wish that you would all go on to behold the Lamb of God for your households! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Why do you stop before you finish this verse? What said the apostle to the trembling jailer? Not merely all that I have quoted, but more; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Are there not many believers who do not believe for their house. Come, now, and believe in his provision of the Lamb for the house. Trust the grace of God for that little girl, the last born, and for that boy who is

still at school, who does not think much of these things as yet; and for that son of yours who has left home, and gone out as an apprentice. Oh, that the Lamb of God might be for him! Pray for him, tonight; and you older parents, pray for your sons who are married, and your daughters who have taken to themselves husbands, and are away from you. The Lamb is for the house, pray for the whole household tonight; take in your grandchildren, all you old folks, all of them who are in your house. Pray that the Lamb may be for the house. I do bless God that I can look upon all my household, and rejoice that they are converted to Christ. My father has this joy, too; and my grandfather also had that joy. Oh, it is a great bliss to have families, generation after generation, all brought to Christ without exception! Why should it no be so? Let us cry for it; surely we may expect the same blessing that God gave to His chosen people under the law, and expect it more largely. Grace does not run in the blood, but grace often runs side by side with it, so that Abraham is loved, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Ephraim, and Manasseh. Thus the covenant blessing goes from one to another. Please with God, tonight, that all in your house may be beneath the sprinkled blood of the lamb, and be saved from the destroying angel, and that all with you may go out of Egypt to have a possession in the land of the promised.

A little further on, following the Scripture, and asking you still to behold the Lamb, in the twenty-ninth chapter of that famous Book of Exodus, at the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses, we come across God's command for the lamb for the people. "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even." Here is the lamb for all the chosen people, the lamb for Israel. It began with the unit, it went on to the family; and here the Lord, who "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling of Jacob," makes His tabernacle to be the central place where a lamb shall be offered for the whole nation. Think of it with delight, tonight, that Christ died for all His chosen people. He hath redeemed them from among men. Though they be as many as the stars for number, or as the sand on the sea-shore innumerable, yet that one Sacrifice has redeemed them all. Glory be to God for the blood of the Lamb, by which the whole of Christ's people are redeemed!

Then let your mind take wing right out of the Old Testament into the New, for I have not time to trace all the successive steps. Come now to John, saying, in the twenty-ninth verse of this chapter, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Now you have gone beyond the bounds of Israel, and have come to the Lamb for the world. You have come to the Lamb of God, who dies for Gentiles as well as Jews, for men in the isles of the sea, for men in the wilds of Africa, for men of every color, and every race, and every time, and every clime. Oh, glory be to God, wherever there are men, we may go and tell them of Christ! Wherever there are men born of Adam's race, we may tell them of the second Adam, to whom looking, they who shall live, and in Him they shall find eternal life. I love to think of the breaking down of the bounds that shut in the flow of grace to one nation. Behold, it flows over all Asia Minor, at first, and then over all Greece, and then to Rome, and Paul talks of going to Spain, and the gospel is borne across the sea to England, and from this country it has gone out unto the utmost of the earth.

Well, now, take your flight, if you can get beyond that, away to heaven itself, and there you will see the Lamb for all heaven. Look at Revelation, the seventh chapter, and the fourteenth verse; no, you need not look it out, you know it. All the saints in heaven are standing in the glittering ranks, white-robed, pure as the driven snow. They sing and praise one glorious name; when one of the elders first asked the question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" he himself gave the answer, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

'Round the altar priests confess,  
If their robes are white as snow,  
'Twas the Saviour's righteousness,  
And his blood that made them so.

The blood of the lamb has whitened all the saints who are in heaven; they sing of Him who loved them, and saved them from their own sins in His own blood. I have often wondered why that second word was not brought into our translation, for it so beautifully fits the language of the beloved Apostle John: "Unto him that loved us and saved us from our sins in his

own blood, and hath made us king and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." There is no whiteness in heaven but what the Lamb has wrought, no brightness there but what the Lamb has bought; everything there shows the wondrous power and surpassing merit of the Lamb of God.

If it be possible to think of something more glorious than I have already described, I think you will find it in the fifth chapter of Revelation, at the thirteenth verse: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." The day shall come when, from every place that God has made, there shall be heard the voice of praise unto the Lamb; there shall be found everywhere men and women redeemed by blood, angels and glorious spirits, rejoicing to adore Him who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty Lamb of God.

I think I have given you something to consider if you turn over the pages of Scripture, and follow the track of the bleeding Lamb.

II. But now, taking you again over the same road a little, I want you, in the second place, TO BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS BENEDICTIONS TO MEN.

The first blessing of all is that of Abel. He was accepted of God; he offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Well now, let anybody here, who does not know it, try to learn this lesson tonight. You can only be "accepted in the Beloved." God loves His Son with such an overflowing love that He has love enough for you, love enough for me, if we are in Christ Jesus. He is the great conduit or channel of God's love, and that love flows through all the pipes to every soul that believes in Jesus. Hide behind your Lord, and you are safe. Trust His name, living and dying, and nothing can harm you. How many dear hearts, when passing through the valley of death-shade, when grim thoughts have clustered about them, have been cheered, and comforted by the thought of Christ! Remember the monk who, as he died, put away the priest, and the crucifix, and everything else, and cried, "Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!" "Thy



wounds, Jesus! Thy wounds, Jesus!" I am not saved by what I can do, but by what He has done; not by what I have suffered, but by what He has endured. There hangs our everlasting hope; we trust to Christ in life and in death, and we are accepted for His sake. Come, every sinner, bring the Lamb of God; put Him on the altar, and you shall be accepted at once, and you may at once begin to praise the name of the Lord.

But then, as we go on, we find this Lamb of God useful, not only for acceptance, but also for rescue and deliverance. It is a dark and dreadful night; Egypt shivers, and stands aghast; and just at twelve at night forth flies an angel, armed with the sword of death. In every house of Egypt there is heard a wail, for the firstborn is dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the woman who turns the mill to grind the daily corn. Death is in every house; nay, stay; there are houses wherein there is no death. What has secured those habitations? The father took a lamb, shed its blood, dipped the bunch of hyssop in it, and smeared the lintel and the two side posts; and then all sat down and feasted on the lamb undisturbed, and calm and happy. They rejoiced to have for food that lamb whose blood was the ensign of their safety. There was no crying there, no dying there; death could not touch the inhabitants of the house that was marked with the blood of the Paschal lamb. Beloved, you and I are perfectly safe if we are sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb of God; nothing can harm us, everything must bless us; and we may go to our beds tonight singing—

Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,  
I lay me down to rest,  
As in the embraces of my God,  
Or on my Saviour's breast.

We may rise tomorrow morning, if we are spared, and go into this busy world without any fear. The broad arrow of the King is set upon us in the blood-mark of the atoning sacrifice, and we are safe, and safe forever. Glory be to the name of the Lord for this!

Nor was that all. As I have told you, the blood of the Paschal lamb was not only sprinkled for the protection of the house, but its flesh was the food of the inmates. Oh, brethren, we do not at first know what it is to feed of

Christ! We are satisfied to be sprinkled with His blood; but the believer afterwards find that Christ is the food of his soul. His blood is drink, indeed, and His flesh is meat, indeed. Oh, what a festival have we kept over the person of our Lord! Sometimes, when faint and hungry, we have begun to think of the Incarnate God, the bleeding Lamb, the full atonement paid, and we have said, "My soul is full, satisfied with favor, full of the blessing of the Lord." I do not know what there is in the gospel if you take away the atoning sacrifice; it seems to me that there would be nothing left but chaff, which might suit asses and horses, but would not be fit for men. Look to Jesus dying in our stead, and here is something for the soul to feed upon, aye, and to be satisfied with, as with marrow and fatness!

I pointed you a little further on, to the lamb in the wilderness, the lamb offered up every day; that brings us to another point in our Lord's work. We have had Christ for acceptance, Christ for safety, and Christ for food, now we have Christ for perpetual resort. The Lamb of God in the morning! Oh, blessed be God for a Saviour in the morning! If the night has gathered aught evil, He doth then disperse it, as the sun dispels the darkness. But oh, what a precious thing also to have the Lamb of God in the evening! If in the day we have soiled our feet in traversing this busy world, here we come to the fountain, and we are made clean through the blood of the Lamb. Perpetual merit, perpetual intercession, perpetual life-giving, perpetual salvation, flow from Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. He is not slain twice; His one wonderful offering has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; but its efficacy continues as though He were sacrificed often, ever supplying us with merit, so that, in effect. His wounds continually do bleed. He is always a new Saviour for me every morning, always a new Saviour every night, and ; yet always the same Saviour, the same Christ. There is no getting weary of Him, there is nothing "stale" in Him. They may talk about "a new view of the atonement." I have no view of the atonement but this, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me"; "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree"; and that old view of the atonement is ever fresh and ever new to the heart and conscience.

Well now, beloved, when we come to John again, following our former

run of thought, we find the Lamb of God useful for guidance, for when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," the two disciples followed Jesus; and we read of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The Lamb is our Guide. The Lord is a Shepherd as well as a Lamb, and the flock following in His footsteps is safely led. My soul, when thou wantest to know which way to go, behold the Lamb of God! Ask, "What would Jesus do?" Then do thou what Jesus would have done in such a case, and thou canst not do amiss.

Further on we find a passage as this, telling us of victory through the Lamb of God: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The Lamb is a great Warrior, there is none like Him. Is He not the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Though He be gentle as a lamb, yet against sin and iniquity He is fiercer than a young lion when it roareth on its prey. If we follow Him, hold fast His truth, believe in His atonement, and perpetually proclaim His gospel, we shall overcome all error, and all sin, and all evil.

Well now, this blessed Lamb—it is not easy to leave off talking about Him when one once begins—is so blessed that you may well behold Him, for all happiness comes through Him. In heaven you will see nothing without Him. "Nothing?" say you. No, nothing; here is a proof of my words. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." All the light, the knowledge, the joy, the bliss of heaven, come through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Not Jesus only, but Jesus slain, Jesus the Lamb of God, is the very light of heaven.

And what, think you, is the joy-day of heaven, the time for the highest exultation? Why, the joyous day when all the golden bells shall peal out their glorious melodies, and all the silver trumpets shall ring out their jubilant notes, will be the day of the marriage of the Lamb. It is the heaven of heavens, the climax of ineffable delight; and the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, sings, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." So that, at the topmost round of the ladder of eternal bliss, there do you find the Lamb. You cannot get beyond Him. He gives you all He has, even Himself.

Behold Him, then, and go on beholding Him throughout the countless ages of eternity.

I would to God that you had all beheld Him, and I pray you to behold Him tonight. It is but a little while, and the death-film will gather about your eyes; and if you have not seen the Lamb while yet you have mortal eyes, you will see Him, you will certainly see Him, but your vision will be like than of Balaam, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh." If it is with you "not now," it may be "not nigh" It will be an awful thing to see the Lamb with a gulf between yourself and Him, for there is a great impassable gulf fixed in the next world; and when you see Him across that gulf, how will you feel? Then shall you cry to the mountains and rocks. "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Jesus will still be a Lamb, even to the lost; it is "the wrath of the Lamb" that they will dread. The Lamb is always conspicuous; He may be neglected, rejected, refused tonight, but He will be beheld in eternity, and beheld to your everlasting confusion and unutterable dismay if you refuse to behold Him now. Let it not be so with any of you.

Ye sinners, seek his face,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there.

Amen.

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## A Last Look-Out

The time of my departure is at hand. - 2 Timothy 4:6

So near, so very near the change - his removal from this to another world; and so very conscious of it; yet Paul looked back with calm satisfaction; he looked forward with sweet assurance; and he looked round with deepest interest on the mission that had engaged his life. As you must have noticed while we were reading the chapter, in his case "the ruling passion was strong in death." Writing what he well knows is the last letter he shall ever write, its main topic is care for the church of God—anxiety for the promotion of the truth—zeal for the furtherance of the gospel. When he is dead, and gone from the post of service, the scene of suffering, the field of enterprise, on whom shall his mantle fall? He desires that in Timothy he may find a worthy successor, strong in the faith, sincere of heart, and having dauntless courage withal, one who will wield the sword and hold the banner when his hand is palsied in death. Men have usually shown us what lies at the bottom of their heart when they have come to die. Often their last expiring expressions have been indicative of their entire character. Certainly you have before you in the last sentences of Paul's pen a fair epitome of his entire life. He is trusting in the Savior; he is anxious to show his love for that Savior. The welfare of the Christian church and the advancement of the holy cause of the gospel are uppermost in his mind. May it be yours and mine to live wholly for Christ, and to die also for him. May this ever be foremost in our thoughts, "How can I advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior? By what means can I bless his church and people?" It is very beautiful to observe the way in which Paul describes his death in this verse. According to our translation he speaks of it as an offering. "I am now ready," saith he, "to be offered." If we accept this version he may be supposed to mean that he felt as one standing like a bullock or a lamb, ready to be laid on an altar. He foresaw he would die a martyr's death. He knew he could not be crucified as his brother Peter had been, for a Roman citizen was, as a rule, exempt from that ignominious death. He expected to die in some other manner. Probably he guessed it would be by the sword, and so he

describes himself as waiting for the sacrificial knife to be used, that he might be presented as a sacrifice. So I say the words of our translation would lead us to think. But the original is far more instructive. He here likens himself, in the Greek, not to an offering, but to the drink-offering. Every Jew would know what that meant. When there was a burnt-sacrifice offered, the bullock or the victim then slain was the main part of the sacrifice. But sometimes there was a little, what if I say an unimportant, supplement added to that sacrifice—a little oil and a little wine were poured on to the altar or the bullock, and thus a drink-offering was said to be added to the burnt-offering. Now, Paul does not venture to call himself an offering,—Christ is his offering. Christ is, so to speak, the sacrifice on the altar. He likens himself only to that little wine and oil poured out as a supplement thereto, not necessary to its perfection, but tolerated in performing a vow, or allowed in connection with a free will offering, as you will find if you refer at leisure to the fifteenth chapter of Numbers, from the fourth to the eighth verses. The drink-offering was thus a kind of addendum, by which the person who gave it showed his thankfulness. So Paul is resolved to show his thankfulness to Christ, the great sacrifice, and he is willing that his blood should be poured as a drink-offering on the altar where his Lord and Master was the great burnt-offering. He rejoices when he can say, "I am ready to be presented as a drink-offering unto God."

We have mainly to do with the second description which he gives of his death. What does he say when the hour that this grim monster must be grappled with is at hand? I do not find him sad. Those who delight in gloomy poetry have often represented death in terrible language. "It is hard," says one -

To feel the hand of death arrest one's steps,  
Throw a chill blight on all one's budding hopes,  
And hurl one's soul untimely to the shades."

And another exclaims -

"O God, it is a fearful thing  
To see the human soul take wing,  
In any shape, in any mood!

I've seen it rushing forth in blood,  
I've seen it on the breaking ocean,  
Strive with a swollen convulsive motion."

Not so the apostle Paul. I do not even hear him speak of flying through the gate as our grand old poet has described death. He does not say, "The hour of my dissolution is at hand"—a very proper word if he had used it; but he is not looking so much at the process as at the result of his dying. He does not even say, "The hour of my death is at hand," but he adopts a beautiful expression, "The time of my departure"—words which are used sometimes to signify the departure of a vessel from the port; the pulling up of the anchor so that it looses its moorings, when about to put out to sea—so he feels himself like a ship lying at the harbor for awhile—but he says, "The time for pulling up the anchor, the time for letting loose the cable, and cutting from the mooring is at hand; I shall soon be launched upon my voyage." And he knew right well where that voyage would end, in the fair havens of the port of Peace in the better country, whither his Lord had gone before him.

Now we will proceed very briefly to say a word about departure; and then a shorter word still about the time of our departure; and then a little more about the time of our departure being at hand—trying here, especially, to bring forward some lessons which may be of practical usefulness to each one of us.

I. First, then, dear brethren, let us think a little about OUR DEPARTURE.

It is quite certain we shall not dwell here for ever: we shall not live here below as long as the first man did, or as those antediluvian fathers, who tarried some eight or nine hundred years. The length of human life then led to greatness of sin. Monstrosities of evil were ripened through the long continuance of physical strength, and the accumulating force of eager passions. All things considered, it is a mercy that life is abridged and not prolonged to a thousand years. Amidst the sharp competition of man with man, and class with class, there is a bound to every scheme of personal aggrandisement, a limit to all the spoils of individual despotism, a restraint upon the hoardings of any one's avarice. It is well, I say, that it should be so. The narrow span of life clips the wings of ambition, and

bulks it of its prey. Death comes in to deprive the mighty of his power, to stay the rapacity of the invader, to scatter abroad the possessions of the rich. The most reprobate men must end their career after they have had their three score years and ten, or their four score years of wickedness. And as for the good and godly, though we mourn their exit, especially when we think that they have been prematurely taken from us, we remember how the triumphs of genius have been for the most part achieved in youth, and how much the world has been enriched by the heads and hearts of those who have but sown the seeds of faith and left others to reap the fruits. If into less than the allotted term they have crowded the service of their generation, we may save our tears, for our regrets are needless. The summons will reach each one of us ere long. We cannot stop here as long as the grey fathers of our race: we expect, and it is meet that we should prepare, to go. The world itself is to be consumed one day. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat." The land on which we stand we are wont to call terra firma, but beneath it is probably an ocean of fire, and it shall itself feel the force of the ocean. We must not marvel, the house being so frail, that the tenants are unsettled and migratory. Certainly, whether we doubt it or not, we shall have to go. There will be a departure for us. Beloved believer in Christ Jesus, to you the soft term, "Departure" is not more soft than the truth it represents. To die is to depart out of this world unto the Father. What say you about your departure? What say you of that from which you go, and what think you of that land to which you go? Well, of the land from which we go, my brethren, we might say many hard things if we would, but I think we had better not. We shall speak more correctly, if we say the hard things of ourselves. This land, my brethren, has been a land of mercy to us: there have been sorrows in it; but in bidding it farewell we will do it justice and speak the truth concerning it. Our sorrows have usually sprung up in our own bosoms, and those that have come from the soil itself would have been very light if it had not been for the plague of our hearts, which made us vex, and fret over them. Oh, the mercy you and I have enjoyed even in this life! It has been worth while to live for us who are believers. Even had we to die like a dog dieth, it has been worth while to live for the joy and blessedness which God has made to pass before us. I dare not call that an evil country in which I have met my Savior, and received the pardon of my sin. I dare not call that an ill life in which I have seen my Savior,



though it be through a glass darkly. How shall I speak ill of that land where Zion is built, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the place of our solemn assemblies, where we have worshipped God? No; cursed of old as the earth was to bring forth the thorn and the thistle, the existence of the church of God in that land seems to a great degree to have made reparation for the blight to such as know and love the Savior. Oh, have we not gone up to the house of God in company with songs of ecstatic joy, and have we not when we have gathered round the table of the Lord—though nothing was upon it but the type and emblem—have we not felt it a joyous thing to be found in the assembly of the saints, and in the courts of the Lord's house even here? When we loose our cable, and bid farewell to earth, it shall not be with bitterness in the retrospect. There is sin in it, and we are called to leave it; there has been trial in it, and we are called to be delivered from it; there has been sorrow in it, and we are glad that we shall go where we shall sorrow no more. There have been weakness, and pain, and suffering in it, and we are glad that we shall be raised in power; there has been death in it, and we are glad to bid farewell to shrouds and to knells; but for all that there has been such mercy in it, such lovingkindness of God in it, that the wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as a rose. We will not bid farewell to the world, execrating it, or leaving behind us a cold shudder and a sad remembrance, but we will depart, bidding adieu to the scenes that remain, and to the people of God that tarry therein yet a little longer, blessing him whose goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and who is now bringing us to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

But, dear brethren, if I have had to speak in a somewhat apologetic manner of the land from which we depart, I shall need to use many apologies for my own poor talk about the land to which we are bound. Ah, whither goest thou, spirit loosened from thy clay—dost know? Whither goest thou? The answer must be, partly, that we know not. None of us have seen the streets of gold of which we sang just now; those harpings of the harpers, harping with their harps, have never fallen on these ears; eye hath not seen it, ear hath not heard it: it is all unrevealed to the senses; flesh and blood cannot inherit it, and, therefore, flesh and blood cannot imagine it. Yet it is not unknown, for God hath revealed it unto us by his

Spirit. Spiritual men know what it is to feel the spirit, their own new-born spirit, living, glowing, burning, triumphing within them. They know, therefore, that if the body should drop off they would not die. They feel there is a life within them superior to blood and bone, and nerve and sinew. They feel the life of God within them, and none can gainsay it. Their own experience has proven to them that there is an inner life. Well, then, when that inner life is strong and vigorous, the spirit often reveals to it what the world of spirits will be. We know what holiness is, do we not, brethren? Are we not seeking it? That is heaven—perfect holiness is heaven. We know what peace means; Christ is our peace. Rest—he gives us rest: we find that when we take his yoke. Rest is heaven. And rest in Jesus tells us what heaven is. We know, even to-day, what communion with God is. If any one should say, "I do not know it," I should reply to him thus: Suppose I said to you, "You know not what it is to eat and drink:" the man would tell me that I belied him, for he knew, as he knew his own existence, what it was to eat and drink; and, as surely as I live, I have communion with God. I know it as certainly as you know that I have declared it to you. Well, friends, that is heaven. It has but to be developed from the germ to the produce, and there is heaven in its full development.

Communion with saints in like manner—know we not what that is? Have we not rejoiced in each other's joys, been made glad with the experience of our brethren? That, too, carried to perfection, will be heaven. Oh, to throw yourself into the bosom of the Savior and lie there taken up with his mind and his love, yielding all things to his supremacy, beholding your King in him! When you have been in that state you have had an antepast of heaven. Your view may have been but as one seeing a man's face in shadow yet you would know that man again even by the shadow; so know we what heaven is. We shall not be strangers in a strange land when we get there. Though, like the Queen of Sheba, we shall say, "The half has not been told me," yet we shall reflect on it thus: "I did surmise there would be something of this sort. I did know from what I felt of its buddings in my soul below that the full-blown flower would be somewhat of this kind." Whither away, then, spirit that art departing to soar through backs to thyself unknown? Thine answer is, "I am away: away to the throne of him whose cross first gave me life, and light, and hope. I am away to the very bosom of my Savior, where I hope to rest and to have

fellowship with the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." This is your departure that you have in near prospect.

Suppose, dear friend, the thought of departing from this world to the glory-world should ever startle you, let me remind you that you are not the first that ever went that way. Your vessel is in the pool, as it were, or in the dock; she is going out on her voyage; oh, but you will not go alone, nor have to track your course through paths un navigated or unknown before! When the Portuguese captain first went by the Cape of Storms it was a venturous voyage, and he called it the Cape of Good Hope when he had rounded it. When Columbus first went in search of the New World, his was a brave spirit that dared cross the un navigated Atlantic. But oh, there are tens of thousands that have gone whither you go. The Atlantic that severs us from Canaan is white with the sails of the vessels that are on voyage thither. Fear not, they have not been wrecked; we hear good news of their arrival there is good hope for you. There are no icebergs on the road, no mists, no counter currents, and no sunken vessels or quicksands; you have but to cut your moorings, and with Christ on board you shall be at your desired haven at once.

Remember, too, your Savior went that way. Have you to depart? So Christ departed too. Some of my brethren are always so pleased—pleased as some children are with a new toy—at the idea that they shall never die; that Christ will come, it may be before the time of their decease; for, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Well, let him come, ay, let him come; come quickly. But if I had my choice, were it permitted me to choose, I would prefer to pass through the portals of the grave. Those that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not prevent, go before, or steal a march on them which are asleep. But surely they will lack one point of conformity to their Lord, for he disdained not to sojourn awhile in the tomb, though it was impossible that he should be holden of death. Let the seal of death, then, be set upon this face of mine, that my fate in the matter may be like his. Enoch and Elias were exempt from this privilege—privilege, I call it—of conformity to his death. But it is safe to go by the beaten track, and desirable to travel by the ordinary route to the heavenly city. Jesus died. Through the valley of shadows, the vale of death-shades, there are the foot-prints of Immanuel all the way along: go

down into it and fear not. Bethink you, too, dear brethren and sisters, that we may well look forward to our departure, and look forward to it comfortably too? Is it not expedient by reason of nature? Is it not desirable by reason of grace? Is it not necessary by reason of glory? I say, is not our departure needful by reason of nature? Men are not, when they come to hoary age, what they were in the prime of their days. The staff is needed for the foot, and the glass is wanted for the eye; and after a certain number of years, even those on whom Time hath gently laid his hand, find the taste is gone. They might proclaim, like old Barzillai, that they know not what they eat or drink. The hearing fails, the daughters of music are silent, the whole tenement gets very crazy. Oh, it were a melancholy thing if we had to continue to live! Perhaps there is no more hideous picture than that which the satirist drew of men who lived on to six or seven hundred years of age—that strange satirical man, Swift. Be thankful that we do not linger on in imbecility. Kind Nature says we may depart; she gives us notice, and makes it welcome by the decays that come upon us. Besides, grace desires it; for it were a poor experience of his kindness as our best and truest friend that did not make us long to see our Savior's face. It is no mere drivelling sentiment, I hope, when we join to sing -

"Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thy earthly courts, and flee  
Up to thy seat, my God!"

I must confess there was one verse in the hymn we sung just now which I could not quite chime in with. I am not eagerly wishing to go to heaven this night. I have a great deal more to do here; therefore I do not want to take a hasty leave of all below. To full many of us, I suppose, there are times of quiet contemplation and times of rapt devotion, when our thoughts surmount these lower skies, and look within the veil and then, Oh, how we wish to be there! Yet there are other times; times of strenuous activity when we buckle on the armor and press to the front; and then we see such a battle to be waged, such a victory to be won, such a work to be wrought, that we say: "Well to abide in the flesh, to continue with you all for the joy and furtherance of your faith, seems more loyal to

Christ, more needful for you, and more in accord with our present feelings." I think it is idle for us to be crying, to go home; it is too much like the lazy workman, that wants Saturday night to come when it is only Tuesday morning. Oh, no; if God spare us to do a long life's work, so much the better. At the same time, as a spark flies upward to the sun, the central source of flame, so does the newborn spirit aspire towards heaven, towards Jesus, by whom it was kindled. And, I add, that glory demands it, and makes our departure needful. Is not Christ in heaven praying that we may be with him where he is? Are there not the saints in heaven, of whom it is said, they without us cannot be perfect? The circle of the skies cannot be completed until all the redeemed be there. The grand orchestra of glory misses some notes as yet. What if the bass be full, there are wanting still some trebles and tenors! There are some sopranos that will be requisite to swell the enchanting melodies, and consummate the worship of the Eternal! What, therefore, nature prepares for, grace desires, and glory itself demands, we have no just cause to shudder at. Our departure need not make us afraid.

II. Having thus occupied so much time on this first point, I have little or no room to enlarge on the second.

THE TIME OF OUR DEPARTURE, though unknown to us, is fixed by God, unalterably fixed; so rightly, wisely, lovingly settled, and prepared for, that no chance or haphazard can break the spell of destiny. The wisdom of divine love shall be proven by the carefulness of its provision. Perhaps you will say: "It is not easy to discern this; the natural order of things is so often disturbed by casualties of one kind or another." Let me remind you, then, that it is through faith, only through faith, we can understand these things; for it is as true now of the providence of God as it was of old of the creation of God that "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Because the mode of your departure is beyond your own ken, it does not follow that the time of your departure is not foreseen by God. "Ah! but," say you, "it seems so shocking for any one to die suddenly, unexpectedly, without warning, and so come to an untimely end!" I answer you thus. If you take counsel with death your flesh will find no comfort; but if you trust in God your faith will cease to parley with these feverish anxieties, and your spirit will enjoy a sweet

calm. Dire calamities befell Job when he was bereaved of his children and his servants, his herds and his flocks. Yet he took little heed of the different ways in which his troubles were brought about; whether by an onslaught of the Sabeans or by a raid of the Chaldeans; whether the fire fell from heaven, or the wind came from the wilderness; it mattered little. Whatever strange facts broke on his ear, one thought penetrated his heart, and one expression broke from his lips. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." So, too, beloved, when the time of your departure arrives—be it by disease or decay, be it by accident or assault, that your soul quits its present tenement—rest assured that "thy times are in his hand;" and know of a surety that "all his saints are in his hand" likewise. Besides this, dear friends, since the time of our departure must come, were the manner of it at our own disposal, I think we should most of us say, "What I shall choose, I wot not." Fevers and agues, the pangs and tortures of one malady and another, or the delirium incident to sickness, are not so much to be preferred to the shock of a disaster, or the terror of a wreck at sea, because one is the prolonging of pain, and the other the despatch of fate, that we need to covet, and desire weeks or months spent in the vestibule of the grave. Rather should we say, Let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good. To live in constant communion with God is a sure relief from all these bitter frettings. Those who have walked with him have often been favored with such presentiments of their departure as no physician could give them. Survivors will tell you that though death seemed to come suddenly to the godly merchant, he had in the last acts of his life appeared to expect and prepare for it, and even to have taken an affecting farewell of his family while in the vigor of health, as though he were aware that he was setting out on his last journey, which a few hours afterwards it proved to be. So, too, the minister of Christ has sometimes fallen, expiring in his pulpit with a nunc dimittis, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace" on his lips; secretly, but surely, made ready to depart and to be with his Lord. There is a time to depart; and God's time to call me is my time to go.

III. Now, to our third point—the THE TIME AT HAND. "The time of my departure is at hand."

In a certain sense, every Christian here may say this; for whatever interval may interpose between us and death, how very short it is! Have you not all a sense that time flows faster than it did? In our childish days, we thought a year was quite a period of time, a very epoch in our career; now as for weeks—one can hardly reckon them! We seem to be travelling by an express train, flying along at such a rate that we can hardly count the months. Why, the past year only seemed to come in at one door and go out at the other; it was over so soon. We shall soon be at the terminus of life, even if we live for several years; but in the case of some of us, God knows of whom, this year, perhaps this month, will be our last. I think tomorrow night we shall have to report at the church meeting the deaths of nine members of this church within the last eight or nine days. Since these have gone, some of us may expect to follow them. There are those who will evidently go; disease has set in upon them. Some of those disorders that in this land seem to be always fatal, tell these dear friends that the time of their departure is undoubtedly at hand. And then old age, which comes so gracefully and graciously to many of our matrons and our veterans, shows, past all dispute, "the time of your departure is at hand." The lease of your life is almost up. Not indeed that I would address myself to such special cases only. I speak to every brother and sister in Christ here. "The time of our departure is at hand." What then, dear friends?

Is not this a reason for surveying our condition again? If our vessel is just launching, let us see that she is seaworthy. It would be a sad thing for us to be near departing, and yet to be just as near discovering that we are lost. Remember, dear friends, it is possible for any one to maintain a decent Christ profession for fifty years, and be a hypocrite after all; possible to occupy an office in the church of God, and that of the very highest, and yet to be a Judas; and one may not only serve Christ, but suffer for him too, and yet, like Demas, may not persevere to the end; for all that looks like grace is not grace. Where true grace is, there it will always be; but where the semblance of it is, it will oftentimes suddenly disappear. Search thyself, good brother; set thine house in order, for thou must die and not live. Hast thou the faith of God's elect? Art thou built on Christ? Is thy heart renewed? Art thou verily an heir of heaven? I charge every man and woman within this place, since the time of his departure may be far nearer than he thinks, to take stock, and reckon up, and see

whether he be Christ's or no.

But if the time of my departure be at hand, and I am satisfied that it is all right with me, is there not a call for me to do all I can for my household? Father, the time of your departure is at hand; is your wife unsaved? Will you pass another night without lovingly speaking to her of her soul? Are those dear boys unregenerate? Is that girl still thoughtless? The time of your departure is at hand. You can do little more for the lads and lasses; you can do little more for the wife and the brother. Oh! do what you can now. Sister, you are consumptive; you will soon be gone. You are the only Christ in the family. God sent you there to be a missionary. Do not have to say, when you are dying, "The last hope of my family is going out, for I have not cared for their souls." Masters, you that have servants about you, you must soon be taken away. Will you not do something for their souls? I know if there were a mother about to go to Australia, and she had to leave some of her children behind, she would fret if she thought, "I have not done all that needs to be done for those poor children. Who will care for them now their mother is gone?" Well, but to have neglected something necessary for their temporal comfort would be little in comparison with not having cared for their souls! Oh, let it not be so! Let it not be a thorn in your dying pillow that you did not fulfill the relations of life while you had the opportunity. "The time of my departure is at hand."

Then there is a third lesson. Let me try to finish all my work, not only as regards my duty to my family, but in respect to all the world so far as my influence or ability can reach. Rich men, be your own executors. Do what you can with your substance while it is your own. Men of talent, speak for Jesus before your tongue has ceased to articulate, and becomes a piece of clay. George Whitfield may supply us with a fine model of this uniform consistency. He was so orderly and precise in his habits, and so scrupulous and holy in his life, that he used to say he would not like to go to bed if there were a pair of gloves out of place in the house, much less were his will not made, or any part of his duty unfulfilled to the best of his knowledge. He wished to have all right, and to be fully prepared for whatever might happen, so that, if he never woke again from the slumbers of the night, nobody would have cause to reflect upon anything



he had left undone, entailing needless trouble on his wife or his children. Such care bestowed on what some account to be trifles is a habit; worthy of our imitation. The main work of life may be sadly spoiled by negligence in little things. This is a striking test of character. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Oh, then! time is fleeting, despatch is urgent; gather up your thoughts, quicken your hands, speed your pace, for God commandeth thee to make haste. If you have ought to do, you must do it soon. The wheels of eternity are sounding behind you. Press on! If you are to run a race you must run it fast, for Death will soon overtake you. You may almost feel the hot breath of the white horse of Death upon your cheeks already. O God, help us to do something ere we go hence and be no more seen. It was grand of the apostle that in the same breath, when he said, "The time of my departure is at hand," he could also say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." So may we be able to say when the time of our departure has arrived.

If the time of our departure is at hand, let it cheer us amid our troubles. Sometimes, when our friends go to Liverpool to sail for Canada, or any other distant region, on the night before they sail they get into a very poor lodging. I think I hear one of them grumbling, "What a hard bed! What a small room! What a bad look-out" "Oh," says the other, "never mind, brother; we are not going to live here; we are off to-morrow." Bethink you in like manner, ye children of poverty, this is not your rest. Put up with it, you are away tomorrow. Ye sons of sorrow, ye daughters of weakness, ye children of sickness, let this cheer you: -

"The road may be rough,  
But it cannot be long  
And I'll smooth it with hope,  
And cheer it with song."

Oftentimes when I have been travelling on the Continent I have been obliged to put up at an hotel that was full, where the room was so inconvenient, that it scarcely furnished any accommodation at all. But we have said, "Oh, never mind: we are off in the morning! What matters it for one night?" So, as we are soon to be gone, and the time of our

departure is at hand, let us not be ruffling our tempers about trifles, nor raise evil spirits around us by cavilling and finding fault. Take things as you find them, for we shall soon be up and away.

And if the time of my departure is at hand, I should like to be on good terms with all my friends on earth. Were you going to stop here always, when a man treated you badly, apart from a Christ spirit, you might as well have it out with him; but as we are going to stop such a little while, we may well put up with it. It is not desirable to be too ready at taking an offense. What if my neighbor has an ugly temper, the Lord has to put up with him, and so I may. There are some people with whom I would rather dwell in heaven for ever than abide with them half an hour on earth. Nevertheless, for the love of the brethren, and for the peace of the church, we may tolerate much during the short time we have to brook with peevish moods and perverse humors. Does Christ love them, and shall not we? He covers their offenses; why, then, should we disclose them or publish them abroad? If, any of you have any grievances with one another, if there is any bickering, or jealousy between you, I should like you to make it up to-night, because the time of your departure is at hand. Suppose there is some one you spoke harshly to, you would not like to hear to-morrow that he was dead. You would not have minded what you said to him if he had lived, but now that the seal is set upon all your communications one with another, you could wish that the last impress had been more friendly. There has been a little difference between two brothers—a little coldness between two sisters. Oh, since one or other of you will soon be gone, make it up! Live in love, as Christ loved you and gave himself for you. If one of you were going to Australia to-morrow, never to come back again, and you had had a little tiff with your brother, why I know before you started you would say, "Come, brother, let us part good friends." So now, since you are so soon to depart, end all strife, and dwell together in blessed harmony till the departure actually occurs.

If the time of my departure is at hand, then let me guard against being elated by any temporal prosperity. Possessions, estates, creature comforts dwindle into insignificance before this out-look. Yes, you may have procured a comfortable house and a delightful garden, but it is not your rest: your tenure is about to expire. Yes, you may say, "God did prosper

me last year, the bank account did swell, the premises were enlarged, and the business thrived beyond all expectation." Ah! hold them loose. Do not think that they are to be your heaven. Be very jealous lest you should get your good things here, for if you do you will not have them hereafter. Be not lifted up too much when you grasp the pain, of which you must so soon quit your hold. As I said of the discomfort of the hotel, we did not think much of it, because we were going away. So, if it happens to be very luxurious, do not be enamoured of it, for you must go to-morrow. "These are the things," said one, when he looked at a rich man's treasures, "that make it hard to die." But it need not be so, if you hold them as gifts of God's kindness, and not as gods to be worshipped with self-indulgence, you may take leave of them with composure; "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Lastly, if the time of our departure is at hand, let us be prepared to bear our testimony. We are witnesses for Christ. Let us bear our testimony before we are taken up and mingle with the cloud of witnesses who have finished their course and rested from their labors. Dost thou say, "I hope to do that on my dying bed?" Brother, do it now: do it now, for you may never have opportunity to do it then. Mr. Whitfield was always desirous that he might bear a testimony for Christ in the hour of death; but he could not do so at that momentous crisis, for as you well know, he was suddenly taken ill after preaching, and very soon expired. Was this to be grievously deplored? Ah, no. Why, dear friends, he had borne so many testimonies for his Lord and Master while he was alive, there was no need to add anything in the last few moments before his death, or to supply the deficiencies of a life devoted to the proclamation of the gospel. Oh, let you and I bear our testimony now! Let us tell to others wherever we can what Christ hath done for us. Let us help Christ's cause with all our might while it is called to-day. Let us work for Jesus while we can work for him. As to thinking we can undo the effect of our idleness by the spasmodic effort of our dying breath, that were a vain hope indeed compared with living for Jesus Christ. Your dying testimony, if you are able to bear it, will have the greater force if it is not a sickly regret, but a healthy confirmation of your whole career.

I only wish these words about departure were applicable to all here.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways, and live." O unconverted man, the time for letting loose your cable draws nigh; it is even at the door. You must shortly, set sail for a far country. Alas! then yours is not the voyage of a passenger, with a sweeter clime, a happier home, a brighter prospect in view. Your departure is the banishment of a convict, with a penal settlement looming in the distance; fear all rife, and hope all blank, for the term of your banishment is interminable. I fear there are some of you who may depart ere long full of gloom with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. I seem to see the angel of death hovering over my audience. He may, perhaps, select for his victim an unconverted soul. If so, behind that death-angel attends there something far more grim. Hell follows death to souls that love not Christ. Oh, make haste, make haste! Seek Christ. Lay hold on eternal life; and may infinite mercy save you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen and Amen.

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